

living in the alps

EGEA Western Regional Congress 2010
challenges and solutions for a vulnerable world





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Living in the Alps – challenges and solutions for a vulnerable world

Congress Report

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Preface

From 6th until 11th of April 2010 EGEA Wien had the honor to present a characteristic area of Austria and a special region within Europe to a wide European public. 110 geography students and young researchers gathered to discuss challenges and solutions for the Alps, a very vulnerable living space.

During the six days of the congress, opinions from people of 22 countries, representing 48 different university sites and hence various levels of prior geographical knowledge about the Alps had to be combined and synthesized in an interdisciplinary way.

In order to implement this project, workshops, lectures and excursions took place, representing the broad variety of geography-related topics in the alpine space. These topics reached from mainly physical- via cartographic to human geographical approaches and dealt with the significant regional situation through praxis-oriented working.

Keeping the often quoted aim of 'interdisciplinary geography' in mind, the single challenges, which the alpine population has to deal with, were not seen as separated issues but in context with each other. One has to look upon them in a wider perspective to be able to size up problems in their whole dimension.

Besides scientific knowledge, it becomes more and more important to be open-minded towards social skills. Hence the congress also provided the opportunity of acquiring practice in various soft-skills.

We are grateful for the output of all thematic discussions which took place at the congress place in Steinach am Brenner and appreciate the contribution of the different nations and cultures very much.

But we also want to express our thanks to all helping persons for their input and support in finding various ways of solutions.

The WRC 2010 Organizing Team

Welcome Words of
The Federal President of the Republic of Austria,
Dr. Heinz Fischer



Encouraging junior scientists is of utmost importance to me and I am delighted that so many talented geographers from all over Europe assembled in Tyrol in order to discuss future prospects and challenges concerning the Alps.

Being an admirer of the splendid Alpine landscape and honorary patron of various Alpine associations, the Alps have always been near and dear to me. The congress titled, 'Living in the Alps - Challenges and Solutions for a Vulnerable World' certainly helped stimulate the integrative approach underlying geography and contributes to shaping the Alpine habitat with foresight and optimism.

Aside from the scientific work, also the cultural and social exchange is of great importance, and getting to know one another with honesty, tolerance, and respect is of utmost value. It is my deep conviction that these are the prerequisites for a peaceful coexistence in Europe.

I greatly appreciate the commitment and dedication of the students, as it shows that much can be achieved with enthusiasm and solidarity – be it during regular or extracurricular studies.

I congratulate the European Geography Association on its successful conference and wish it all the best for the future.

Heinz Fischer

Welcome Words of
the Head of the Department of
Geography and Regional Research, Vienna,
Prof. Dr. Helmut Wohlschlägl



International meetings of people with the same profession are always something special. The exchange of knowledge, experience and delight concerning our main field of interest – geography – brings young scientific staff from all over Europe together.

Therefore, I am very pleased to hear that the congress – organized by an enthusiastic group of geography students from our department – was very successful.

As the head of the Department of Geography and Regional Research in Vienna, I'm proud of our active and motivated EGEA group. They help to integrate our students in an international European wide network. I support their ideas and conventions for a united Europe.

The Western Regional Congress 2010 focused on the main landscape building region in Austria – the Alps. In the context of the congress theme “Living in the Alps – challenges and solutions for a vulnerable world” geographically orientated workshops, excursions and lectures were held which helped to communicate between students, young geographers and experts from different working fields. The congress participants got to know this special living space in a different way and with this approach, they met the interdisciplinary approach of geography. Keeping the scientific part as high as possible was one of the main goals of the organizers. The young geographers got to know the coherence between global progresses and local consequences which is a main field of geographer's work nowadays.

Congresses allow the direct interaction and dialogues concerning a regionally orientated theme and function as a meeting of geographers in their different stages of knowledge. Particularly for geographers it is interesting to seize challenges, consequences and new ideas from other regions in Europe, have focus areas on the most relevant themes and analyze them from a geographer's point of view. Congresses like the Western Regional Congress signal the relevance of our discipline. Geography is an interdisciplinary science which does not want to be a science only for itself but one which could make a contribution for recognizing global, regional and local changes and for solving problems.

I am more than pleased that more than 100 young geographers from all over Europe worked motivated on the challenges of our alpine space and made this special living space to their focus area for one week. I wish EGEA Wien all the best, stay active and supportive!

H. Wohlschlägl

Welcome Words of the Board of EGEA

Dear EGEAns,

A few months ago we had a great EGEA congress in the Alps. It was the Western Regional Congress organized by EGEA Wien. The report you hold in your hands is a product of this great congress. Contributions written by participants, workshop leaders and organizers have been thoroughly compiled into this publication in order to document the scientific and social activities.

The congress started on the 6th of April in the small village Steinach am Brenner. We arrived in a beautiful place in the middle of the Alps. The Opening Ceremony was followed by a night walk worth remembering. The following days were dominated by the scientific program: workshops, trainings and excursions.

Distinct from past congresses, a novel technique was used to present the scientific outcomes of the Western Regional Congress. In a sum-up round, the workshops' contents were derived into statements. In a voting the some of these statements were selected worth for the final discussion which was held with a fish bowl technique. By doing this everybody was involved in making the main conclusions of the congress.

I think the organizers did a great job and I believe everybody had a great time at the congress. That you learned a lot and have good memories about it.

With kind regards,

On behalf of the BoE 2009/2010,

Samantha van der Sluis

(Regional Contact Person West/ Treasurer BoE)

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Superior interconnected congress themes
 Artwork: Barbara Schwendtner

Introduction

EGEA is sharing knowledge among young geographers all over Europe. Thereby the scientific part was very important for the Western Regional Congress 2010 in Steinach am Brenner. It was split in three subgroups: the more intense workshop part with a workshop outcome session in the end; lectures dealing with actual topics concerning our congress theme; and lots of excursions.

In particular, the workshop sessions dealt with our congress theme *Living in the Alps – challenges and solutions for a vulnerable world*. In the beginning we focused on eight to ten main geographical topics with high relevance especially to the alpine space. Our workshop leaders specified themselves with their workshop theme even more and tried to combine two related topics in one theme. This kind of interdisciplinary approach should help to

consider one thematic constellation from all sides and should help to understand the opinions of all stakeholders.

Most of the workshops invited some highly qualified experts from the municipality, regional companies or universities. For the workshop participants it was very helpful to recognize, see and maybe even understand the others' point of view which was in some cases more profitable and orientated economically. However, the participants learned not only theoretical things – they did also some field work. They went to avalanche prone areas and torrent controls, visited the remote sensing institute at the EURAC in Bozen, the Brenner Base Tunnel Agency and the TIRIS office in Innsbruck, some had fruitful discussions with majors and representatives of tourist offices. ▶

Scientific program

◀ One of the most important scientific parts was the Workshop Outcome Session. In a complex variation of different discussion forms, the participants learned more about the other workshops, brought in their points of view and tried to find finalized solutions.

One evening two professionals supported our scientific program with a lecture. Dr. Oliver Bender from the Austrian Academy of Sciences talked about *“The rural areas of the Alps under conditions of global change – results of the projects RAUMALP/ GALPIS and DIAMONT”* and Dr. Rudolf Sailer from the University of Innsbruck told us more about the *“Climate Change Consequences on the Cryosphere – Examples of the Austrian Alps”*. The lectures gave a good external view on our congress theme and mainly pointed out the biggest challenges of the Alps, in particular in Tyrol. Through their projects, dealing with the alpine space, it was clearly visible that in the future especially rural villages will have development problems with the age structure, economic power, infrastructure or even tourism. We learned more about the vulnerable nature of the Alps and particularly the consequences of human and climatic influences. The lectures summarized all topics of our congress and connected them in an interdisciplinary approach.

Not only workshop-related field trips were organized, but also full day excursions were offered, where every participant had the chance to learn more about the region in a different way. Some went snow-shoe hiking, reached a 2400 m high peak and learned more about avalanche hazards. A big group visited the beginnings of the Brenner Base Tunnel and the beautiful Mediterranean city Meran. Some others dealt with the glacial processes in the Alps in former times and went up to the Stubaier Glacier, while others visited the capital of Tyrol, Innsbruck. This city excursion handled with the political importance, spatial planning and city development.

To sum it up, scientific input formed the major part of our congress. We focused on sharing knowledge, experience and learning. How well this can work among young students!

I would like to thank all the workshop leaders and excursion guides, without whom the scientific part would not have been as successful. They supported our congress in a very special way and were the interface between the participants and the professional scientific world.

Barbara Schwendtner
Scientific Coordinator

Applied Physical Geography — Processes and System Dynamics

RAPHAEL RIEDLER¹, RAINER STUMMER² (WIEN)

The workshop *Applied physical geography - Processes and System Dynamics* mainly focused on rockslides and debris flows. In the first part a common theoretical background was established as a basis for the further program, linking human activities and infrastructure with the two processes mentioned above and underlining the importance of the difference between rockslides and debris flows. Whereas torrents and their catchments are often highly influenced by human activities, rockslide source areas are normally unaffected. Moreover the temporal dimension of occurrence and possible mitigation strategies differ a lot. Hence these two processes can be used to show the broad bandwidth of interactions between natural hazards and humans.

The first part of the workshop took place in a classroom and the basics of the topic were presented by the workshop leaders. To get an impression of the dimensions of the processes media like photos and videos were used. Then impacts and mitigation strategies for torrents were introduced including discussion of advantages and disadvantages. For the geomorphological mapping of rockslides (source and deposition area) mirror stereoscopes had been introduced to the participants. Taking the advantage of a 3-dimensional view with two connected aerial photographs the participants got to know an excellent tool for the identification and delimitation.

On the second workshop day, the theoretical findings of the former day were investigated in the field with two experts. The first field trip in the morning led to Bachhauserbach near Obernberg am Brenner and was guided by DI Leopold Stepanek, an expert from the Austrian service for Torrent

and Avalanche Control. The Bachhauserbach has a small catchment with an area of only 1,5 km², however was responsible for six events between 1930 and 1985 which caused damage to buildings and agricultural areas. Therefore mitigation measures were built in 1931 and also after a big event in 1985. By having a look at these structures in the field and the opportunity to discuss different possible mitigation strategies and their problems at this torrent the participants established a better understanding of the topic. It was also possible to get insight to the decision making process and discuss the role and interests of the different stakeholders. This is a very important and interesting field in the prevention of natural hazards thus responsible for many decisions which are not comprehensible in a technical viewpoint.

In the afternoon the excursion took place in the area of Ötztal Bahnhof in the Inn valley where one of the biggest rockslides in the Alps happened around 3,500 years ago. The specialist was Dr. Marc Ostermann from the University of Innsbruck who works on a dataset of massive rockslides in the Alps. The Tschirgant rockslide has a volume of about 180-240 mil. m³ and a run out distance of approximately 6,2 km. It has dammed the river Ötz and Inn temporarily and caused a rough and dry terrain by the deposition of unsorted course material of up to 80 meters. In the field the participants had the possibility to get an impression of the dimensions plus how an event like that influences the landscape. Further it was underlined that the special characteristics have an impact on the local population because this area is hardly feasible for agriculture or other land use.

In the last session the participants had time to structure the gained information and experiences of the workshop in order to revise everything and prepare a poster for the final discussion of the congress, presenting the workshop content.

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Ruben Maes (Leuven)
Filip Popadic (Beograd)
Marijn van Veelen (Amsterdam)
Dragan Vucenovic (Ljubljana)
Hendrik Weiler (Amsterdam)
Karl Wutzer (Marburg)

