

1. From Chamonix to Maribor: An Animal Interrail

Due to human infrastructure, habitats of animals get sectioned off and prevent animals from migrating freely, thereby limiting genetic diversity, and leading to an increase in death, disease, and extinction. For instance, in Switzerland about 20,000 large animals are killed on roads each year, while smaller animals die but stay unnoticed.

First, we must preserve the habitats that are left by tightening laws that guarantee that untouched natural areas stay protected, and that no new human infrastructure will be built in those areas.

In addition, we must ensure that those protected habitats will be connected to each other, to prevent animals from crossing roads. Since it is too costly and complicated to remove them, we should find other ways. Therefore, we propose to expand and promote green infrastructures that help animals crossing roads. Different habitats would thus be connected and biodiversity would be promoted. Such wildlife crossings may be wildlife bridges and tunnels, fish ladders and connected forests. As it has already been done in some Alpine regions, we are convinced that further well-thought expansion could increase the quality of life of animals, and drivers' safety as well. Animals can pass safely over and under the roads, fewer accidents will occur, and habitats can be connected and preserved.

It is the responsibility of the governments to collaborate and protect wildlife across all Alpine borders. They should address their environmental, transportation, and/or infrastructure specialized organizations. The coexistence between humans and animals has been important since the beginning of time: it is fundamental that we keep on preserving it.

2. Improving the Alps One Message at a Time

We postulate that the Alpine Convention establishes a campaign to distribute text messages to visitors who enter the Alpine region and thus increase their environmental awareness. The issue that we are facing is that the Alps are getting harmed because visitors do not know how to act. Visitors, especially foreigners, should be educated better about how to respect the sensitive environment of the alps and preserve it for future generations.

The solution that we propose is simple. The Alpine Convention should, in cooperation with governments and telecom companies, organize a campaign that would with a very short message inform anybody who enters the Alpine region about how they should behave. Those messages would, with underlined keywords, inform the readers in their respective languages on how to behave. The messages would work similarly to those that were sent out during the Covid pandemic or one that you get when you cross a border. It would tell them for example to stay on the path, not to litter, try to use public transportation et cetera. All underlined keywords would also link to websites with additional information (e.g. public transportation would lead to a list of all timetables, prices...). These links would be specific for individual countries. The message would be short and easy to translate into many languages, so tourists from all over the world could get the message in their mother tongue. It would be sent in the interval of seven days, in order to avoid spam. Citizens who live in the Alpine region will not get the message.

The goal is to show the visitors how to behave in the Alpine region. For many people living there the rules listed above are probably well-known, but many visitors have no clue about them. The text message is a simple, automatic and cost-effective solution to solve this problem.

3. Promoting Local Products

The problem of self-sufficiency has come to the surface in the light of the Corona pandemic. With it, the people in the Alps started to realize that local products are not very accessible and affordable, especially in big cities and urban areas. The lack of interaction between the rural and urban areas has made many producers and farmers unable to sell all of their products. The most important part in fixing the gap is the promotion of local products. With more people interested in local food we can support the local producers and farmers.

Promotion of local products directly connects to social coexistence. Coexistence can be achieved with two concepts, the first being cooperation and the second being social interaction. The procedure of advertising and selling local products does not only connect rural with urban regions but also leads to cross-regional interaction between countries.

Our first proposal is creating a brand name across the entire Alpine region with which the consumers can recognize locally produced products. Governmental organizations will have the role of cooperatives which buy the products from producers and farmers. They regulate the prices of sales and purchases from farmers so they can stay competitive. The governments also ensure that the products uphold a certain level of quality.

The second solution to boost accessibility of local products is the introduction of more marketplaces in bigger cities. With this solution we ensure that independent sellers with well-established promotion have a place in big cities to sell their products.

The producers and farmers are free to take part in the cooperatives or not and sell their products individually on markets. The measure can be achieved by the government who can create such a cooperative. The solutions do not only benefit the producers but also the environment by shortening the supply chain.

4. Changing through Exchanging

Social coexistence is about being able to accept and respect others; these skills should be learned from a young age up until adulthood. We think that in our schools we are not given this opportunity. We strongly believe that a person can grow responsible towards others and ongoing topics by discussing and sharing opinions with one another and therefore learn how to solve conflicts actively and non-violently.

We propose to institute debate sessions to all students, from first grade to last grade. These sessions would be mandatory but not graded because they would not be considered a subject in which you have to prove your knowledge, but their aim would be to educate youth on important topics and improve our communication and debating skills. Every student can choose when to take the session by booking it independently, the school provides for the spaces and timetables in which the sessions take place as well as hiring professionals involved.

