OpenSpaceAlps
Strategic Recommendations

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All results of the project see: OpenSpaceAlps-website

OpenSpaceAlps Strategic Recommendations (WP T4 / D.T4. 4.1)

Main Author(s)
Richard Schoßleitner, Office for Geography and Spatial Research
Philipp Vesely, Walter Riedler, Verena Rohringer, Salzburg Institute for Regional Planning and Housing (SIR)

Contributing Authors
Hubert Job, *Constantin Meyer*, University of Würzburg, Chair of Geography and Regional Science (JMU)
Peter Laner, Andrea Omizzolo, (Eurac Research)
Guido Plassmann, Oriana Coronado, The Network of Alpine Protected Areas (ALPARC)
Sergeja Praper, Andrej Gulič, Simon Koblar, Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS)
Corrado Teofili, The Italian Federation of Parks and Nature Reserves (Federparchi)

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OpenSpaceAlps project partners:

What the document is about

Alpine open spaces[1] provide multiple services that sustain human life and the intrinsic values of (near-) natural areas. Increasing human impacts and landscape fragmentation put these precious spaces under pressure. Spatial planning for open spaces − and especially harmonised transnational planning − is fundamental for safeguarding open space functions and "unbuilt opportunity spaces" in the Alps for future generations.

This document is a tool to achieve a better understanding of the concept of open spaces and to implement or improve (spatial) planning processes on all administrative levels. It is divided into two chapters:

- **Policy recommendations** have a "strategy focus", the main target groups are (political and administrative) decision-makers on different levels
- **Implementation recommendations** have a "technical focus", the target groups are primarily experts in the field of spatial planning

An **extended version of this document** is published on the OpenSpaceAlps-website.

Policy Recommendations

PR_1: Keep remaining open spaces open for future generations

Further cooperation is necessary to create an international legal agreement for the safeguarding of open spaces in all countries before 2030. With a 2030 horizon, spatial planners, economists and ecologists shall work together to find the best way to use available land on the basis of common criteria and a common understanding.

PR_2: Safeguard open spaces especially in mid-altitudinal locations and Alpine valleys

Open spaces need to be part of the planning instruments of all Alpine countries; ecological and nature protection aspects need to be integrated. OpenSpaceAlps recommends ensuring that the proportion of open space below 1500 m.a.s.l. in the Alpine Convention perimeter does not fall under the current 47%.

PR_3: Valorise open space functions for the current and future Alpine population

Open spaces need to be valorised on an economic basis. An international system establishing the economic value of open spaces and their ecosystem services is therefore crucial. An evaluation based on a qualitative approach is required to complement a pure quantitative evaluation.

PR_4: Strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation in safeguarding open spaces by involving experts from all relevant fields

Spatial planning needs interdisciplinary and international cooperation as planning procedures and territorial levels are different in the various Alpine states. A decisive tool is the recently created AlpPlan network for spatial planners and partner disciplines.

PR_5: Improve coordination of cross-border cooperation between Alpine countries to safeguard open spaces by harmonising mapping approaches and planning rules

International cooperation is the only realistic way to achieve a long-term and coherent Alps-wide open space structure. Essential elements are the elaboration of a coherent international Alps-wide mapping of open spaces with quality criteria and a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC).

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[1] Definition of open spaces: *"Open spaces comprise areas that are kept free from infrastructural developments of any kind, which are not predominantly developed (punctual, linear or planar infrastructure), widely free of soil sealing and ideally 'noise-free' (especially free of traffic or largely reserved for non-motorised traffic). Technical infrastructures not belonging to the landscape structure are either non-existent or hardly existent."*

Implementation Recommendations

IR_1: Use a uniform and comprehensible definition as a basis for safeguarding open spaces

Based on common quantitative and qualitative criteria (see IR 7), a practical definition should be harmonised among countries in the Alpine Space to support transnational coordination of open space planning. Thematic glossaries could provide an opportunity to facilitate transnational exchange on relevant spatial planning concepts.