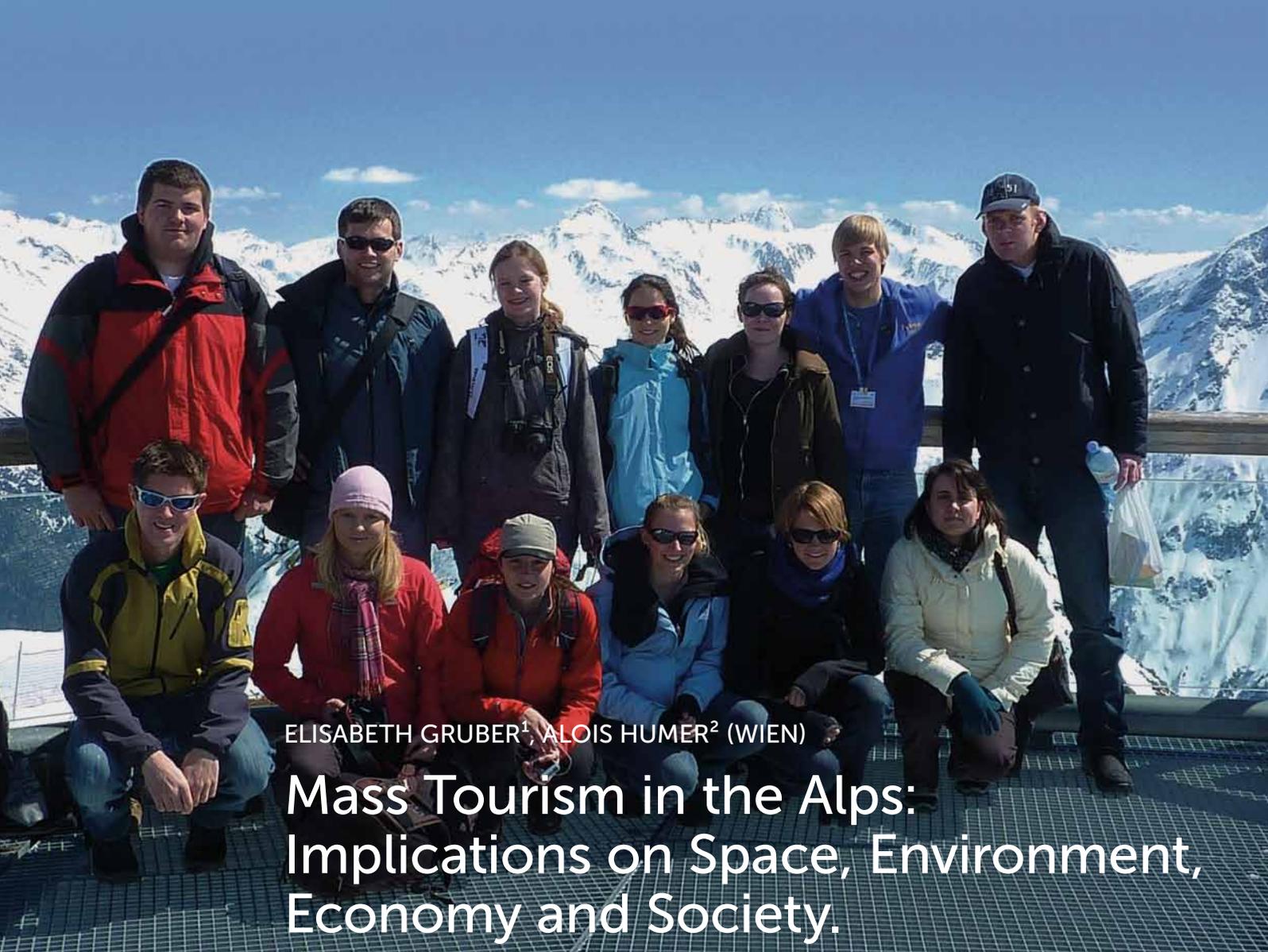
It was found that the most important questions and findings in the topic of natural hazards do not focus on the processes itself. An important point was the finding that natural hazards can not be prevented, however, the risk can be reduced. A main finding for the participants was that the people who live in the Alps have to be conscious that they have to deal with natural hazards and a safety of 100 % is not possible. A further important point is the decision whether or not mitigation measures should be taken. This is a societal decision and implies that different stakeholders have different opinions which have to be taken into account. However, this dialogue should only be the procedure for the protection of existing settlement areas. For further developments there should be an intensive cooperation between spatial planning and natural hazard management.

Concluding, the workshop offered the possibility to get a better insight into the different problems of natural hazards and mitigation measures to the participants. As soon as the basic information was covered, the workshop group shifted the focus more on the importance of the dialogue between stakeholders and on the different problems connected to that. Further the experts gave a lot of input not only for the societal aspect but also for the basics of natural hazards which could be pointed out in the field thus helped a better understanding of the process. Working with the stereoscopes, preparing a poster, discussing a lot and doing group activities in between made this workshop interactive and interesting for the participants as well as the workshop leaders.



Group picture with the workshop poster.

Photo: Philipp Vollnhofer



ELISABETH GRUBER¹, ALOIS HUMER² (WIEN)

Mass Tourism in the Alps: Implications on Space, Environment, Economy and Society.

Group picture from the top station of the cable car of Gaislachkogel (Sölden)

1st row: Jakob Eder (Wien), Eva-Maria Tillder (Helsinki), Špela Loriger (Koper), Nathalie Giloy (La Rochelle), Corinne Labudde (Bern), Stefania Russo (Bologna)

2nd row: Florian Simetsreiter (München), Alois Humer (Wien), Ann-Sofie Beuerle (Erlangen), Judith Bernet (Mainz), Elisabeth Gruber (Wien), Thomas Waagemakers (Utrecht), Olaf Kamphuis (Nijmegen)

Photo: Michael Gritsch

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100% of the territory of the Federal State of Tyrol (Austria) belongs to the Alpine Space by CIPRA definition – only about 8% of this territory is potential settlement area. Tourism is a decisive economic factor in Tyrol. 25% of the Tyrolean GDP (direct plus indirect effects) is earned from tourism and 45,5 overnight stays per inhabitant stand for position number one among all NUTSII regions on the European mainland. (cf. Rauter 2003) In certain Tyrolean valleys with less other economic alternatives, the impact on tourism is even higher. The tourism in Tyrol is characterized by a high concentration in temporal (peak during the winter season) and spatial (hotspot destinations) respects and therefore can be characterized as mass tourism. This unbalanced situation implicates consequences not only for economy, but also for society, environment and generally spoken *spatial* issues.

Learning about these implications and getting to know perspectives of tourism in the Alps were the

main aims of this workshop. During the first session the group learned about different mass touristic phenomena. It was concluded that tourism often goes hand in hand with an economic dependency of the respective region as alternatives are lacking. Implications are significantly different for certain types of territories. Metropolitan areas like Paris can handle a high number of tourists easily and still show a highly polycentric economic structure, whereas for vulnerable areas, like mountain regions or coastal zones, already a little amount of touristic activities can cause massive impacts, especially for the environment. Mass touristic phenomena interact with the local society in various ways. One very explicit issue is the competition for space – i.e. prices for land – that can result in processes of displacement as examples from Sylt or St. Moritz showed.

After approaching the theme *mass tourism* via several case studies the workshop group focused

closer on specificities of tourism in Tyrol and the Alps. A field trip offered the possibility to explore a touristic hotspot in the Alps and to meet with private and public stakeholders in the tourism industry. Sölden in the valley Ötztal with currently ca. 3.5 mil. overnight stays per year (75% of that in the winter season) is behind Vienna the municipality of Austria with the most overnight stays in total. In the following, some striking findings from the meetings with representatives of the regional tourism board of the Ötztal (Mrs. Barbara Schöpf), the ski-lift company (Mr. Michael Gritsch) as well as the mayor of Sölden (Mr. Ernst Schöpf) will be presented and discussed.

These meetings with local actors gave a detailed idea of how tourism as well as daily life works in a valley like the Ötztal. During the five months of winter season nearly all inhabitants are in one or another way orientated towards tourism business and public space is dominated by visitors. Additionally to its approximately 3000 inhabitants, in the high season Sölden is hosting ca. 5.000 seasonal employees from 50 different countries as well as 17.000 tourists. The spatial implications on the village are easy to detect. Social and technical infrastructure rather remind of a city than of a village in the periphery. The municipality has a total area of 466km², only 1.6% is potential settlement area out of which only ca. 10ha are still spendable. The municipality therefore dedicated special zones for their local inhabitants by defining areas in the development plans that are free of touristic use. As the municipality was the land owner, it could control the prices per m² and decide who is allowed to buy the plots. This instrument empowered the municipality to counteract processes of displacement as usual prices of private land lies between 500 to 5000 Euros per m² which is not affordable for most of the local inhabitants. Employment opportunities are on the one hand very prosperous, on the other hand the segments of jobs is rather

limited to touristic branches and to rather low skilled jobs.

Big seasonal differences between summer and winter are a main challenge that touristic stakeholders of the Ötztal are facing. Marketing strategies are being developed to get more tourists into the region also in summer. In comparison, summer tourism has a more diversified demand what makes efficient advertisement more complex. In ecological terms, summer tourism would need less technical infrastructure. Via an inter-municipal cooperation in 2006, the several local tourist boards of the Ötztal merged to one big (international) actor. This strategic decision should ease the way for fostering existing and discovering new markets. The big economic dependency on winter tourism is though not seen as a major problem by the regional stakeholders.

Also climate change is not yet identified as a severe challenge. This can be explained by the fact that Sölden has a comparatively high snow security with ski resorts starting from 1800m until above 3000m altitude. For vital economic interests, environmental problems are not really neglected but simply accepted. Investments in advanced technology – new cable cars with higher capacities replacing old infrastructure or snow cannons for protecting the surface of the glacier – are chosen as ways for solutions in the Ötztal.

People living and working in touristic destinations try to cope in a constructive way with their challenges. In a wider perspective, tourism in the Alps will further concentrate in fewer but by time and space more intensively used hot spots. Respecting those circumstances, a professional and cooperative planning – as it can be stated for the case of the Ötztal – is the basis for minimizing spatial conflicts and providing opportunities for touristic as well as non-touristic activities.

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Alpine Tourism in a Media Age

In Tourism it's all about communication

Tourism belongs to the most important means of livelihood in alpine regions. Thus tourism is normally promoted as a strategic branch of industry. **New media** informs and mediates our knowledge, understanding and experience of tourism spaces. Looking for information about leisure and tourism activities are amongst the most popular uses of the internet (van Eimeren & Frees 2009, Griffith & Fox 2007). Internet media such as information portals play a decisive role for information, communication and marketing, and thus become important intermediaries for knowledge, planning and the enforcement concerning the collective configurations of places for leisure-time activities (Faby & Fontanari 2004, Strauch 2007, Freyer 2009). Concurrently tourism in **Tyrol** faces a multitude of future challenges concerning changes in tourism practices and demands. Specialisation on niches, the establishment of high-class tourism and summer-tourism as well as the attraction of younger tourists is seen as a way out of the trap of mass-tourism and defines Tyrol's future tourism strategy (Vahrner 2010).

On the interdependence of Media and Tourism

Internet media are considered to play a crucial role in order to reach those aims. They inherit the capacity to make and share meaning, and to provide a sense place for a global public – and potential tourist. Thus the main activity and consequence of the internet media is the mediation of tourism experience and the creation of expectations towards a tourism destination (Daye 2007). Thereby we fo-

cusced on central questions during the Workshop “Alpine Tourism in a Media Age”:

How can internet media attract tourists, how do they facilitate new forms of tourism practice and how could the Wipptal apply new media to gain more tourists?

These questions were approached by a tripartite workshop design comprising of the examination of internet media, investigations on recipients that is, tourists actual media reality and the questioning of producers of tourism media. All three parts of research are closely intertwined, are focused on the Wipptal and have been brought to synthesis by the participants in the end of the workshop.

Media-Analysis

In a first instance the participants analysed various websites of the Wipptal in order to extract different constructions of the Wipptal as a tourism destination and become aware of the functionalities that support the construction of expectations by its receivers towards the Wipptal.

The Wipptal tourism association (TVB) operates an own homepage³ which provides comprehensive information about the valley. It addresses a general public from young to old, from ski-tourists to hiking-tourists, from sport tourism to wellness activities. Apart from that the Wipptal can be found on various websites, which provide information about alpine regions – mainly about skiing. On those pages the Wipptal usually has an inferior appearance compared to other alpine regions. It became clear that the Wipptal is not an own brand for a specific kind of tourist. It rather tries to address everyone as Kurt Hasenbacher from the TVB confirmed in a later discussion.

The Tourist's Media-Reality

Secondly we attempted to picture tourists' media-reality by reception-focused interviews at the Lake Obernberg (Obernberger See), a touristic hotspot in the Wipptal.

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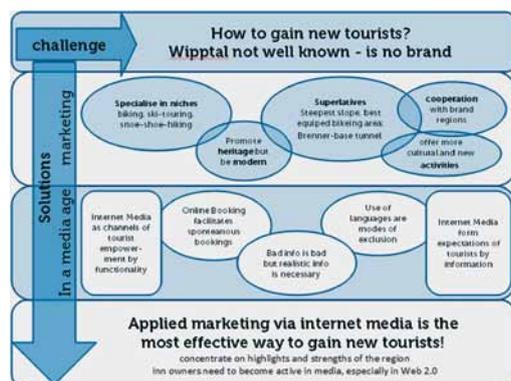
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Wipptal Tourism: How can internet media attract tourists and how do they facilitate new forms of tourism practice?

Authors' own artwork.



Due to the beginning of the off-season the few tourists who still could be found in the Wipptal were regular tourists which are assumed to use media rarely before or during their stay. They got their main information from friends or relatives who know the Wipptal. As expected only few of them used internet information platforms. However, a local tourism commissioner declared that the general use of the internet to get informed about the Wipptal is increasing while requests by letter, telephone and orders of leaflets have been decreasing throughout the years.

Expert Opinion

Thirdly we invited two experts who belong to the sphere of production of tourism media to gain insights in their experience and intentions towards the use of internet media in tourism industry. On one side we could talk to Kurt Hasenbacher, the chief of the tourism association in the Wipptal (TVB) and on the other side Jochen Karl, Head of Marketing at Tiscover GmbH, one of the world's leading travel portals. In general the Wipptal is a small tourist region in the alpine region. According to Kurt Hasenbacher, it cannot even be called a "destination". Since one third of the tourists who visit the Wipptal can be regarded as new tourists there is a need to position the area in new media. It has to be "bookable". Furthermore, a marketing which focuses on highlights and differences from other regions might be a chance as well as user generated media. Platforms like Tiscover⁴ contain many possibilities for tourist regions, while empowering the user imply a risk at the same time. Nevertheless the use of new media is gaining more and more importance – especially in the tourist sec-

tor and thus a tourist region who wants to be successful has to be present.

Develop Initial Strengths

After looking at the recent developments in the alpine tourism and the developments in the use of media applied to the region Wipptal, we can conclude the following. Tourism is an important factor in the alpine region. Especially winter tourism is facing fast developments concerning the climate change. In the Wipptal tourism is not the only economic branch and thus not as depended on it as many other regions. Since summer has been the main tourism season for the Wipptal there might be a big chance to position the valley there.

Get into Social Media – But With Caution

Focusing on new media, the Wipptal already has taken some steps. There is the attempt to get all tourism providers in the Wipptal bookable via internet. Crossing mind-borders and familiarising the mostly traditional tourism hosts is the first task there. As well effort is put into maintaining the local tourism website. One further step would be implementing marketing elements into fast moving social networks like facebook or youtube. On one side this is not fully controllable by the supplier any more. On the other side it requires a high flexibility, but it is a vibrant possibility to attract young tourists.

