

AlpPlan side-event in Aosta

Guiding question: “What role can spatial planning take to mitigate the effect, glacier melt has on the landscape, territory and communities?”

Format: onsite in Aosta

Date/time: Thursday, 28 May 2026, 14:00 – 16:00 CET

Background

This workshop will feature contributions from five experts with both scientific and practical backgrounds. The discussion will focus on the impacts of glacial decline on territories, landscapes, and local economies, as well as on protected area management, with particular attention to the role spatial planning can play in addressing these challenges. The side event will serve as a valuable opportunity to prepare for the Forum Alpinum, offering insightful input and “food for thought” with valuable collaboration from representatives of CIPRA Italy.

Target group:

Observers within the Alpine Convention, Students interested in alpine topics, stake- and rightsholders from Alpine Convention, EUSALP; ISCAR, CIPRA, and further on, local and regional communities as well as generally interested people in dealing with climate change within the Alpine perimeter.

Agenda

Each of the presenters gets a timeslot of 20 minutes for their presentation, with an overall discussion round afterwards. The Workshop will be concluded by a moderated session ‘food for thought’ for 10 minutes, delivering input for the upcoming Forum Alpinum, including 15 minutes for their presentation and 15 minutes for feedback from the scientific experts and discussion with the other young researchers.

Moderator: Kerstin Ströbel

14:00 – 14:05	Welcome and Introduction
14:05 – 14:20	<p>Input from CIPRA Italy – Dr. Vanda Bonardo</p> <p>Glacier retreat is not only an environmental phenomenon; it is a turning point that is reshaping Alpine spaces, economies, and communities. From the perspective of CIPRA, this keynote frames deglaciation as a spatial planning challenge: no longer the management of existing conditions, but the governance of deep and irreversible transformations.</p> <p>In the face of unstable landscapes, declining snow-based tourism models, and increasingly fragile territories, there is a growing need for planning approaches that</p>

anticipate change, value emerging proglacial environments, and support more resilient local economies. The key question then becomes: will spatial planning be able to guide this transition, or will it simply follow it?.

14:20 – 14:35

PD Dr. Marco Pütz

Alpine Spatial Planning: Distinct Planning Culture or Mosaic of Practices? This paper examines whether Alpine spatial planning constitutes a distinct planning culture within Europe or is merely a mosaic of diverse practices shaped by national contexts. While a definitive answer remains elusive, exploring this question enriches the transnational discourse on planning cultures and highlights the unique challenges and methodologies of the Alpine region. Alpine spatial planning is defined by its singular geography: extreme altitude variations, steep slopes, and valleys demand specialized construction and planning. Limited settlement areas intensify competition for space, while fragile ecosystems and natural hazards—such as avalanches, mudslides, and floods—pose constant risks. Cross-border coordination among eight countries, rural village structures, and rich cultural diversity further complicate planning. The Alps serve as habitats, economic hubs (agriculture, industry, energy), recreational spaces (tourism), and transit routes, creating multifunctional landscapes and inevitable conflicts. Structural weaknesses and youth outmigration add to the complexity, requiring planners to balance competing demands and ensure equitable living conditions in peripheral areas. Though these challenges echo those in maritime or urban regions, the Alps’ unique physical, ownership, and usage characteristics necessitate tailored solutions. Key instruments include hazard zone mapping, open space preservation, priority area designation, and tourism management. Transnational institutions, such as the Alpine Convention’s spatial planning protocol and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP), underscore planning’s cross-cutting role in addressing climate change, sustainable development, and regional networking. In conclusion, the Alps’ specific legal frameworks, planning tools, and objectives—rooted in managing natural hazards, land scarcity, and cooperation—support the existence of a distinct Alpine planning culture, shaped by region-specific practices and traditions. To be further discussed.

14:35 – 14:50

Dr. Luisa Pedrazzini

The topics of interest concern the effects on the territory, landscape, and local economy caused by the impact of snow reduction, deglaciation, and reduction in snowfall on seasonal tourism (snow tourism), especially in the southern side of the Alps. The effects include the decommissioning of ski resorts, the abandonment of second homes, the crisis in the local economy, and significant changes to the landscape. In Lombardy, analyses and studies have also been carried out across the entire southern Alps. Other effects on the territorial, environmental, and landscape system include the abandonment of inhabitants and the abandonment of safety measures on steep Alpine slopes, with the abandonment of grazing and Alpine agriculture. One effect is the increase in uncultivated forest, with the paradoxical effect of a

	<p>decrease in biodiversity and an increase in environmental risks. Many of the policies in place at the regional level are contradictory because they do not take into account the environmental crisis and the need to deseasonalize tourism.</p>
<p>14:50– 15:05</p>	<p>Dr. Ahmed Shams</p> <p>Hiking contributes to the economic benefits and local and visitor satisfaction in the inner settlements above 1,600m ASL in the Alps, which is substantial for some mountain communities in the absence of ski resorts. The glaciers and high-elevation wetlands are key elements of the aesthetic landscape values. The spatial pattern of lakes and moors/bogs—either biotopes and/or glacial- or precipitation-fed—is marketised through a network of hiking trails and mountain huts in high-elevation areas, where the glaciers are the backdrop of the landscape. Founded on landscape documentation field surveys in Alto Adige/Südtirol, this paper discusses how the marketisation of high-elevation mid-summer landscapes, i.e., market space, is expected to change in the municipality of Predoi/Prettau in upper Valle Aurina/Ahrntal (part of the protected area of Parco Naturale Vedrette di Ries-Aurina/ Naturpark Rieserferner-Ahrn). The wetland-abundant market space has persisted and expanded since at least the 1980s, and it will continue to benefit the mid-summer tourism flow in the medium-term, especially with the increasing outflow of glacial-melt in some valleys. Contrarily, the aesthetic attractiveness of the precipitation-fed wetlands highly depends on winter or late snow(-melt) precipitation in May-June. A persistent water stress, which is not the case at present, has the potential to impact wetland biodiversity and vegetation composition and consequently the aesthetic landscape value. Re-occurring seasonal conditions are key to effective landscape marketisation, while the opposite leads to change in visitation pattern or to the municipal or regional substitution of a specific destination. Ultimately, it is a question of spatial planning and territorial development in a market space.</p>
<p>15:05 – 15:20</p>	<p>Dr. Hubert Job/Luzia Maurus</p> <p>The climate change induced ongoing retreat of glaciers in the Alps is leading to the formation of new glacial forefields, which are becoming increasingly significant in both spatial and ecological terms. These juvenile landscapes are characterised by primary succession, dynamic geomorphological processes and rapidly changing patterns of biodiversity, whilst at the same time representing sensitive habitats in the high mountains.</p> <p>For Alpine protected areas, this change poses a challenge in terms of management strategies for these juvenile landscapes. Legal frameworks vary depending on the protected resource; thus, a comparative analysis of existing legal frameworks and management plans provides an overview of the current management strategies of glacier forefields in Alpine protected areas. Remote-sensing-based cartographic representations and qualitative expert interviews from the management bodies of Berchtesgaden National Park (DE), Hohe Tauern National Park (AT) and the UNESCO</p>



	World Heritage Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch (CH) provide insights into their application.
15:20 – 15:55	Discussion Moderated on the four presentations with group discussions
15:55 – 16:00	Closing of event