

Pan-alpine networks: The case of the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (ALPARC)

Pan-alpine networks is a research project on mountain people and stakeholders networks. It especially strives to understand why and how people ground collective action on mountain at the global level, or at the scale of a range or a specific region. This research has been undertaken by the team “Mountains: Knowledge and Politics” of the University of Geneva.

This paper presents the mid-term results of a survey on the Alpine Protected Areas (APAs)

1. Objectives and methods of the research

The Alpine Network of Protected Areas: 12 years of trans-national activities

In the Alps, there are more than 900 important (larger than 100 ha) protected areas. Altogether they cover about 25% of the Alpine Convention's area. Among them, 14 National Parks, 65 Nature/Regional Parks, 307 Nature Reserves, 10 Biosphere Reserves, etc.

The Alpine Network of Protected Areas was created in 1995 as a major contribution to the implementation of the Alpine Convention. Initiated in 1995 by the French government, its core team is settled in Chambéry (France). In 2007, it was attached to the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention. The Task Force Protected areas coordinates the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (ALPARC).

Methodology

The research relied on three sources:

- **Managers’ survey:** A questionnaire written in four languages has been emailed in February 2007 to 170 protected areas’ managers. Thanks to additional phone calls, 68 answers, mainly written by directors and deputy-directors of national, regional and nature parks, have been collected. Altogether, they cover 83 protected areas of different categories since some managers have several protected areas in charge.

Managers’ survey

Type of protected area	Number	Questionnaires filled
National Parks	14	13
Nature/Regional Parks	65	35
Nature Reserves	307	12
Biosphere Reserves	10	4
Others	536	4

- A second questionnaire was filled by 77 participants of the **12th Danilo Re Trophy**, (Val d'Allos, France, March 2007). This sport event gathers every spring teams of workers in the various protected areas throughout the Alps who compete together.
- Several oral **interviews** have been made with managers and rangers of protected areas, and with members of the Alparc team as well. The language used during each interview was in all cases the mother tongue of the person who was interviewed.

<i>Country of residence of answerers</i>	Managers’ survey	Danilo Re Trophy survey
Italy	20	44
France	9	14
Switzerland	7	1
Germany	1	5
Austria	26	6
Slovenia	5	7
Total	68	77

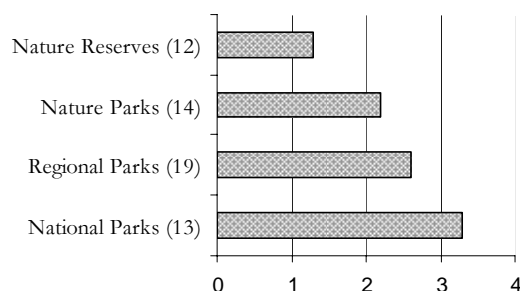
2. Modes of involvement

The involvement of Alpine Protected Areas (APAs) in ALPARC is very contrasted.

- About 20 of them take part to most of ALPARC's initiatives, and were involved in the Alpencom project¹. Most of them are national parks.
- The others seem much less motivated. We suppose that those who didn't answer, despite several phone calls, probably feel even less concerned.

<i>"How do you qualify your involvement in ALPARC?"</i>	Managers' survey (68 ²)	Alpencom (14)
Very important (x4)	17	11
Important (x3)	23	2
Fairly important (x1.5)	11	1
Weak (x0.5)	12	0
Nul (x 0)	3	0
<i>Index</i>	2,3	3,5

Importance given to involvement in ALPARC (min = 0; max = 4)



A very active minority of Protected Areas

The active minority of ALPARC participate to most of the initiatives. Most of them are also active in Interreg IIIB Habitatp project, in different Working groups of Alpine Network

¹ **Alpencom** is an Interreg IIIB project aiming at promoting "global Information and Communication Exchange System for sustainable management of natural resources and public relation" for the ALPARC

² Total number of answers (filled questionnaires).

and are members of International Steering Committee as well.

<i>Did your PA participate at international meetings organised by ALPARC</i>	Managers' survey (68)	Alpencom part. (14)
Never	24	
At least one	17	1
Regularly	16	6
As often as	10	7

<i>Do your PA regularly use the communication tools of ALPARC: Website, proceedings, brochures, etc.?</i>	Managers' survey (68)	Alpencom team (14)
Never	9	0
Rarely	16	0
Occasionally	24	8
Very regularly	18	6

What kind of difficulties your PA has met in its relations with ALPARC

	Managers' survey (68)
Lack of time	45
Linguistic	7
Distances	9

Is there room for employees and inhabitants in the network?

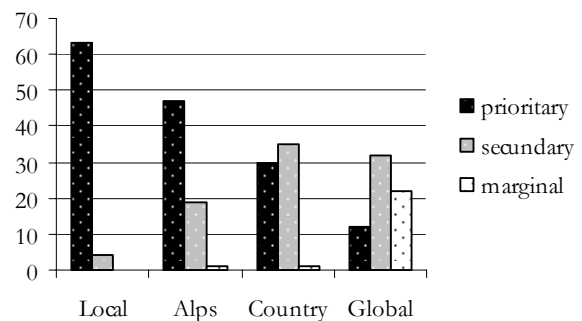
For two-thirds of APAs, the main or only person to be involved in the network is either the director himself, or the deputy-director. Usually most of APAs give little importance to the involvement of their own staff (except for National Parks), probably because many have very few if no employees, and local inhabitants in Alpine cooperation.