Due to its initial position, the Wipptal might have a very good chance to be successful in developing sustainable modes of tourism. Thereby the most effective way to gain new tourists is seen in applied marketing via new internet media concentrating on highlights and strengths of the region.

⁴ <http://www.tiscover.com/>

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4 Countries, 1 Problem: trans-Alpine Cargo Transit in the 21st Century

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In the sensitive Alpine regions pan-European interests often bear environmental concerns and cause disadvantages for local residents. A very good example for this is trans-Alpine cargo transport, which was extensively analyzed in this workshop.

One of the European Union's Four Freedoms (cf. Barnard, 2007) is the free movement of goods, enabling the free trade among its member states. While it is widely agreed upon that this does more good than bad to the European economy/-ies, in some regions more than in others this freedom tends to cause conflicts. Frictions occur especially when environmental interests become an issue. Alpine regions are both environmentally sensitive and a bottleneck for trans-European transport.

This workshop has dealt with the public discourse of trans-Alpine transport infrastructure projects and the numerous stakeholders involved. Special focus was laid upon the Brenner Base Tunnel (BBT), which is projected to connect Germany's and Italy's economies.

The main problems generated by Alpine traffic are either health-related or ecological, in many cases combinations of both. More than 8000 heavy

good vehicles (HGV) pass Brenner Pass every day (cf. Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Innovation und Technologie, 2006), causing noise, air and water pollution in the narrow valleys which are more sensitive than lowlands: the pollution of one truck in a mountainous region corresponds to the impact caused by three trucks in flat country. During the night, local topography and micro-meteorology can make this ratio even worse, resulting in a pollution impact up to six times higher (cf. Allinger-Csollich 2009). Temperature inversions, a phenomenon observed frequently in mountain valleys, can trap the polluted air like a lid on a pot, not allowing gas exchange for several weeks in a row (cf. Schönwiese, 2008³).

As one can see, it is not very difficult to figure out the challenges of Alpine transport. Nor does it seem difficult to find possible solutions: "Put all the traffic on the rail!", is one popular claim. But today's markets do not allow railways to act competitively. This is partly because road transport still is not required to internalize most of its external costs (cf. Fink & Belz 2009) and is able to offer the same services at a lower price. But also the aged design of most railway infrastructure causes longer run-times and higher costs. Base tunnels – tunnels, which avoid steep inclines and narrow slopes by crossing mountain ridges far underneath the

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surface – are believed to solve this struggle. Some scholars refer to base tunnels as the transportation revolution of the 21st century.

The Brenner Base Tunnel's antetypes can be found in Switzerland: the country's most important transit route leads via Saint Gotthard, featuring the same narrow curves and steep inclines as the existing Brenner railway line. The new Gotthard Base Tunnel will open in 2017 and will be one of the key parts of the Swiss NEAT program to develop rail traffic on Alpine routes at the expense of road traffic. Today only 36% of the total cargo is carried on the road in Switzerland, compared to 76% in Austria (cf. Noreland 2008). Switzerland enforces this by comparably high road tolls. This commitment to more environmentally-friendly modes of transport is the key to success for the Swiss tunnel projects.

During the workshop a considerable number of key stakeholders could be identified. These actors vary considerably in their goals, their options of (formal/informal) action and in their power to act. Obviously, the adjoining countries have an interest in a good trans-Alpine transport connection,

and the local residents stand up for their quality of life and for local revenue. The different branches of transport economies also have their distinct lobbies; but by far the most important corporate actor in the BBT discourse is the European Union with its financial, legislative and political power. Traditionally E.U. decisions tend to favor economic over ecological arguments. This means, unfortunately for the Austrian valleys, the country's membership in the European Union prevents it from enforcing efficient pollution reduction measurements.

Mega-projects as the Brenner Base Tunnel draw high public attention on themselves, realizing them is a continuing trade-off between the project's goal and numerous stakeholders' interests. The broad acceptance which is sought requires significant environmental and social measurements during the construction time and afterwards, but these efforts are appreciated, as one of the experts interviewed during the workshop put it: "[The BBT] is the least shitty option." To reach its goal – that is, to reduce the traffic impact over the Alps' lowest pass – the Brenner Base Tunnel is considered the best strategy available. Let us see whether he is right!

This workshop's concept would not have worked out so well without the dedication and inspired co-operation of Aafke Mertens (Amsterdam), Alexander Wacker (Osnabrück), Carmen Minder (Bern), Claudia Nowak (Hannover), Dennis Söderholm (Helsinki), Henning Kronen (Aachen), Herman Nienhuis and Matthijs Rolsma (Groningen), as well as Tom Haines (Utrecht). We also want to express our thanks to Simon Lochmann at BBT SE and Fritz Gurgiser of the Transitforum Austria, who both kindly took time to lay out their arguments pro respectively contra the Brenner Base Tunnel.

Examining the study object *in situ*.

Photo: Christoph Fink



Tracing the Change of the Alpine Environment – Remote Sensing as a Powerful Tool for Geographers

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Goals:

We chose the workshop topic because Remote Sensing is important for geographic tools and applications. Remote Sensing covers different topics for geography, especially in urban planning, land use classification and natural hazards. The goals of our workshop were gathering knowledge of climate change and creating awareness for the impacts of climate change in the Alps. Our participants should learn the Remote Sensing basics, be able to understand the behavior of surfaces on satellite images and learn how to monitor the environment.

Schedule:

Wednesday: introduction to the workshop, gathering knowledge on Remote Sensing and climate change.

Thursday: practical exercise on different topics and workshop excursion to the EURAC in Bozen/Italy.

Saturday: poster creation and feedback.

Practical work:

The practical part of the workshop was separated into two groups. Half of the participants had to work with the subject “climate change and glacier retreat in the Alps” and the rest of the participants with “NDVI as a drought indicator in the Alps”. Both glacier retreat and droughts will be an important impact on the alpine environment in the course of climate change. The drought analysis worked with Meris Data and the glacier change detection worked with Landsat ETM+ and MSS data, which was kindly provided by the European Space Agency (ESA).

Excursion:

On Thursday after lunch we started our field trip to the EURAC (European Academy) in Bozen, South Tyrol, Italy. We were invited to an expert discussion with Dr. Marc Zebisch, who is the scientific director of the institute for applied Remote Sensing. First of all he explained the workflow of his institute and the focus on environment dynamics, e.g. land cover, soil, terrain and geology.

Participants:

Marco Blank (Kiel),
Pol Martinez Rosell (Barcelona),
Maike Metzkw (Berlin),
Maria Müller (Wien),
Lena Püschel (Osnabrück),
Stephanie Saal (München),
Kristina Smolentsva
(St-Peterburg)

Photo: Kristin Kalian



The institute’s focus is the development of Remote Sensing applications for the Alps and other mountainous areas. Their projects concentrate on environmental problems with the global change with respect to the regional level. The institute is organized in four different units: air and atmosphere; land, vegetation and snow; risk, vulnerability and climate change; receiving station and data center. EURAC is working with their own data to monitor activities in relation to natural hazards and risk management.

Outcome of the workshop:

The probability of droughts is likely to increase with ongoing climate change. Climate change predictions show, that hot and dry summers, such as in 2003, will become more frequent (IPCC, 2007). In dry summers, plants suffer from water stress, their vitality is low. An indicator to measure the vitality of plants is the Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) which uses the reflection of vegetation in the Near Infra Red (NIR) and Red spectral part. The NDVI was the focus of one practical work (Lillesand & Kiefer, 2000). The used Meris images have 15 spectral bands in the visible and NIR spectrum and a spatial resolution of 300m. The NDVI was calculated for the dry year 2003 and the normal year 2005 on an area including the Alpine range as well as southern Germany and northern Italy. In both cases the Meris images were from August. The results showed that the most striking decrease of plant vitality for the dry year was observable in the agricultural areas of southern Germany and Northern Italy. The participants also observed reduced plant vitality in the Alps and less area covered by snow in 2003. The difference was most striking in the Central Alps, where precipitation is less than in the Northern and Southern Alps (Veit, 2002). Furthermore, observed higher NDVI values in the Adriatic Sea are probably an indicator of an algae bloom due to increased wa-

ter temperatures. The exercise gave an outlook to possible future “normal” summers and its consequences on different agricultural, forest as well as aquatic ecosystems. The second practical work focused on glacier melt in the area of the Bernina glaciers. Landsat images from 1976 and 1999 formed the data basis of the exercise. In a supervised classification, the pixels were grouped in different land cover classes. The results did not show a clear retreat of the glacier tongues from 1976 to 1999. This may be due to the limited spatial resolution of the 1976 data or also due to a melting, which results mostly in volume rather than in glacier length decrease. However, the result shows the increase of the surface of glacial lakes and an increase of debris deposited on the glacier tongue. Expanding glacial lakes are a sign for increased melting and related to climate change (Bates et al., 2008). This exercise confronted the participants with the difficulties in optical Remote Sensing, such as the comparability of different sensors, the information loss due to shaded areas - notably in mountainous regions - and the absent distinctness of glacier surface and snow in optical satellite images. The participants also learned that ground truth is necessary to value the Remote Sensing results. Together with those and also radar images, optical Remote Sensing can contribute to a better monitoring of parameters related to climate change in the Alpine region.

Acknowledgement:

A cordial thank you goes to the Eduspace team from the ESA, namely J. Lichtenegger who was an adviser at any time and provided us the Remote Sensing data and the necessary software. A second cordial thank you goes to our motivated participants. Last but not least: Thank you, dear WRC organisers, for taking care of the workshop leaders!

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Using GIS for Modelling Geohazard Risks in the Alps

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Geohazards, such as mass movements, are one of the main concerns for people living in the Alps. They can cause harm and loss to the community as well as damages in building areas including infrastructural nets destruction. Avalanches with their rapidity set a good example of such phenomena. Understanding their nature enhances the ability of forecasting their occurrence and discriminating potential release areas. Main duties of scientists and experts from emergency management centers are to combine different data sources and create scenarios which can help to predict avalanches and somehow to reduce their consequences for human population.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are increasingly important in the study of geohazards, so it was obvious to use it in our workshop. Not only provides it wide range of tools but also the ease of combing data.

Our workshop group consisted of 10 participants: Catrin Promper from Vienna, Marta Jovanović from Zagreb, Holger Fritze from Muenster, Horea Ionut Meleg from Cluj-Napoca, Maciek Radyno from Warsaw, Marek Krajčůška from Bratislava, Nils Kaplan from Muenchen, Patrick Dietrich from Jena, Roland Kloß from Graz and Valerio Di Domenica from Bologna; and us.

Photo: Ekrem Canli



Together we concentrated on distinguishing potential areas of avalanche release. Area of our interest was the Gschnitzal in Tirol, Austria. First part of the workshop was dedicated to get to know spatial analyst tools, map algebra and model builder which we could use later for the analyses. The participants had different experiences with using GIS so it was necessary to level the knowledge and then discuss the variety of factors which are possible to implement in our model. On the first day we hosted Daniela Thaller – an expert from Synergis (ESRI distributor) – who gave us a presentation on specific tools which may be utilized in such analyses and also helped to understand some of the algorithms used in ArcGIS during the lab session. On the next day we invited another guest, Matthias Huttenlau expert on geohazards risk. We went on a field trip to the Gschnitzal to understand how the system of environment functions in here. Matthias gave as a short lecture on factors that trigger avalanches and spatial planning problems concerning avalanches as well as some historical review of their occurrence. With those specialists' backgrounds we could easily move forward to create our model. The most difficult for us was to decide which factors should be taken into consideration, which thresholds should be assumed, how to classify different maps and also the importance of different factors. Finally, we agreed to use four of five factors we considered at the beginning: angle of slope, geomorphologic form, snow accumulation based on aspects and wind directions and land cover. We excluded solar radiation because of the lack of sufficient knowledge about threshold values and its magnitude of influence on the avalanche release. The output of our work was a potential release areas map. We compared its adjustment to avalanche tracks discriminated by Wildbach- und Lawinenverbauung (WLV) and we were quite satisfied with results because they indicated some connections.

The model we created was only to discriminate the potential areas so it was based above all on geomorphological features. Main criticism was that we didn't take into account meteorological conditions e.g. precipitation or temperature which should play the crucial role in such analyses. However, we couldn't include them because simply we didn't have an access to such data and also even if we had, such data exist only for few measurement points, so it would breed the problem of interpolation as well as variability in time.

All in all, on the one hand the wide range of existing approaches and tools which may be used in such analysis and on the other hand the lack of common and unambiguous utilized method give a great possibility for researches to come up with some new ideas. It is also very important to incorporate these solutions in spatial planning procedures that they can help to improve the level of life in mountains' regions.

Projekt Seminar – Instruments for Spatial Planning and Regional Development in the Alpine Region

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The alpine region is a peripheral area which is distinguished through its rural structure, the specific topography and its small-sized administrative units. Due to these facts it poses a special challenge to spatial planning and regional development. The workshop was aimed to discuss contemporary planning systems of different countries in a comparative way and transfer the right possibilities and planning strategies for the alpine region, all in combination with a team-building process. To abet this team building process, the whole workshop was structured as an interactive project seminar.



