



Ecological Networks in the European Alps

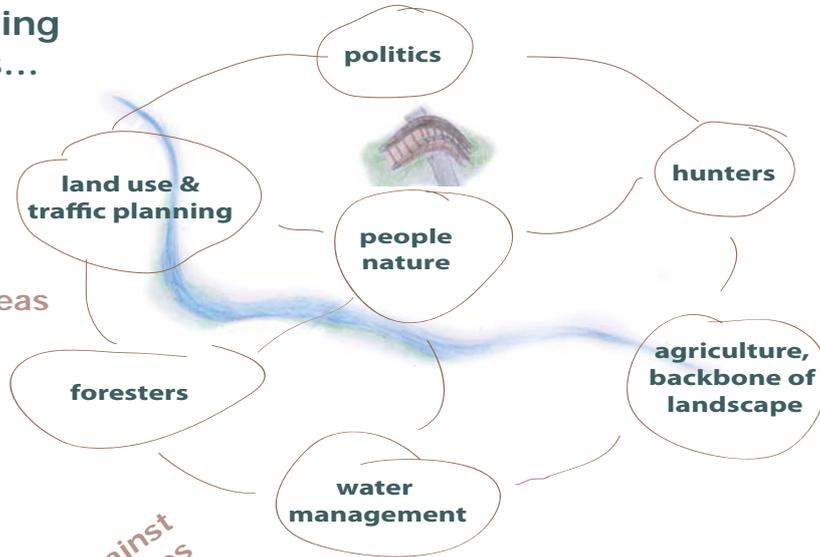
Connecting systems...

flood protection

recreation areas

better air quality

protection against avalanches



...to living networks

...with us

...are changing

The Alpine landscapes...

... a mosaic of different habitats. Meadows, woodlands, water courses and open prairie, but also farming infrastructure such as ditches, terraces and hedges. Incredibly varied spaces occur alongside one another and are inhabited by the most diverse species. In the course of a year or a life cycle, the different elements of the landscape provide animals with shelter or food, as well as reproduction and wintering sites.

The incessant increase of infrastructure, the intensive land use and the growing pressure of urbanisation cause habitats to shrink, fragment into smaller, isolated areas, or disappear altogether. If a living space becomes too small, or if its connections to other areas are cut off, the survival chances of species decrease rapidly. This can lead to the disappearance of populations.



During their migrations some animals cover long distances and sometimes must overcome obstacles. Therefore linking the different ranges and resources is of key importance for the survival of populations and species.

Ecological networks can help to create or restore the ecological connectivity between areas that are important for nature protection. This will ensure longterm conservation by including aspects such as migration of species as well as an attractive landscape for human beings.

the other initiatives. A joint Alpine methodology and a catalogue of measures to enhance connectivity have been developed, pilot regions have been chosen. In the frame of the **Alpine Convention** the **Platform Ecological Network** was established in 2007. It provides an important link between policy makers, the scientific community and practitioners, animating the political discussion to support the Alpine connectivity initiatives. **ECONNECT**, a project of the EU's ETC Alpine Space Programme, connects 16 partners from six Alpine countries. ECONNECT aims at bringing forward the implementation of ecological networks in pilot regions until summer 2011.