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PLANNING  
IN A WORLD  
OF TURBULENCE**

**BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS**



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## TRACK 04: INTEGRATED PLANNING OVER THE BORDERS

### FOUR CITIES, THREE PROVINCES, TWO STATES, ONE REGION: INTEGRATED INNER-CITY DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT (ISEK<sup>4</sup>) (1063)

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**Abstract.** Designed as a pilot project for the development of a new planning instrument, ISEK<sup>4</sup> addressed two spatial spheres that – despite obvious necessity – are rarely considered together in the existing planning toolkit: the inner city and the functional region. Integrated urban development concepts for the four inner cities of Bruneck (South Tyrol), Hermagor-Presegger See (Upper Carinthia), Lienz (East Tyrol), and Spittal an der Drau (Upper Carinthia) were developed in conjunction with a regional symbiosis of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE region – demonstrating and using synergies between the inner cities as anchor points of public life in the region. ISEK<sup>4</sup> is based on an integrated, interdisciplinary planning approach and was developed together with local steering groups from the cities. Within the project, knowledge and needs were collected, recorded, and located in different workshop formats. The paper will focus on the work process, the lessons learned and the transferability of the project approach, as well as the results.

**Keywords:** Integrated Planning, Urban Development, Inner Cities, Alpine Cities, Regional Symbiosis.

## 1. The SOUTH ALPINE SPACE

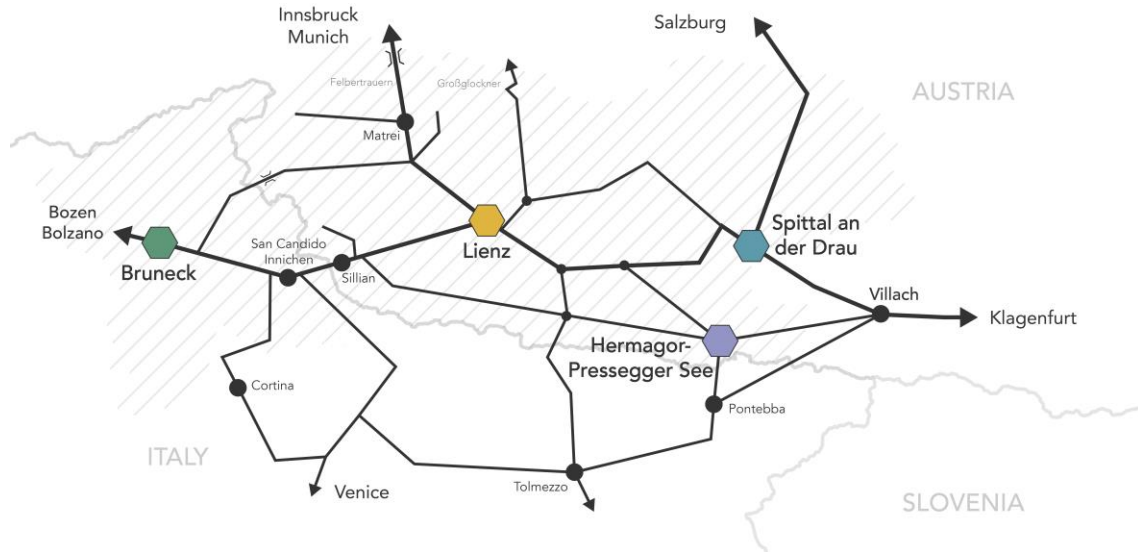


Figure 1. The SOUTH ALPINE SPACE

ISEK<sup>4</sup> was a transnational project aimed to develop a regionally integrated vision, as well as inner city development concepts for four cities in the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE, a highly dynamic and versatile region. As the name suggests, the region is located in Central Europe, right within the Southern Alps (*see figure 1*). It covers two states, as well as one Italian and two Austrian provinces. The region spans from the north-eastern part of South Tyrol (Italy) to East Tyrol and Upper Carinthia (Austria), displaying both alpine and Mediterranean influences. The four main cities of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE, Bruneck (Italy), Lienz, Spittal an der Drau and Hermagor-Preseggsee (Austria), share the advantages of being located close to alpine rivers and having direct access to the rail network. The region has had strong connections for centuries – both inwards and outwards towards the surrounding valleys and mountains. There are numerous functional interrelationships with the Italian provinces of Belluno and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, as well as with the urban region of Bolzano and the central area of Carinthia (Klagenfurt, Villach).