THE TEAM:

Anne Blok (Utrecht),
Lien Colpaert (Brussel),
Dick De Munter (Nijmegen),
Carolin Heymann (Mainz),
Ayno Kirillova (Izhevsk),
Tobias Muennich (Leipzig),
Jazzy Le Bris
(Tübingen, Alumni),
Lucian Parfene (Timișoara),
Marta Rodríguez Galdón
(Valencia),
Erkan Yilmazer (Tübingen),

Lina Polom & Timm Wiegand
(Hannover)

Photo: Lucian Parfene

At the beginning the alpine region with its spatial specifics was discussed. After that the different national planning systems (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) were compared. In this context the TMS-method, which was explained during the first day, allowed arranging three teams in the (theoretically) best composition. The guiding principles, strategies and planning instruments were summarized by each group in a short presentation. The comparison in a group discussion pointed out that there are a lot of possibilities to work actively in planning processes and there are always more or less “bottom-up” processes initiated by citizens

and “top-down” processes, which are developed by the state. One main goal of all planning processes is to find the perfect solution with a “win-win-situation” for every stakeholder and the “reduction of the ‘disparities between the levels of development of the various regions’, i.e. the ‘backwardness of the least favoured regions’, which include rural areas” (European Parliament 2009:9).

The regional aspect of the workshop was a SWOT analysis of the Wipptal LEADER Region which emphasized the specific Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for the valley. To name a few of these findings; as strength of the Wipptal pertains the diversity of the landscape and ecology, various different educational institutions, small regional enterprises, the neighbourhood to Innsbruck and the quality of recreation possibilities (cf. Regionalmanagement Wipptal 2007:17 f.).

On the other hand the weaknesses: e.g. congestion and pollution, the brain drain, small cooperation between different economical sectors, extreme conditions regarding the location and exposition of the hillsides which is particular a problem for the agricultural sector. Fundamental structural problems like the lack of innovation and employment or less immigration were pointed out as well (cf. Regionalmanagement Wipptal 2007:17 f.).

The opportunities of the region are, notwithstanding the Brenner highway, attractive recreational areas, which are promoted by the cooperation “destination management Wipptal”. And there exist ideas to establish sustainable tourism with a united tourist infrastructure. Further opportunities could be the internationalisation of the region and clustering processes in the form of business parks. It is necessary to use existing potentials, such as direct marketing of regional products or new cooperation between companies. A chance for the small municipalities can be the renewal of village cores

and innovative use of sustainable energy. Beyond all these facts there are risks and threats, like the loss of attractiveness due to the transit traffic, the scepticism of the residents about the regional future, the conflict between nature and economy, the decline of birthrate and the loss of companies. Also the climate change and the change of leisure behaviour are important - especially for the tourism industry (cf. Regionalmanagement Wipptal 2007:24 f.).

All these problems, risks, challenges and chances can be faced with a sustainable and balanced regional development in form of regional development plans, regulations and laws and participation processes to integrate the inhabitants of the region and develop a well-balanced mix of socio-economic structure.

In the third part EU concepts for inter- and transnational spatial planning and regional development (e.g. ESDP) were discussed. The opening question was: Is the ESDP useful for international planning and regional development? The result was that a concept for the entirety of the European Community is possible, can guide to new powerful ideas and is a strategic vision for the whole European Community. The ESDP with a high level of vertical and horizontal cooperation is a sustainable way of European Integration for the European Community and provides the small-sized administrative units, too, because of its guiding principle character as an ideal guideline (cf. BATTIS 2000; SINZ 2000). Closing answer: The ESDP and spatial planning is useful for regional development!



▲ Team profiles of the workshop participants.
Photo: Lina Polom

◀ Regional marketing
Photo: Lina Polom

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MARKUS SPERINGER¹ (WIEN)

Future Demographics of Alpine Space

The aim of the Workshop was to elaborate assumptions/scenarios for the municipality of Steinach/Brenner, for which we ran population projections for the year 2055. The outcome got audited with an expert discussion in the impression of the mayor of Steinach/Brenner, Dipl.-Vw. Hubert Rauch. The resulting impressions got implemented in the exposure of the demographic challenges and solutions.

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Schedule & Methods

Part I – Basics

In the first two sessions the participants were introduced into the basics of population projections as well as in data mining and implementation of data and transitions into the Population-Development-Environment (PDE) – Software.

Part II – Creativity & Experience

The participants had to set up projection assumptions as base for the scenarios to be developed. These scenarios had to be justified during a local inspection of Steinach/Brenner, before presenting and discussing the results with the mayor.

Part III - Dissemination

The impressions of the discussion were implemented into the elaboration of the possible demographic challenges and solution for the municipality Steinach/Brenner. Hereafter the results were compiled to two discussion statements:

- *“Steinach won’t die out, because of its proximity to Innsbruck”*
- *“Just the ‘right’/‘regional’ immigrants should help to compensate the ageing of Steinach’s population”*

Findings

The statements are based on the three scenarios, elaborated by the participants, by means of the population structure of Steinach/Brenner in 2005 (see fig.1). *Three groups designed the following scenarios:*

Scenario 1 – Decline of Winter tourism

The first scenario assumes a high economic dependence of Steinach from winter tourism, which will shrink from 2030 on because of climate change. This will cause an emigration of about 500 inhabitants (i.e. ski lift attendants, shop holders and employees, family members, ...). The life expectancy will rise, while the Total Fertility Rate will decline from 1.58 (2005) to 1.4 (2055). This will lead to a population decline from 3 305 (2005) to 1 989 (2055). (see fig.2)

Scenario 2 – New Company Scenario

In this scenario a company with higher educated employees will settle in Steinach in 2015, causing an immigration of about 500 people in the age-groups 0 to 45 years, because of family reunification. The sex distribution will be 280 women to 220 men. The mortality of the domestic population will remain the same, whereas the fertility will rise to a TFR of 1.7 in 2030 before it starts to stagnate. The population size in the sample period will almost stay the same. (see fig.3)

Scenario 3 – Medium Scenario

In this most likely scenario the participants assumed a stable economic structure. The life expectancy will rise (2005: ♂: 71.25; ♀: 76.25; → 2055: ♂: 74.6; ♀: 79.6), while the fertility will decline (2005: 1.58 → 2055: 1.3). This will lead to a shift in the age structure from younger to older age groups. The net migration will be set to zero, but without migration the population size will decline from 3 300 (2005) to 2 700 inhabitants in 2055. (see fig.4)

Participants:

Tom De Bruyn (Leuven),
Alexandru Dragan (Timișoara),
Dan Doroican (Bucharest),
Adri Leemput (Leuven),
Julian Messenzehl (Wien),
Julia Ruedi (Trier),
Lisette Van Leijenhorst
(Utrecht),
Nina Maria Wack (Trier),
Bettina Wittek (Bonn)

Expert meeting

During the expert meeting with the mayor we received the impression that he expects that the second scenario to set in. He argued that the municipality still delimits immigration from other regions like Innsbruck or the tributary valleys, as well as the location of new (unwanted) industries, like cargo companies. Industries which would cause a higher traffic volume shall be avoided to maintain the quality of living.

The municipality's goal is to equilibrate the natural loss of population due to fertility decline with "right" immigrants. In his opinion these should be regional migrants from the tributary valleys, with a higher local identification, but also commuters to Innsbruck.

The proximity to Innsbruck was cited as remittance area for Steinach gaining from the good infrastructure connection (21 min per train) and from the demand of the city population to live on the countryside. Therefore a mix of the second and third scenario seems to be the most realistic. The mayor dismissed the first scenario with the argument that tourism just makes up 20% of the municipality's economy, whereby the proportion between summer and winter tourism is 60% to 40%. Nevertheless the emigration of 500 inhabitants as a result of declining winter tourism seems to be overdrawn.

It can be said that the assumptions behind the scenarios, especially for scenario 1, are neither perfect nor wrong. It was the challenge for the participants in this workshop to argue their scenario assumptions with concerned people. Therefore it is always necessary to base every scenario on well-grounded empirical research.

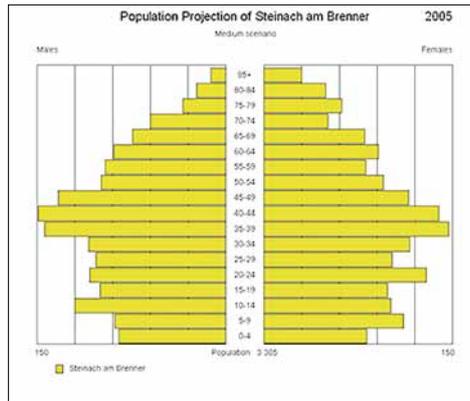


Fig.1: Age-pyramid of Steinach/Brenner in 2055

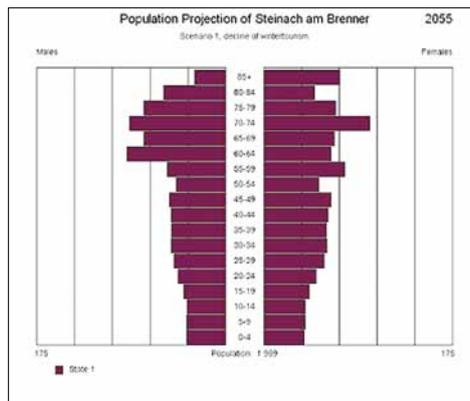


Fig.2: Age-pyramid of Steinach/Brenner in 2055 – Scenario "Decline of Winter tourism"

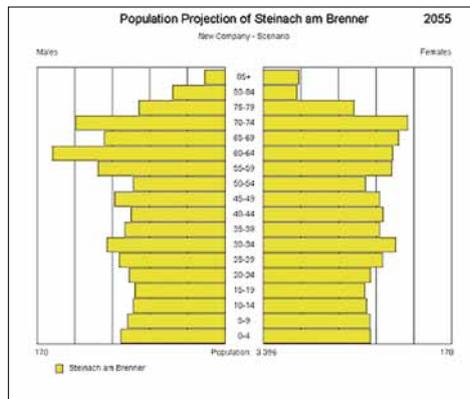


Fig.3: Age-pyramid of Steinach/Brenner in 2055 – Scenario "New Company"

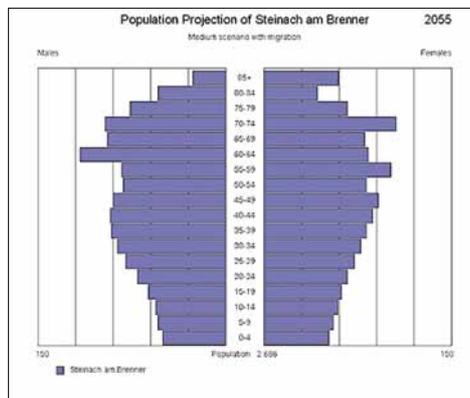


Fig.4: Age-pyramid of Steinach/Brenner in 2055 – Scenario "Medium"



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Glacier Excursion: From the Stubai Valley to the Top of Tyrol

MAREK KRAJČUŠKA (BRATISLAVA)
OLAF KAMPHUIS (NIJMEGEN)



Photo: Ekrem Canli

The weather was on our side. With sunglasses, sun-cream and smiles on our faces, we were ready to go for the glacier sun.

On a meadow under the slopes of Mount Patscherkofel our excellent guides Prof. Dr. Stötter and Mag. Matthias Huttenlau introduced us into the glacial history of Tyrol, the geological conditions and the evolution of glaciers. We learned about the development of river networks and potential natural hazards. From our panoramic view point at the junction of Wipptal and Stubaital valleys, despite the huge Europabrücke, until 2004 the highest bridge in Europa, obstructed our views, we could clearly see the Inn valley. There, we were told, a change in bedrock occurs: the northern mountain ridge, the Nordkette, is built up by limestone, while the southern Ötztal Alps consist of metamorphic rocks.

The highlight of the excursion was a visit in the Stubai Valley, from where a cable car took us up to the mountain station “Bergstation Eisgrat” at 2 900 m. While in the valley spring long had started, up here a lot of skiers enjoyed themselves: the Stubai glacier features Austria’s largest glacier ski resort,

which inevitably results in a strong safety policy on the slopes to minimize the avalanche risk.

Face to face with the big masses of tourists on one side and the calm atmosphere of Mount Schaufelspitze (3333 m) on the other side, we had another stop. We heard, that the Ötztal Alps account for almost one third of Austria’s glacier extent. Between 1997 and 2006 an overall area loss of 10.5 km² or 8.2 % occurred. This massive loss raised interest in an updated glacier inventory. Besides forming an important source for the determination and modelling of glacier extents as a main purpose, periodically updated glacier boundaries serve as a crucial input for accurate mass balance studies (cf. Abermann et al., 2009).

Besides breathing fresh mountain air, on this excursion we had an opportunity to learn something new about avalanche problems and the situation of glaciers. Our guides provided us with a lot of useful (background) information and explained how it is possible to solve or prevent natural hazard risks. Thanks to the friendly atmosphere they created in the group and thanks to the attention of all participants we spent an amazing day full of funny moments which may be long remembered.



Achtung Lawine! & Berg heil!

Excursion: Snowshoe Hiking

JESSICA LE BRIS (ALUMNI, TUBINGEN),
PATRICK DIETRICH (JENA),
VERA BORNEMANN (MAINZ),
MARIJN VAN VEELEN (AMSTERDAM)

Photo:
Simon Reichenwallner

Early in the morning none of us would have expected it would be turning into such a beautiful sunny day. But in spite of the bad forecast we could enjoy the warm sun on our faces and sparkling snow under our snowshoes. Our 7-km long snowshoe hike was guided by Verena (EGEA Wien) and our “personal mountain guide” Sepp, a member of the local mountain rescue service.