<i>Are you willing to involve your staff and local inhabitants in Alpine cooperation.. ?</i>	Your staff	Local inhabitants
As often as possible	16	5
From time to time	30	17
Not really	16	39

3. Motivations and scales of involvement

Priorities: cooperation and environment at the Alpine scale

Alpine Protected Areas which belong to the Network are highly motivated for cooperation and the general objectives promoted by ALPARC, nature conservation and sustainable development.



“Why is it important for your PA to belong to ALPARC ?³”

<i>To exchange experiences between protected areas of the Alpine region, from France to Slovenia</i>	3,5
<i>To build a global reflection on the alpine ecosystem (ecological networks and continuum)</i>	3,1
<i>To improve protection of environment</i>	3
<i>To contribute to sustainable development</i>	3
<i>To collaborate on common research programs and to exchange their results</i>	2,9

Practical advantages for each PA taken separately usually appear less important. This is especially true for financial opportunities (except for Natural Parks whose index for this is 3.5) and communication.

“Why is it important for your PA to belong to ALPARC ?”

<i>To search for solutions on concrete problems</i>	2.7
<i>To benefit from a financial support</i>	2.4
<i>To make visible the projects of my protected area to other partners</i>	2.6

The importance given to local and political issues

Questioned about the areas and scales they focus on, the managers mainly insist, besides the Alps as a whole, on the local scale. The importance given to local issues is mainly due to the difficulty many managers meet in being accepted by local communities.

“How important is each of these statements for you ?”

- Local: “Protected areas have to be well anchored and accepted locally”*
- Alps: “Protected areas have to contribute all together to the quality of the environment in the Alps”*
- Country: “Protected areas from a country or from a region (land, canton, province) have to coordinate”*
- Global: “Protected areas have to cooperate at the global scale according to the type of ecosystem they represent”*

Wider scales are usually of secondary importance.

“What kind of PA partnership your PA focuses on ?”

<i>Within my Alpine region</i>	3.6
<i>At the Alpine scale</i>	2.8
<i>Within my canton, province, land, or political region</i>	2.7
<i>Within my country</i>	
<i>however mountainous the other PAs are</i>	2.0
<i>In Europe</i>	
<i>however mountainous the other PAs are</i>	1.6
<i>At the global scale</i>	1.4

The importance given to political regions is very contrasted: for Natural and Regional Parks, this level is important since cantons, lands or regions are willing to coordinate the parks which are under their responsibility. For these political institutions, Alpine partnership is usually of secondary importance.

³ The index (value between 0 and 4) measures the importance given to each statement by the managers.

4. The significance of the Alps and collective action

The promotion of the Alps as an ecological good

The importance given to the Alpine scale is mainly related to the ecological value of the region, and secondary to the possibility to influence public policies.

“Why is it important for your PA to belong to ALPARC ?”

<i>To strengthen the image of the Alps as an ecoregion of continental importance</i>	3,1
<i>To know the other alpine protected areas</i>	2,8
<i>To build a lobby to promote common policies at the alpine scale</i>	2,4
<i>To build a common image of the alpine protected areas...</i>	2,8

Is there room for an Alpine sense of belonging?

Compared to ecological and political issues, cultural and social ones seem very secondary. The managers do not give much importance to the Alpine sense of belonging of their staff and local people.

Why is it important for your PA to belong to ALPARC ?

<i>To strengthen the alpine identity of the inhabitants and the staff of protected area</i>	2.5
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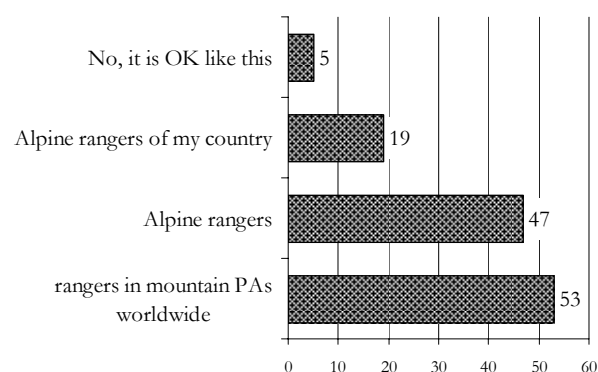
Compared to this relative indifference, it is worthwhile to mention how important is such a sense of belonging for the people who work for the protected areas. Questioned on the personal attachment they have for various kind of places and milieus, the employees who attended the Danilo Re Trophy expressed a very strong feeling for the Alps and mountains regions generally speaking.

<i>“How much do you feel attached to...”</i> (77 answers)	very much	Attached	fairly	not attached
<i>your commune-village</i>	31	26	16	2
<i>your country</i>	25	34	11	3
<i>your region</i>	35	29	9	1
<i>the Alps</i>	46	22	3	0
<i>your protected area</i>	48	24	4	0
<i>mountains in general</i>	62	13	0	0

They also express a strong curiosity for foreign rangers at the Alpine scale and even further

“Do you wish to have more exchanges with...”
(77 answers)

	yes
<i>rangers in mountain PAs worldwide</i>	53
<i>Alpine rangers</i>	47
<i>Alpine rangers of my country</i>	19
<i>No, it is OK like this</i>	5



This research has been undertaken by Petra Arnus and Bernard Debarbieux within the research team « Mountains: knowledge and politics” University of Geneva.
www.unige.ch/ses/geo/Recherches/EquipeMontagnes

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