IR_2: Offer and continue advanced training and exchange on safeguarding open spaces, esp. involving the younger generation

With outputs of the OpenSpaceAlps project, well-founded materials are available to sensitise and educate spatial planners for the future-oriented safeguarding of open spaces. Interactive events for the exchange of good planning approaches are important to disseminate this information via multipliers such as professional associations, coordination centres or universities.

IR_3: Strengthen supra-local spatial planning for safeguarding open spaces

The regional planning level should focus on certain key issues of supra-local relevance, such as interconnected open space networks or the coordination of tourism infrastructures. Coordination between the municipalities within the framework of regional planning procedures should be guided by developing regional concepts for settlement and open space development.

IR_4: Safeguard the most endangered open spaces and/or the most affected open space functions

Spatial planning should put a stronger focus on the implementation of agricultural priority areas in valley bottoms, ecological corridors and large recreational open spaces. Regular monitoring of the quantity, quality and structure of open spaces should be established to facilitate planning decisions.

IR_5: Apply transferable planning instruments for safeguarding open spaces in the Alpine region

Basically, to keep open spaces free from infrastructural development, a "positive planning" approach FOR open spaces seems to be more accepted by stakeholders than a "negative planning" approach against disruptive infrastructure. Planning instruments with multifunctional approaches are particularly transferable. Stakeholders are less convinced by monothematic instruments for limiting disruptive infrastructure. Thus, such instruments are rather difficult to transfer.

IR_6: Develop strategies for open spaces at different levels

Create a data basis − raise awareness (public relations) − implement binding planning instruments − ensure they focus on the future. Establish long-term associations for open space planning esp. at regional level. Create an implementation strategy for improved safeguarding of open spaces in your region.

IR_7: Include and harmonise quality criteria for the cross-sectoral safeguarding of open spaces

By using the coordination function of spatial planning, forces can be combined (multiplied) to achieve the objective of protecting open spaces in an intersectoral and pro-active way. Normative quality criteria – as a basis for implementation – must be pragmatic and simple to apply. Therefore, we recommend gathering inspiration from the OpenSpaceAlps priority criteria list, Deliverable D.T2.5.1.

IR_8: Implement a harmonised transnational spatial delimitation of open spaces in the Alpine region

The OpenSpaceAlps' Alps-wide mapping provides a general delimitation of spaces with little or no infrastructure on an Alpine scale. A more detailed delimitation applicable to the local level will require improvements in the availability, comparability and precision of data. The long-term evolution and future prospects of open spaces should be supported by the monitoring of commonly defined key indicators.

IR _9: Develop common monitoring for open spaces

A permanent Alps-wide monitoring system needs to be implemented to observe and identify the evolution of open spaces and their modification by quantitative and qualitative impacts. It should cover the Alpine Space according to the delimitation of the Alpine Convention (sensitive natural space) and within a belt surrounding the Alps and extending approximately 50 km.

IR_10: Provide a permanent conference (exchange) of spatial planners in border regions

A permanent exchange between spatial planners on both sides of a national border would help to identify trends at an early stage and facilitate appropriate reactions to safeguard open spaces especially in sensitive regions.

IR_11: Long-term processing of the pattern language approach to contribute to the preservation and development of green infrastructure (GI) through increased valorisation

The importance and interaction of seemingly insignificant GI-elements may be complex to grasp and to understand. The GI-pattern-language is a concept to make GI and their interactions concise and easily understandable. A broadly accessible online tool (i.e. DokuWiki) could be set up.

IR_12: Use and strengthen networks for safeguarding open spaces in the Alpine region

The new AlpPlan network - in addition to existing structures - can take on a role below the level of political cooperation and instead focus more on issues concerning the planning implementation of transnational spatial development strategies. To enable this exchange, the Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association (ARL) will continue to organise regular transnational workshops and seminars.

IR_13: Consider safeguarding open spaces as an essential part of "crosscutting issues"

In times of global change, there are new crosscutting challenges ahead, for which open space protection is an important key to solving associated problems: climate protection, groundwater and flood protection, soil protection or biotope protection are among the arguments for this. Stakeholders should strive to link the topic of open space planning / safeguarding more strongly to these future key challenges.