Arriving in Padaun, we were introduced to our task of the day: to save the “Minttu”¹ from its impending death in the mountains! To fulfill our task, Sepp gave us an introduction on the necessary equipment (a snow shovel, an avalanche beacon and a probe) and rescue techniques. Furthermore, he told us what to keep in mind when going on a mountain trip (get information on local avalanche conditions before leaving home) and showed us how to react when an avalanche occurs:

First, the luckily unburied looks for clues, like a skiing pole or piece of clothing. When nothing can be observed visually, the beacon is used to detect transmitter signals of trapped people. Next, a team forms a probe line, advancing up the affected slope to locate a buried person.

Afterwards our quest led us to the real wilderness of Tyrol between the Valsertal and Venntal. This area had suffered from an avalanche in the win-

ter of 1993/94. Fortunately for us, wind velocities were low this day and the snow pack well bonded to the slopes so that the probability for avalanches was low. Nevertheless we had to face highly demanding situations. Most of us had never been on a snowshoe trip before so first we simply had to get along with the new equipment. To keep wild animals away we were busy singing songs. Meanwhile the group had to stay concentrated, always having one eye at the great countryside around us.

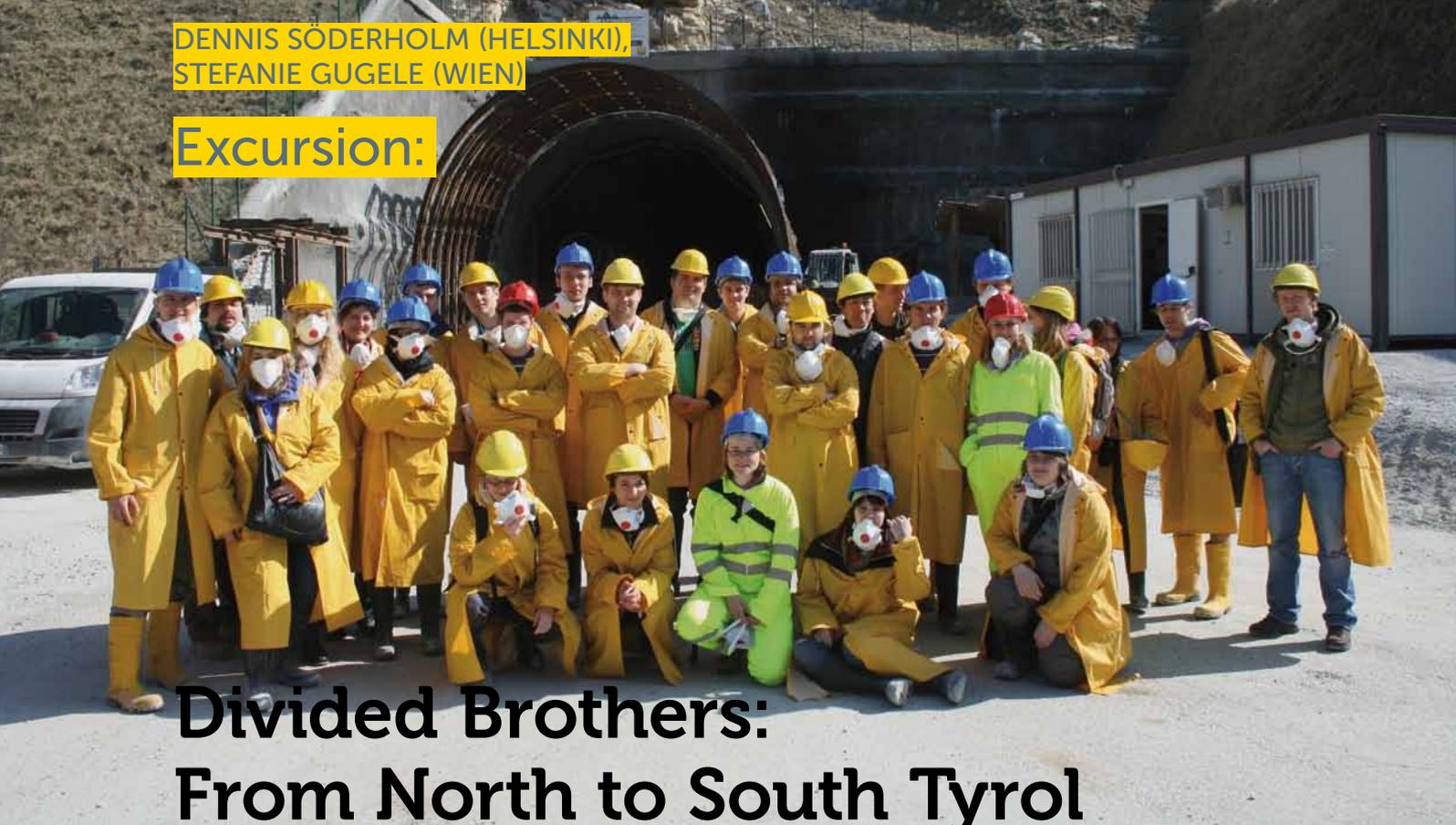
After managing the ascent of about 800 meters we reached the peak of mount “Vennspitze” on around 2400 m ASL including a breath taking view. We spent two hours on the top having lunch, examining the surrounding mountain ridges and discussing different types of hazards in Alpine regions while Roland played Tyrolean songs on his harmonica.

After all this, discovering the best method to descend was another task - some of us invented quite innovative ways to slide down on various body parts!

Through finally applying all our newly gained knowledge into field research we did not have problems finding the lost Minttus under a blanket of snow in the end and thus we were able to bring them to the place they really belong...

¹ As we were told, the Minttu had lost its way during a hiking tour

Excursion:



Divided Brothers: From North to South Tyrol

The Brenner Base Tunnel (BBT) is a planned 56 kilometer long railway tunnel through the base of the Brenner massif. It will run from Innsbruck train station in Austria to Franzensfeste (Fortezza) in Italy. The Brenner Pass, in the Alps at the border between Austria and Italy, is one of the most important traffic connections between northern and southern Europe and the motorway going over it is famous for its frequent traffic jams. Also pollution from this traffic is a major concern and political issue not only in the adjacent Inn valley, but also for European Union politics. The hope is to relieve this situation by greatly improving the railway connection between North Tyrol and South Tyrol with the new tunnel which will allow trains to cross the Alps much faster.

We started our excursion early in the morning, got on a bus and drove with our two excursion leaders Christoph and Markus to Franzensfeste in South Tyrol. At an information centre a representative of the BBT team waited for us and gave us a short introduction on the tunnel project and how the construction work is advancing.

The first big attraction of the excursion was the immersion point of the BBT. Before we entered the tunnel, we had to get on rain coats and safety hel-

met. We were told about the drilling machine, the types of rocks and the arising problems.

After the short trip inside the tunnel, we continued back to the information centre where we watched a film about the benefits of the tunnel and the opinions of the people living close to it.

We continued to the city of Meran (Merano) in South Tyrol, where our first stop was Trauttmansdorf Castle. The castle hosts the Touriseum (Museum of Tourism). It's the only museum in the Alpine region that attends comprehensively to the history and development of tourism. The build-up of the museum is very creative and informs in funny and interesting ways about the progress of the growing importance of tourism for the Alps.

In the centre of Meran we went for a little sightseeing tour through the historical centre. Markus, our excursion leader, guided us and told us some things about the town. From a watch tower we could enjoy a marvellous view over Meran and the surrounding area. We finished this great day with Italian ice cream before we started our journey back to Steinach.

The Brenner Base Tunnel is one of the largest infrastructure projects in Europe
Photo: Christian Korte

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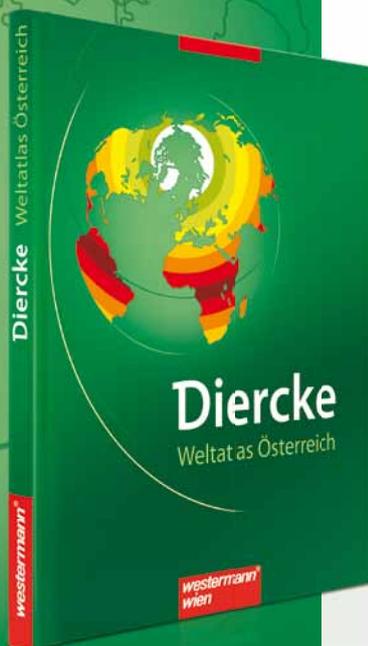
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HENNING KRONEN (AACHEN),
HERMAN NIENHUIS (GRONINGEN),
JOHANNA BRANDSTÄTTER (WIEN)

The excursion group in the city quarter "Hungerburg"

Photo: Aafke Mertens

Excursion: Innsbruck

On the 9th April all participants had the chance to go on an excursion, one of them lead a group of 25 EGEAns to the capital city of Tyrol, Innsbruck.

In the morning we had an appointment in the Tyrolean Regional Government, where the former Governor of Tyrol (from 2002 to 2008) Herwig van Staa, guided us through the whole complex: from the old part at the front, through a square with the chapel of St. George (the former patron saint of Tyrol) to the newest part of the building at the back.

Most interesting during this tour were the nicely furnished rooms of the older part of the complex. Each room presented itself with its unique design and art, but also with interesting historical stories. By far the most impressive one was the assembly hall, where the parliament is seated.

The second part of our excursion took us to the office of TIRIS, the Tyrolean Spatial Information System. Since 1991 information is digitalized in the federal state. Important key-issues here are bundling local and regional information and transferring it to small and local institutions. Thus, a lot of web applications are prepared, which are mainly presented in maps available online for free. For example maps about avalanche risks or flooding are

created. At the moment TIRIS is doing a laser scanning of whole Tyrol with an accuracy of 1m x 1m, to be able to create a map with accurate altitudes.

After the two more scientific visits we also did some sightseeing, as most of us have never been to Innsbruck. To get a nice overview of the city of Innsbruck we went onto the Hungerburg by funicular. At 868 meters above the sea-level we could overlook the city. Kristina showed us Innsbruck from up there, told us about the history of the city and how it developed throughout the time. The Hungerburg itself is a famous local recreation and living area on the foothills of the Nordkette, an impressive mountain ridge which can be seen from everywhere in Innsbruck

Back down in the city center again, we visited the most famous sight of Innsbruck: the Golden Roof. It was built by Maximilian I in 1500, the building itself was already built in 1472 by the Archduke Friedrich IV. The roof is decorated with 2657 fire-gilded copper tiles and the reliefs on the balcony underneath show important persons of Maximilian's life and also himself in coats of arms. Today the Alpine Convention is located in the building.

The excursion ended with some free time in the city, so we could explore it on our own.

Workshop Outcome Session — Open Space Technology

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In line with the scientific concept of the EGEA Western Regional Congress 2010 each of the eight workshops is highlighting a special topic derived from the frame theme “Living in the Alps”. The participants have been working on these particular topics intensively during their workshops and have developed a deep but strongly focused view on the frame theme of the congress. In a last step these separate perspectives of the workshops have to be linked and synthesized in order to draw a comprehensive picture of challenges and solutions for the Alpine living space and to uncover the most relevant and striking issues as well. This outcome session was structured in an interactive manner, empowering every participant to contribute to and influence the final scientific results of the congress.

Enhancing the results through interdisciplinarity

The provisional results of each workshop have been collaboratively documented on a **poster** by the workshop participants. Those posters are meant to present identified challenges and possible solutions concerning the topic of the workshop. They include information on the workshop topic, the program, excursions/field research and involved experts as well as the presentation of the workshop outcomes. The posters provide a basis for a **guided world café** afterwards. A world café is characterized by an open way of group discussion, guided by one background moderator per topic. Groups of 8-12 participants visit a table of their choice and interest in three rounds lasting for 16 minutes each. They become “guests” in the world café, hosted by the moderators. In this case one workshop leader became a moderator on each table who has been in charge to present the poster, answer questions,

stimulate discussion and document intermediary results in order to maintain a progressive and fruitful interaction. The guests were invited to interact with each other, modify, strike, add, question or confirm the posters’ content. The idea behind this method was to create interdisciplinarity by linking and exchanging knowledge from various workshop groups and also to disseminate the findings of the workshops and build knowledge networks within the whole group of congress participants.

Densifying the discussion by targeting the main issues

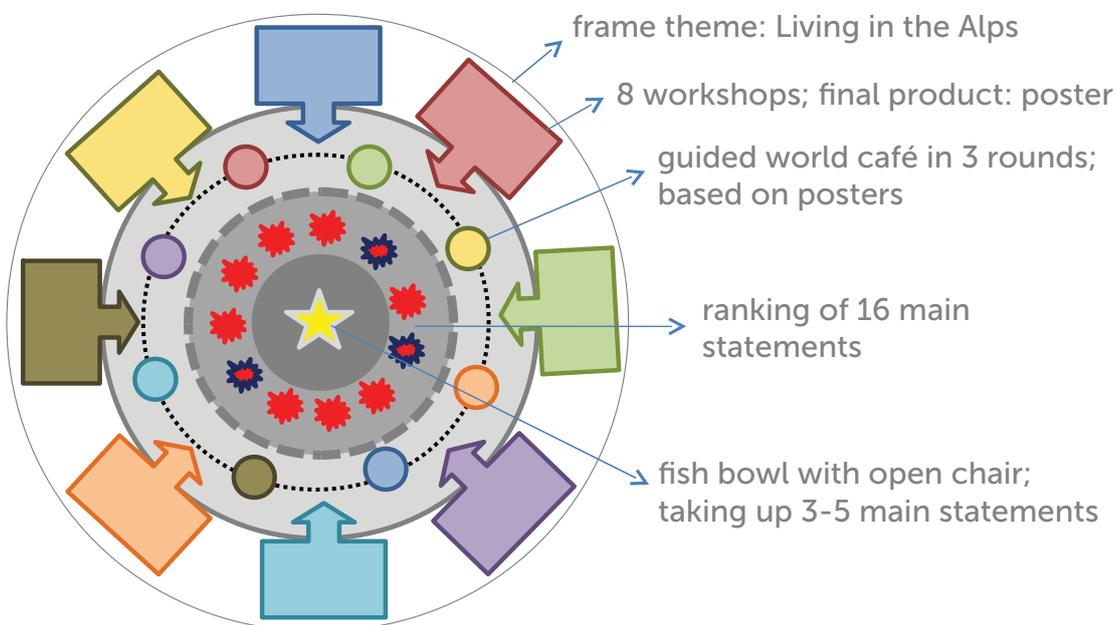
While the perspectives of each participant have been broadened and contextualized during the three rounds in the world café, a focusing of the further discussion had to be initiated. The participants had the possibility of touching a huge variety of issues during the world café but then it was the task of the workshop leaders on each table to review the discussions and to decide on two main statements concerning their topic. Consequently 16 main **statements** have been collected and made public to the plenum to be **ranked** by their relevance and importance concerning the frame theme of the congress. Every participant could donate four dots to the statements of choice. Various modes of voting were possible: Each participant could give all his votes to one statement, or distribute them arbitrarily.