We thought of a minimum number of hours of participation depending on the age of the students: for elementary school an hour a week with the hope to develop emotional intelligence skills. Elementary school students will be divided into age groups, so that their age differences do not become an obstacle for the expression of the younger children and consequently to the discussion. For students between the ages of 10 to 14 we propose 36 hours minimum per school year and for teenagers between the ages of 14 to 19 a minimum of 50 hours. For the last two mentioned age groups the topics would regard current events and the students' interests.

Mediators, such as teachers and experts from the Alpine region should neutrally take part in the debate and supervise the discussion. With the approval of the Ministry of Education this project will become reality.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” (Nelson Mandela)

5. A Ticket to Experience the Alps

OnedayWONDER – With this ticket we want to attract all generations of tourists who want to have a special insight into the Alpine region as well as support locals and the environment. It would be an extension to already existing combination tickets.

The one-day ticket includes one fixed local museum, public transport and bike rent. By including less visited destinations we will make this day ticket live up to its purpose of minimizing mass tourism in the Alps and spreading visitors more evenly between different attractions. Every tourist can choose two additional activities out of many offers provided by the local city and tourism department. In addition, a discount for all regional restaurants is included in the ticket.

With this idea we want to support more localities of a city so that the tourists are more evenly spread and not only visit well-known sightseeing points because small attractions can also clearly represent the identity of a city or region. The options range from sport to cultural and also family activities.

We would implement the one-day ticket first and if it develops well, we can work on the wholeweekWONDER. This would encourage tourists to stay even longer and it would be less expensive than seven one-day tickets.

We call it a wonder because it is an easy way to visit different attractions of a city and everyone can thus contribute to a more sustainable world.

6. Creating Common Ground through Cultural Hubs

Our current society is facing a challenge in people's lack of interest for local culture. With this postulation, we are aiming to close the gap between people of different generations, social backgrounds and ethnic origins.

In order to close this gap, we need to create a new cultural common ground, which would involve bringing people together. To reach our goal there is a need to create common places, where people from different backgrounds, all living in the same town, can meet and exchange through cultural activities. We suggest that these meetings take place in schools open for everyone on the weekends, as well as in multipurpose halls. They would be used as open places where the community could freely, without external rules, organize cultural activities such as concerts, workshops, cinema evenings, exhibitions, plays, festivities etc. In order to make these events more accessible and to organize them more freely paperwork would not be needed since the people involved are not an organization and the place would be a public one. The contribution can be financial or voluntary and the organization of the events would be based on people's commitment. These events should be free for all so that anyone can have access to them.

With this suggestion, we will succeed in creating a cultural unity without leaving behind any culture or tradition. Helping people meet each other and exchange would result in a firework of creativity.

7. Services to Revive Traditions

With our postulation we want to make cultural activities more appealing to young people.

Usually, cultural heritage is only preserved by the elders, and young people are often indifferent towards their cultural background. However, since the essence of tradition is not to merely preserve the ashes, but also to stoke up the fire, we must find a way to make young people interested in their heritage so that they can actively pass on traditions to future generations.

Children would experience their tradition in excursions and lectures in school but also by participating in festivals. Thanks to this they would develop a strong connection to their local folklore already from a young age.

Therefore, as those kids grow older, they will get the chance to be actively involved in the organization of these events. The result of this would be that young people could keep traditions alive while also creating an appealing environment for the younger generations.

We propose a program that allows people to help out in the cultural environment of their community. For example, they could organize festivals, assist in the local library, host workshops and outings or participate in cultural clubs. After 100 hours of this service, they would get a certificate that testifies their commitment towards the community, which could be inserted in a résumé to show background experience and cultural knowledge, and this would help people that do not have diplomas to find jobs in cultural fields. This cultural service would also receive compensation in the shape of a “culture bonus” which could be spent on cultural material (for example books, vinyls, art supplies, etc..) and services (concerts, museums, art galleries, etc.).

8. Let's Make Culture More Accessible!

We postulate a collaboration network for cultural life in the Alpine region. The network will take the form of an online platform which allows artists to connect with event hosts and rent spaces provided by locals. Likewise, hosts can invite artists whose work they are interested in. Events negotiated via the platform can also be advertised and tickets for them can be sold on the website that is operated by an NGO. By this measure the accessibility of cultural life, primarily meaning culture in the artistic sense, can be increased. This is especially needed in rural areas since participating in cultural life there is significantly harder than in urban regions.

The platform offers particular benefits for three different groups of people: artists, hosts and visitors. Concerning the artists, the platform is mainly directed at smaller, local ones and newcomers. They are offered the chance to gain experience and publicity. The hosts, who can be anyone providing space for artists, are enabled to bring cultural life to their hometown. The vivid cultural life created by the platform is rewarding for visitors of all parts of society.

The platform brings together culturally interested people from the whole Alpine region, allowing cultural exchange to occur among them. By its implementation, different aspects of culture can be more widely represented in the individual towns.