Formulating a common output by clarifying the most relevant issues

The top five ranked statements have been taken further into the concluding discussion round: a **fish bowl with open chair** lasting for 60-90 minutes. In a static perception, a fish bowl is nothing more than a panel discussion with silent audience.

The interactive momentum of this method is created due to a voluntary switch of roles among the participants. This session starts with five chairs occupied by volunteers plus one free chair. Those six chairs form the inner circle with speaking rights. The plenum in the outer circle is without speaking rights. Whenever a member of the plenum wants to contribute a short statement to the discussion he/she is invited to use the open chair to join the discussion and leave it again afterwards. Furthermore he/she may replace one of the starting debaters as well, and stay at this chair for a longer part of the debate. The discussion moderator puts one of the top voted statements after another up for argumentation, collects comments and tries to stimulate a focused discussion. The debate's progress, its hotspots and intermediate results are documented on flip charts. Thus the plenum is enabled to follow and review single points of discussion and is invited to comment in the inner-circle. After having discussed a statement until a certain degree of saturation, the moderator makes a short summary. The end of the fish bowl is set by the moderator. He/she gives a **concluding resume** and an **outlook** on the theme.

The illustration underneath unfolds those processes of focusing, broadening, re-focusing and linking that are aimed to establish a concertation and valorisation of particular workshop findings. It depicts the thematically common frame of the congress, being processed in eight workshop boxes. The preliminary results of the workshops (represented by the arrows) reach the interdisciplinary stage of world café tables. The world café session is again intensifying and concentrating the debate in three rounds, providing the basis for the most striking ideas and relevant statements. The statements with highest impact (according to the participants' ranking) are centered and compressed in the final fishbowl. Out of this targeting, common overall conclusions can be drawn.



EGEA WRC 2010 Workshop Outcome Session - Open Space Technology
Artwork: Alois Humer

Workshop Outcome Session — Participants' View

“Hi Hac!”

“Hi Judith! Did you enjoy the last day of the congress?”

“Yes, it was a really good outcome session today! Much better than the normal presentations! To produce a poster is much easier if you have ‘guidelines’ like we had this time.”

“Yes, but still we had a hard time to put all the information on one poster, without putting too much text on it. I really liked the posters, they were so creative!”

“You’re right: I had a hard time to decide which workshops I wanted to attend at the three rounds of the world café.”

“At the rounds which I attended people were really motivated in discussing. But 16 minutes are quite short: First the workshop leaders told about the content of the workshop and what they did, then people asked questions and read the poster more carefully, and then the discussion started – but then the time was already nearly up... Perhaps it would be better having only two rounds of half an hour.”

“I felt the same. Some discussions got nearly ‘emotional’, you could feel that people really reflected about the topic.”

“And it was a good possibility to get into the topics of the other workshops as well.”

“Definitely! Based on the statements, which came out of the world café and especially the ones which were chosen for the fish bowl, you could see that this whole outcome session wasn’t so descriptive like a classic workshop presentation, but moreover, it got much more into the topic of ‘challenges and solutions.’ I heard, that people really liked the idea of being free to choose for themselves: first – which world café rounds they want to attend, then second – which statements they wanted to be discussed at the fish bowl and the whole time they could decide whether to listen or to discuss actively! This generated a concentrated and creative atmosphere in which everybody could get involved voluntarily.”

“Also the setting was well chosen: As it took place in the lobby and entrance area, you could go for a coffee or take a short break in the sun if you wanted to.”

“Hm, yes, the atmosphere was good there, but at the beginning of the fish bowl the setting didn’t seem to be that good: Obviously people didn’t like the idea of standing the whole time, so that everyone was able to see something. But luckily it turned out well, as everybody just sat on the floor.”

“I was quite surprised how concentrated and active the people stayed. The break before the fish bowl was too long - I heard some people complaining about it. It seemed that the organizers got some issues with the presentation slides for the fish bowl session.”

“I also was a little tired at the beginning of the fish bowl – I think that was the reason that at the beginning nobody wanted to fill the fixed chairs. But then the discussion started quite well, so that many people had the heart to join the round.”

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“Did you notice? There was a moment people nearly were queuing to sit on the open chair! That was surprising!”

“That was my impression too. I liked the whole idea of the fish bowl as an instrument for discussions in such a big group. It is really dynamical and everybody who wants to say something is able to do so, but nobody has to.”

“I was surprised that it was absolutely no problem to have all the discussions in English – it is great to see that EGEA ‘boosts’ our abilities to talk and discuss in front of so many people – even in a foreign language!”

“Yes, but I also heard some people criticize that you had to talk in front of such a huge group.”

“Hm, you’re right... But in the small group of the world café I think even shy people joined the discussion?”

“Maybe they will have less inhibition to join in a small group rather in a big round like the fish bowl. It took me quite some time till I felt comfortable to talk in front of so many people, but it helped a lot that it was a round table we were sitting at.”

“After all I think it was a good idea to organize the outcome session like this.”

“Yes, in my opinion that kind of session could be a role model for congresses in the future.”

“I agree, it was a great experience and I enjoyed participating.”

“Let’s finish the day with a relaxing beer.”

“Good idea!”

Excited audience
Photo: Ann-Sofie Beuerle



Living in the Alps. Challenges and Solutions for a Vulnerable World

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Tourism, natural hazards, transit and demographic ageing have emerged as the main issues of the EGEA Western Regional Congress 2010. These topics are the core challenges of the alpine space now and in the future. They were therefore chosen to be discussed in the synergetic outcome session at the end of the congress. On the following two pages we highlight the major questions and dominating perspectives of the final discussion.

Mass Tourism: the keyword is sustainability
Tyrol's economy is strongly dependent on tourism. In 2008 the tourist intensity ran up to 65 overnight stays per inhabitant, which is far beyond the Austrian average of 16 overnight stays per inhabitant. (cf. Statistik Austria). Tourism is therefore a highly important branch in this region. The region's future development is closely linked with the performance of the tourism sector, which faces various challenges such as the impact of climate change or scarcity of settlement area.

One of the suggested solutions for the predicted lack of snow is investing into diversified offers of summer tourism. However, in economic terms this option cannot counterbalance the turnover of rather mainstream organized winter tourism. Consequently, new approaches for both winter and summer season are needed. Mass tourism has the advantage of bundling the impact on focused areas, which somehow counteracts the individual tourists' wish to discover "pure nature". New trends like soft or integrative tourism are difficult to implement and rarely compensate the loss of profit of mass tourism.

Therefore, mass tourism in Tyrol – if organized in the most sustainable way – can be part of the solution. From touristic infrastructure to marketing, all components of winter and summer tourism should be developed in a coordinated, inter-regional way.

Natural Hazards: can we avoid them?

Ever since, the population of the Alps lived with natural hazards such as avalanches, floods and mass movements. In the last few years this topic appeared in the media very often in combination with climate change and is considered as one of the main challenges for the future of the Alpine Space. Due to changed precipitation patterns and temperature rise, events are predicted to occur in larger dimensions and more frequently (than so far recorded). Consequently, several questions arise, e.g. "Can natural risks be reduced in a sufficient manner or even avoided at all?", "How do people react on the risks – should the population just give in and move? Or is nowadays' technology already strong enough to solve all the problems?" However, the alpine population does not start from scratch, protection measures already exist for a long time. Nevertheless, as frequency and magnitude of events are supposed to increase, traditional adaptation measures need to be evaluated and improved in terms of their robustness, resilience and sustainability and new innovative solutions must be developed to supplement the existing ones.

Brenner Base Tunnel: different stakeholders - (too) many perspectives?

The *Brennerautobahn* or *Autostrada del Brennero* is part of the important European North-South connection E45 and of the TEN-T priority axis 1. Pollution, traffic jams and nuisance have guaranteed for an infamous image of the motorway. In the future, Austria, Italy and the EU plan to solve many

of these problems with the construction of the world's second largest tunnel. Built along 56 km on the base of the Brenner Massif it is intended to enable transit to cross the Alps unnoticed and much faster. Technologically a very feasible venture, a complex entanglement of different political, economic and environmental interests has turned this project into a major dispute. Is it fair to force Austria and Italy to take on all the North-South transit pay for it and then deal with the resulting pollution? Who should pay? Would the plan of the Brenner Base Tunnel look different if there was no political influence? How sustainable will the project be after all political demands have been satisfied? The EU's interest for competitiveness and single market, the national financial situation, the needs of the local population living in close surrounding to the motorway and the wish to protect the environment are only some of the perspectives in this cross-border debate.

This multiplicity of interests makes a compromise unavoidable.

Can ageing of population be compensated by migration?

Demographic change, the ageing of the first world's populations, is an undisputed fact that fills not only research projects, but also development plans, newspapers and books. A shrinking working age population that has to support growing numbers of people age 65+; a rapidly growing need for public services for this age group; endangered welfare systems. These are trends that are especially demanding for regions that are additionally challenged by their physical landscape. The discussions during the congress and during the final event showed that the question no longer is "how to avoid the demographic change?" but much more "how to deal with it and how to lessen the unavoidable?" Besides necessary adaptation measures in terms of social infrastructure, regional mi-

gration was offered as a possible solution. Attracting working population, fighting emigration from local communities by creating incentives to come/stay could keep a more balanced population structure. However, in that scenario one community's gain is another village's loss. Will we have to give up certain remote areas to nature? Maybe, the well located and connected sub-centers see themselves as winners already.

Synthesis

The Alps constitute a vulnerable living space – i.e. they are very sensitive to changes in their ecosystem, economy and society. The area for settlement is limited, forcing people to use their resources carefully.

The rapid changes confront the population with manifold challenges now and most likely in the future. During the congress, natural hazards, transit traffic, mass tourism and the ageing of the population were detected as the most significant issues, particularly for Tyrol. The different problems arising in these areas are often connected to each other and therefore require a multidimensional perspective in order to find suitable and sustainable solutions, many of which end up being compromises.

However "finding" solutions is frequently not as easy as it seems. In the past, numerous strategies were generated; many were applied successfully, but as many have failed. The processes of failing and of constant learning are highly valuable for the development of new innovations and therefore a necessary step which can be considered as one of the major outcomes of the congress: The Alps as a dynamic system and the challenges their inhabitants face are changing steadily. Consequently, the solutions for arising challenges are hardly ever ultimate, but need to be adapted and advanced continuously.

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Soft Skills Training: Creativity

JULIA RUEDI (TRIER),
BARBARA SCHWENDTNER (WIEN)

Creativity is inside all of us, that is the conclusion Alice Hasenauer wanted to convey to the participants during the session. While usually giving creative writing workshops to different people, she communicated to us being creative in each personal way. First the participants found out that everyone expresses his creativity in his own personal way. This can be while playing music instruments, writing, dancing or even reading. Then Mrs. Hasenauer explained the nature and the source of creativity and how to find ways to start to be creative. After this short introduction the participants were split in two groups and put together two collages that should show the theme of the congress, “Living in the Alps – challenges and solutions for a vulnerable world”. Here you already could see the different ways how several people express their ideas and creativity. Finally the collages were interpreted by the each other team. Interestingly, also in this part of the session a lot of creativity was used, by just interpreting the pictures.

The creativity soft skills session was hold two times and the four posters of the different groups were presented to all others in the auditorium. Remarkably, all collages look totally different. One group made an overwhelming poster separated in four parts showing the wide range of alpine impressions (blue sky, fire, traditional cottages and winter tourism). Another group preferred the more subtle way. At first sight it didn't look very impressive or critic but while watching it for a few

minutes one recognized the message behind the picture: “See the ignorance”. The participants implemented two-layered pictures, the more superficial version above and underneath the reality, the consequences, the problems and challenges. The third group started immediately with their creative process but without concept so the result was more confuse. However they dealt intensively with the given theme and presented their views of the vulnerable Alps in a wide range. The other team showed an “Alpen Panorama” with the whole variety of the Alps – tourism, living space, rural areas, rich green pastures and lonesome but also overcrowded peaks.

Even in the discussion with each the other group after making the collage showed the different views and interpretations that one can have. Everybody had his own point of view and implemented his creativity in another way, while looking at the other picture.

We found out that the constellation of a team is very important and the product, the result of the group differs also when one person gets replaced by another. It is the mixture of the people involved which makes the creative process. The outcome of this soft skills session was very interesting also for all other participants. We saw what every one of us is thinking about the content of the congress theme and particularly how profound, comprehensive and topical it is.



Presenting the collages to the others.
Photo: Ekrem Canli

Soft Skills Training: Promotion

FLORIAN SIMETSREITER (MÜNCHEN),
LENA PÜSCHEL (OSNABRÜCK)

Even if creativity is one of the most important things you need for creating good promotion material, there are some basic rules, which should not be underestimated. Making a good poster or video is like a small project. In the beginning should be defined what kind of message the promotion material should transport. A Poster for a party or a scientific event, even if they are not the same event, should include main information. Like What – Who – Where.

In a text, it's easy to explain things with a lot of words, but to use only a few words for saying everything, that is needed to be said, is more complicated. But this is one of the most important rules: don't overload your poster, video or promotion material. One picture can be equal to 1.000 words. As there are different ways of attracting attention, the picture can fit to the theme, show something completely different or an impossible situation, so the observer starts to think about it.

There are different levels, so called activations, on which the interest of the observer can be caught. The Emotional activation use key stimulates like skin, bodies, babies, etc. But one main risk is that the intended message can get lost. For the Cognitive activation you use special situations, which are abnormal or paradox. The attention of the observer is attracted by the conflict in the picture. The Physical activation is in most cases easy to understand. It's mostly "loud" promotion, with signal colours and big letters. One really successful way is

to use taboos. They will always get attention. The only question is, if it is the attention you want to have for your event.

While working on a poster or a flyer it's always a question which font should be used. As not every font fits to every event, this choice should also be done carefully. Even the colours or the colour combinations, which are used, contain messages. It looks like every detail is important. And surprise it is!

How can all this information help us creating good promotion material?

With all of these hints in the back of your mind, you will be able to find out, what good promotion material is and what not and why. Hopefully it will help you to work on good promotion material as there are more and more things in EGEA which should be promoted.

Have you ever thought about the EGEA Logo and why most of the activities or entities use this logo in their logos and promotion material? The reason is the so called Corporate Design. What does this mean? Easy to explain! The logo, the colour, the design of official documents, the fonts, everywhere you can find EGEA. It shows the connection. EGEA is used as a brand. There are more things that can be corporate, like behaviour, the "Groningen move" for example, the communication via Posters, flyers, etc. Everything together gives an identity and the connection to EGEA or something inside EGEA.

Für eine grünere Welt



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Soft Skills Training: How to Apply for a Job

To apply for a job is a challenge every university student has to deal with at some point in his life. In the soft-skill session of Andreas Steinmeyer the basics of how to apply for the first employment after university life were covered.

At the beginning the focus was on how to decide which job suits and how to find the adequate job opportunities. The application part included the curriculum vitae as well as the cover letter which is as important as the résumé. It was underlined that the cover letter should clearly indicate why it is exactly this job the application is for, and also shown a vision on how the applicant can contribute to the future success of the organization/company. Moreover, problems many students deal with, like a “gap” in the CV, may be explained in this section of the application part. Further, one can show additional strengths and by that catch the eye of the employer. The Curriculum Vitae should have a logical structure and a proper format. Moreover the importance of honesty was highlighted as well as the fact that mistakes should be avoided.

The topic interview was outlined after finishing the application part. It was very interesting to get to know the different ways a job interview may look like. The importance of gathering information about the organization and preparation before the interview in general respectively was highlighted. Further typical questions and possible answers were discussed in order to give an overall picture on possible job interviews. Another important aspect of the interview section was the salary. It is important for the applicant to know approximately what the future salary may be in order to be able to express realistic expectations hence to have sufficient buffer for possible negotiations. To finish up the interview part, the assessment center was shortly characterized.

The last part of the session with Andreas Steinmeyer covered the soft skills themselves. Several positive and negative aspects of certain skills were discussed, especially how to answer questions concerning negative aspects of certain skills.

Additionally, after the first part, Andreas Steinmeyer offered an individual session to the participants, where they had the possibility to discuss their own situation and application material.

This soft skill session focused on crucial topics for university students facing the challenge of applying for a job after finishing their studies. It was very interesting and may help some in their future working life to land the one or other desired job opportunity.

NINA WACK (TRIER), STEPHANIE SAAL (MÜNCHEN)

Soft Skills Training: Communication

It was early in the morning, everybody showed traces from the evening before, so it seemed to be an excellent idea to start a communication workshop! ;)

At the beginning, our trainer Martina Ornetsmüller asked us why we want to participate and what we expect from this workshop. Various answers showed us, that all of us had one aim: to improve our communication skills in order to be more successful when we talk to other people.

After this practical chapter, we also got to know some models, for example the iceberg model: 20% of an iceberg is over water surface and 80% down surface. Assigned to communication: 20% of what we do when we communicate are words but the biggest amount are unconscious acts like gesture, facial expression or tone.

Now, that we've got how insignificant the words are that we speak, we did a little game where we were reduced to do exactly that. We were told to sit back to back, two people every time, and then

to draw whatever we want. After that, we had to tell our partner what we've done on our paper and he had to draw it by himself. After we did the same the other way around, we put the sketches on the wall and started to discuss, if the communication worked good or not.

After that, we got back to theory. So we talked about another import model - the four-ears-model. This model wants that we interpret all messages we get with at least four questions. The first one is: about what I was informed, second one: what does the consigner want to reach with its message, third one: identify consigner's self description, last one: to interpret the relationship between speaker and listener.

All in all: we learned that communication is not that easy and if you want to communicate in more successful way, you should keep in mind that words are not the most important thing concerning communication.

Photo: Ekrem Canli



NATHALIE GILOY (LA ROCHELLE), CAROLIN HEYMANN (MAINZ)

Soft Skills Training: Motivation

Christine Ornetsmüller and Robin Waluschnig offered a training during the Western Regional Congress, that was called “Motivation-Training”. Actually, at 9 o’clock it was first quite difficult for us to find our motivation. Robin noticed: “You’re not completely motivated!” So to wake us up, we played a small game to get to know each other. Finally everybody was awake and motivated to start the 3-hour-session. This training was based on self-reflections completed with theoretical input and was divided in two big parts: self-motivation and team-motivation.

After naming some of our personal achievements we completed during the past year, Stine and Robert detailed the two types of motivation: “Internal Motivation”, which means that the motivation comes from inside oneself e.g. passion for something, eager etc. and “External Motivation”, which means that the motivation comes from the outside, e.g. a reward, a salary, recognition.

The next big self-reflection was to define seven motivators for each-one and also to name seven de-motivators, things that hinder us to do something. In small groups we discussed the different motivators and de-motivators and found out, that everybody had different motivators. But still, the process of Goal Setting to increase the motivation should follow a scheme: SMART – Specific – Measurable – Ambitious – Reasonable – Terminated.

After a small coffee break, the session continued under the topic “team motivation”. It’s more difficult to motivate others than oneself, because first of all you have to motivate yourself to motivate them. But after this session, it became clear, that there are some techniques applicable for this: in a team-project, first of all the tasks should be clearly defined. The next step is to find the right work for each team member: everybody should do what they like to do, and what they’re good at. The work will be done easier and without motivation conflicts. Last but not least, it is really important to give constantly feedback on the work that is done.

To reflect on the team-motivation, we used an open-space technique to brainstorm on how to motivate persons from EGEA entities to get active and involved within the association: three groups were created: motivation for new persons, motivation for alumni and motivation for already active and experienced members. We could see in the final discussions, that there are different techniques for every group to get them motivated.

This also reflects what we already found out during the first part of the session: everybody/every group has and needs different internal/external motivators.

We want to thank Stine and Robin for this great training!

Photo: Ekrem Canli



Social program

As on any other congress, of course also on EGEA congresses an accompanying social and cultural program is offered. Traditionally this includes a regional folklore evening with culinary specialities. À par, the cultural fair offers the participants to present their countries in a similar way.

The official duties of the congress were fulfilled in the Western Regional Meeting, and of course there also was a full-featured opening ceremony with a subsequent night-walk with candles.

As if to make the both entities grow together even closer, EGEA Wien's "sister-entity" München organized a pre-event for the early-arrivers, who spent a lovely Easter weekend a few valleys further.

Last, but not least, and in contrast to past EGEA congresses, the Board of EGEA offered a "Contact Person Training Day", extending the WRC.

The Participants can't wait for the congress to start ...
Photo: Christian Korte



Neither can the organizers ...
Photo: Christian Korte



... or the workshop leaders!
Photo: Maciek Radyno



CLAUDIA NOWAK (HANNOVER)

Opening Ceremony

After all participants, workshop leaders, organizers had arrived the official opening ceremony started. Philipp Vollnhofer, as head of the organiser team, welcomed everyone and declared the WRC 2010 in Steinach am Brenner as opened. He reminded us in what great way EGEA as a European network of young geographers can help us to explore the scientific, culture, social way of studying. That's why the organizers have done their best to develop a programme of workshops, lectures, soft-skill sessions and excursions to cover these three aspects equally.

Philipp also gave some statistics about the event itself. Out of 230 registered people 80 participants finally made it to attend the WRC. These participants come from 46 entities from all across Europe. Additionally there were 15 workshop leaders, 5 trainers and a few other guests, all in all perfect conditions for a successful congress!

Subsequent to this introduction Kurt Hasenbacher, the manager of the local tourist agency said a few words of welcome to the participants with Verena Baumgartner translating. He explicitly also sent us the mayor's regards who unfortunately couldn't attend personally.

After this warm welcome Christine Ornetsmüller explained the motto "*Living in the Alpes – Challenges and Solutions for a Vulnerable World*" a bit more in detail and also gave us an overview of the congress location Steinach am Brenner. The organisers had chosen this motto in order to show how much this area is affected by change, especially climate change. This becomes especially important when looking at the future winter tourism. Furthermore she explained that living in the Alpes alone brings already some challenges for the planning process since all functions for a space like doing agriculture, providing living and traffic areas etc. have to be squeezed in a limited land area.

Following this content-related words by Christine some of the house rules like "No Turning!" ;) were explained and finally all organizers of EGEA Wien and all workshop leaders were introduced accompanied by huge applause.

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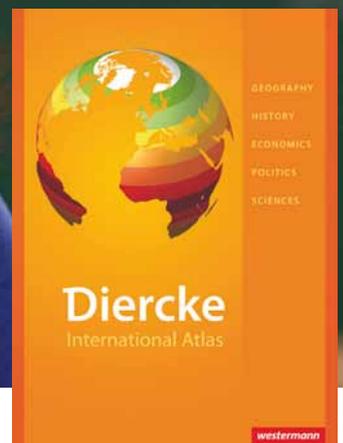
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Cultural Fair

CATRIN PROMPER,
ELISABETH GRUBER (WIEN)

An important aspect of an EGEA congress, besides all inputs from workshops, excursions and lectures is of course the cultural one. Participants that gather for a European event are not only interested in exchanging scientific perspectives, but also want to learn more about the home regions of their new friends and colleagues and experience international flair. This possibility was given on the second evening of the WRC when the cultural fair took place.

During the WRC people from 19 countries were present, so the cultural fair could offer us a variety of national tables ready to be visited by all congress participants. The decision between chocolate from Switzerland or Belgium was nearly as difficult as the decision between Romanian Zuika or Dutch bitters. A country presentation of Switzerland was the last time taking place at the Annual Congress 2007, so a lot of participants were keen on visiting their table; on the other hand the Belgians brought self made chocolate in the form of Easter eggs and a gigantic chocolate Easter bunny (which unfortunately did not survive the evening). The German table could offer a big variety of regional products as there were lots of people from different parts of Germany joining: whereas the Bavarian delegation assured a big selection of different wheat beers and was proudly wearing the traditional outfit of "Lederhosen" and "Dirndl", other typical and beloved products like gummy bears were not missing

thanks to other entities – not sure is still if the coal, that was offered was tasty enough to find it also on upcoming EGEA events. Anyway, rumors tell that there were good synergies also between the tables: the Austrian bread and mustard in combination with the "Leberkäse" from the German neighbors were said to be legendarily enjoyable! It could be only topped by a combination with wines from Croatia or Spain. One of the most beloved products was again a speciality from Finland, namely Minttu. Overall the Serbian table was voted for the best table of the evening – not sure is still if the high density of cookies or the charming presenter was crucial for the decision.

A special notice from the Austrian table is that since 2010 there are new products offered besides Manner waffles and "Burning Mozart": students from the University of Graz joined the EGEA Network and not only EGEA Wien but also the visitors of the cultural fair (at the WRC or at future events) are happy to finally find products from Styria on this table (as it is famous for lots of tasty things like bacon, bread or pumpkinseed oil).

This event may be summed up as a really exciting evening where all the participants had the possibility to represent their country and explore the taste of Europe. For this reason let EGEA expand further to get to explore the taste and culture of some new countries and regions at the next cultural fair.

The Italian Table
Photo: Ann-Sofie Beuerle



DANIEL KAISER (AUGSBURG),
ALEXANDER WACKER (OSNABRÜCK),
HAC DINH VAN (MAINZ)

National Evening

In between a bunch of pure highlights there was one that will be remarkable for the participants for a long time and in its very own way. Not to set events like the Cultural Fair and the traditional EGEA Goodbye Events below their deserved value, but the National Evening always has its pretty own atmosphere. The organising entity has the special opportunity to introduce and present their country's culture, traditions, population, specialities, food, beverages and their own lifestyle.

When fellow EGEAns first entered the common room this evening they were welcomed by a typical Austrian two man band, which they call "Kapelln". When all participants finally arrived the Viennese hosts entered the room dancing to Austrian folk music played by the band. They were all dressed in traditional costumes and after a couple of rounds it was ladies' choice: they took other EGEAn to the dance floor. Not only EGEA Wien, but also their steady exchange partners of EGEA München were wearing the traditional clothes.

After everybody had had a chance to dance, a lot of games, which included almost everybody at one part, made sure, that the second part of the evening was as impressive as the first one. An Austrian quiz, hosted by a very charming and good looking moderator couple revealed some, not so common but very interesting and amazing, facts about Austrian city names, laws, animals to human and social behaviour. In a traditional game called "Maßkrugstemmen" the contestants had to hold a one litre glass full of beer with an outstretched arm as long as they could. Surprisingly the glasses were empty very short after the game finished. Another game or better sport was the so called "Fingerhakeln". In this contest the participants have to wrap around their little finger against the one of their opponent

and then both have to pull. The one who can't hold his opponents finger any more has lost.

Now there was some unbelievable action – well, we are sure if we are allowed to write about it, but as this was possibly the most remarkable performance of the evening, we can't leave it out. Maybe just one sentence: that around twelve 'o clock the bells were striking really amazing. So everybody who was present at this special moment on the WRC, should now have a little smile on his or – more likely – her face. Thank you boys!



▶ (Nearly) traditional
Austrian Lederhosen
Photo: Kristin Kalian



During all this time EGEA Wien took care of the physical well-being of their congress participants with really tasty Austrian food like gammon (smoked ham), cheese, special wine and the good old beer.

Even after this “official program” was over, there was still a lot of Austrian spirit in the air. By listening to Austrian songs, looking at beautiful girls in their “Dirndl” and fetching boys in their “Lederhosen”, drinking tasty Austrian beer or wine and dancing the Austrian kind of way, every participant took his very own Austrian experience back home.

▲
Three “Dirndl” in “Dirndl”
Photo: Aafke Mertens



◀
Polka!
Photo: Kristin Kalian

LISETTE VAN LEIJENHORST (REGIONAL ASSISTANT)

Western Regional Meeting

Every year during the Western Regional Congress, the Western Regional meeting takes place. This year, the Regional Meeting took place on Friday 9th of April in Steinach am Brenner, Austria.

The Western Regional Meeting is a meeting for all entities of the Western Region. This meeting is an important communication tool, because every interested person will be informed about the current developments in the region. During the meeting, each entity which is present at the congress will have one representative. These representatives will give a short overview of the developments and activities of their entity and will try to answer questions, if needed. Furthermore, the Regional Con-

tact Person of the Board of EGEA (BoE) will be present, as well as the Regional Assistant and one or two minute-takers. Besides these people who are expected to be present at the meeting, every interested person is welcome to come to the meeting and to ask questions or give an opinion.

The Regional Contact Person of the BoE will chair the Regional Meeting. During the meeting, an overview will be given about the present entities, the inactive entities and about new or potential entities. Furthermore, an overview about BoE issues will be given by the Regional Contact Person of the BoE to inform the people about the current situation of the BoE and EGEA. During most of the Regional meetings, a candidate for the next Regional Congress will be introduced and voted upon. ▶

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All in all, the Regional Meeting is a tool to inform the region, in the person of representatives and interested people, as good as possible about current developments in the region, in the different entities and in EGEA as a whole.

After this explanation about the Western Regional Meeting, I will continue with the Western Regional Meeting in Steinach am Brenner.

The meeting started with a short overview of activities at European level. The other regional congresses and the annual congress were mentioned here, as well as some other activities, like seminars and local weekends. After this overview the meeting continued with an overview of all entities in the Western Region. Each representative gave a short overview of the developments in their entity and about the (planned) activities. After these present entities, the situation of the inactive entities was discussed. This year there was only one entity discussed here; Belfast. Next, it was the time for the new entities to introduce themselves if a representative was present at the meeting, otherwise the Regional Assistant was telling about the situation. In the end of this entity-overview, the potential entities were mentioned. Those are entities which we are having contact with and which are enthusiastic and motivated to set up a new entity. This year, there are a lot of new and potential entities in the Western Region, which is a very positive sign for EGEA.

After this overview of the entities, Samantha (Regional Contact Person, BoE) gave an overview of the BoE issues. Several issues were mentioned here like the status of the European Geographer, the Alumni proposal and the division of the regions. Another topic was to inform the people about the EU grant. In the end of this overview people got the opportunity to give feedback to the BoE.

The next topic on the agenda were the 'Western Regional Issues'. Here, some big events which will take place in the Western Region were mentioned, like the Germany Weekend, Utrecht Experience, a climbing weekend and a Summer School. Afterwards there was a remark that the Western Regional Subforum should be used more often by the Western representatives.

At the end of the meeting, EGEA Wien gave a short report about the Western Regional Congress (WRC) so far, and the next step was to choose an entity which is willing to organise the WRC next year. EGEA Utrecht was the only candidate, everyone agreed that EGEA Utrecht will organise the congress next year. There was also asked if there was already a candidate for the Regional Contact Person for the BoE next year, but there was no candidate so far.

Many people think the hillside with the steepest slope at the WRC would be found in Steinach. NO! – it is on the way to FloFi's Cottage.

On Sunday, April 4th, eleven highly motivated EGEAns reached exactly this idyllic place near Uderns in the Zillertal valley. Before starting the funny and comfortable part of the weekend, the food and stuff for a long Easter-Weekend had to be brought up to the cottage. After the work was done, tasty goulash was served. Some spirited people started a night-hiking adventure in the dark, primeval forest. Later they joined the easygoing party to enjoy the cozy evening.

On Easter Monday a short Easter-egg geo-caching was planned, but the GPS-modules of our cell phones didn't work well enough, so FloFi came up with a great emergency plan:

The whole crowd went to the nearby hillside and climbed the snow covered mountain with sleds on their back. Unfortunately the snow conditions were not good enough to sledge down, and the sleds got stuck in the soft snow. So people were gliding and rolling down the hill on their hands and feet.

Exhausted by the sledding, the group was cheered up by a huge knoll of spaghetti and a special gorgonzola white wine sauce served by Hac and Sim. To make the evening perfect the meal was closed by a short BDC-Training to be prepared for the great tournament on the WRC.

After a great weekend the group left the cleanly swiped cottage in the Zillertal valley and was transferred to Steinach am Brenner, where the next great EGEA-event took place.

Photo: Florian Simetsreiter

NILS KAPLAN (MÜNCHEN) WRC 2010 Pre-Event

With FloFi (Alumni), Maike (Berlin), Stefania (Bologna), "Jens"-Patrick (Jena), Nanny (La Rochelle), Judith (Mainz), Vera (Mainz), Hac (Mainz), Sim (München), Phips (München) and Jumei (Wien).



Contact Person Training

The Contact Person (CP) training is part of an EGEA wide programme, which was implemented throughout all EGEA regions during the Spring Regional Congresses of 2010. The aim of this programme is to provide an opportunity for all Contact Person of EGEA entities to meet, bond and exchange best practices as well as to provide a space and a time for questions and answers directed towards the Board of EGEA, in order to clarify the tasks of a CP and to help problematic entities overcome their entities issues, where is the case.

There were 16 CPs present, representing 15 entities from 4 different countries. The training included a series of explanations and presentations of best practices and advice from the Board of EGEA representative and from the Secretariat Director, as well as a series of debates about internal entity problems, such as: what does a Contact Person stand for? Tasks of the CPs? How to get new members? How to keep members active? How to use the EGEA website?

According to the evaluation made at the end of the session, the information provided during the training has been considered useful and motivating, especially for the new entities or the small ones.

As trainers of this event, we appreciated very much the participation of developed entities, such as EGEA Amsterdam, EGEA Leuven, EGEA Münster, EGEA Utrecht and EGEA Wien. With this occasion, they were able to share their experience about different topics in regards to entity management and therefore they were a source of inspiration, especially for small or candidating entities, as well as for the other developed entities.

Also, we appreciated very much the attendance of candidating and “endangered” entities, such as EGEA Aachen, EGEA Berlin, EGEA Jena, EGEA Osnabrück and EGEA Tübingen. Many of them are barely starting to get roots in EGEA or are going through a difficult situation. The training has given them the possibility to gain useful advice and information from the other entities and it has provided more insight about how EGEA works. The candidating entities have also been given a separate short training about how EGEA is organized and managed.

Taking into account the results of the survey and the feedback received during the session from the participants, we believe that this pilot project has been a success and we’ll encourage the next BoE to continue with it or to create a similar event in order to improve communication between the board and the entities. During the training we realized that most entities have similar problems and it has provided us with information about the level of development that each attending entity has so far.

In the long term, the aim of this project is to create stronger entities in EGEA, which are stable and running effectively. This will enable them to organize more activities and sustain the European cultural environment that we are proudly promoting and providing as an association and therefore, offer more possibilities for European students in Geography to get involved and fulfill their geographic potential.

Impressions

From every EGEA event vivid images remain in one's mind. Nevertheless, there are always some which deserve to be conserved; and published in the congress report.

On the following pages, Philipp Vollnhofer, the main organizer of the Western Regional Congress 2010, presents his résumé of not only a successful week, but of nearly 15 months of intensive work.

Of course, also the obligatory group pictures are not missing, and there are a lot of people we really want to thank for their support. To whom we might have missed on the list: You were as indispensable as all the other people who helped realizing this great congress.



The Organizers in St. Gilgen/Wolfgangsee
Photo: Philipp Vollnhofer



Arrival at the entrance hall at the JUFA
Photo: Ekrem Canli



Silhouette of the
Stubaier Alps
Photo: Ekrem Canli



The organizers thank Mayor Hubert Rauch
and Kurt Hasenbacher for their support
Photo: Ekrem Canli

Organizing an EGEA congress for so many students and young geographers also means to work together in a team. This needs a lot of personal effort, but the output value is far higher: Months of brainstorming and meetings had taught the organizers team work, motivation, creativity, self management, dealing with conflicts, networking on various levels and professionalism - granting a satisfying congress for everybody.

The hours before arrival time it became more and more excited. The planning phase was over and all preparations were done. The stress of the weeks before was forgotten. We were coming closer to our aim to organize a great congress for all participants. So at that point we theoretically should have been able to stay cool and relaxed.

It's always a big pleasure to arrive at an EGEA event. Some people know each other already for a long time having met years ago on other events. For others it's their first touch with the international EGEA community. For those who joined the very first time I can tell an old EGEA wisdom, that has not been disproved yet: *Most likely it was not your last activity within this association.* People usually stay connected for many years, even after finishing their studies. That's one aspect, that makes EGEA a fantastic association.

The Alps are one of the most complex and fascinating regions in Europe. For geographers it is a unique area to work and discover. Studying a topic theoretically is one thing, but to feel it with all senses you have to go outside. The surrounding in Tyrol has a high potential for excursions of various interests. Experts were guiding us under surface, in the Brenner Base Tunnel, as well as on daylight, to the Stubaier Glacier.

Tyrol welcomed us with open arms. The unforeseeable weather conditions in this mountainous region challenged out workshops, excursions and activities, but everything went just perfect. During the whole organizing process the support of the mayor of Steinach am Brenner, Hubert Rauch, and the manager of the local tourist agency, Kurt Hasenbacher were indispensable.

PHILIPP VOLLNHOFER (WIEN)

Résumé

Exchanging opinions and having offensive discussions often are underrepresented in regular studies. The content related part of the congress led the participants to finding their personal opinion (based on scientific methods) on different aspects of the theme. The workshop session also encouraged to articulate oneself in an ongoing discussion.

Spending one week together, exploring a so far unknown part of Europe, getting new experiences and facing new challenges or just enjoying others company let all of us find new friends.

**Keep your mind open,
keep your motivation going,
keep EGEA living!**



Excursion in the Wipptal
Photo: Philipp Vollnhofer



Participants in open discussion
Photo: Ann-Sofie Beuerle



Girls at the National Evening
Photo: Kristin Kalian



Romania meets Lithuania at the hat party
Photo: Milda Latakaite



Workshop excursion in Steinach
Photo: Lina Polom

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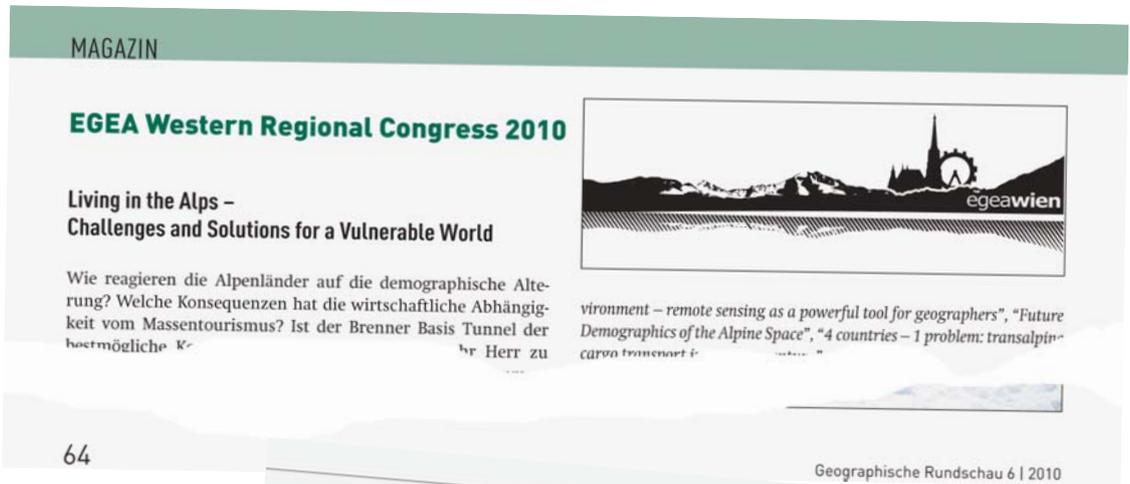


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In the Press

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