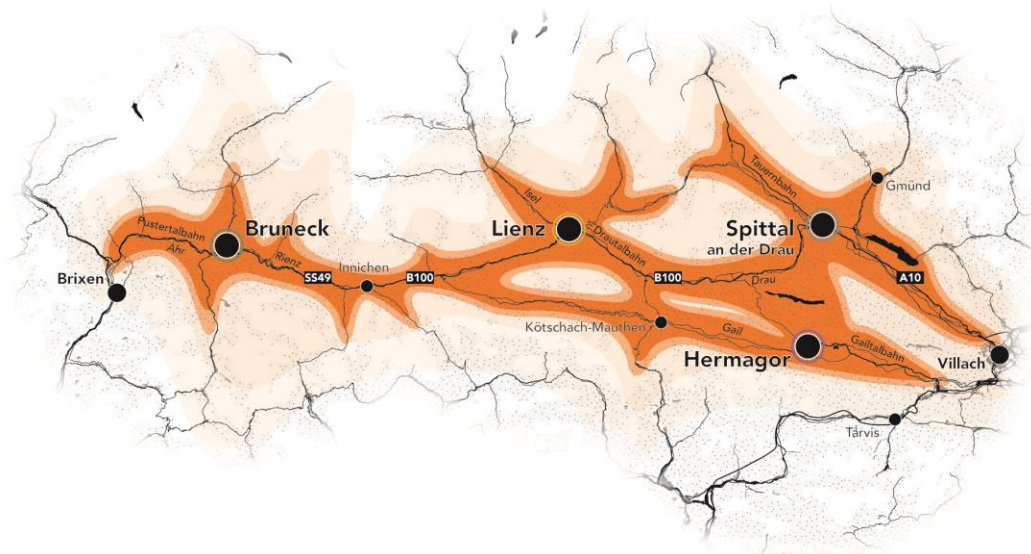


Figure 2. Scheme of the region

The four cities of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE are connected through valleys that function as important infrastructural axes (see figure 2). At the same time, Alpine mountain ranges form incisive spatial barriers between the cities. Topographically, the South Tyrolean Pustertal, the Drau Valley and the Gitsch Valley connect the four cities.

Through regional railways, the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE is well-connected to the long-distance railway network. There are direct services from Lienz and Spittal an der Drau to Vienna. Further links exist to Salzburg, Innsbruck, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Zagreb. Thanks to the ÖBB Nightjet, direct overnight connections are available from Spittal-Millstätter See to Zurich and Zagreb. Through the large infrastructure projects for the expansion of TEN corridors (e.g. Brenner Base Tunnel, Semmering Base Tunnel, Koralm Railway), the accessibility of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE by train will improve even further in the years ahead (cf. Kunzmann, 2015). Beyond that, there are important regional bicycle connections which primarily run along the rivers in the valley areas. Sections of these cycle routes are part of the European EuroVelo network. As of today, the regional bicycle routes are already of enormous importance for summer tourism in the SOUTHERN ALPINE SPACE. The promotion of new international connections (e.g. the long-distance bicycle route from Munich to Venezia) will allow the share of cycle tourism to grow even further (cf. Tscherne, n.d.). An expansion of the tourist bicycle infrastructure will also benefit everyday mobility in the region.

All four cities have been active in city marketing for years. Measures like shared spaces, pedestrian zones, weekly markets and commercial location development produced vibrant inner cities for residents and visitors. Participation and social commitment helped

to establish a resilient cooperation basis among the cities. Know-how transfer and learning outcomes are shared within the region and beyond.

In order to strengthen the region's competitiveness relative to other urban agglomerations (e.g. the Carinthian central area Klagenfurt – Villach), the four core cities of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE formed a strategic network in 2019 (cf. Regionsmanagement Osttirol, 2021). In a modern-day society, administrative boundaries do not reflect the actual scope of action for a region's population. Thinking along the lines of functionally networked spaces is becoming increasingly important when it comes to regional policies: Major challenges in the fields of climate change, mobility, employment, business, education, housing, commerce, shopping and recreation can only be tackled sustainably by working closely together. Cooperative regional planning has therefore become an essential condition for the formation of resilient regions. The cooperation within the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE cities network has thus far focused on inner-city development as well as on the issues of mobility and infrastructure, climate change, site management, quality of life, civil defence and disaster prevention.

## **2. The European and National Strategic Framework**

The SOUTH ALPINE SPACE cities network is an informal alliance between the four largest cities in the region, Bruneck, Lienz, Spittal an der Drau and Hermagor-Presssegger See. The principles and objectives of the regional cooperation activities were outlined in a charter signed by all mayors in late 2019. Beyond the thematic objectives, the charter also defines the organisational and administrative parameters for the cooperation between the four cities. Through the *Strategic Framework for the Development of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE* issued in 2021, the region formulated its mission statement and designed a systemic approach to its future work (cf. Regionsmanagement Osttirol, 2021). In this strategic document, the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE positioned itself as an innovative, future-oriented region aiming to become a model region for sustainable cross-border cooperation in and for Europe (cf. *ibid*, p.4). Under consideration of global mega-trends and their implications for the region, the central topics for the cooperation were defined: Education and knowledge-based economy, regional cycles, inner-city development and care services in the context of demographic change. Further, a governance model was developed to ensure optimal coordination between the different levels of operation and multiple regional actors (cities network, INTERREG, CLLD regions, EGTC). On a formal level, the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE Council (representatives of the EGTCs, the cities and the CLLD regions) is to be established alongside a SOUTH ALPINE SPACE Conference, in which tourism organisations, municipalities, LEADER-LAGs, regional management and associations should participate. The formal bodies are supported by the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE management. On an informal level, projects and events are to be developed in

thematic working groups (cf. *ibid*, p.21).

By exploring new limits of regional cooperation, the region is contributing to the implementation of the European Union Territorial Agenda 2030 and the New Leipzig Charter, both passed in 2020. The Territorial Agenda 2030 aims to align the individual national spatial development strategies of the EU member states according to common goals and guiding principles. In further continuation of the previous strategies from 2007 and 2011, the Territorial Agenda 2030 takes into account new challenges to spatial development (climate change, energy scarcity, financial and economic crisis). It aims to reduce regional disparities and strengthen social cohesion in Europe. With the objective of a "Green Europe," the agenda calls for the careful and efficient use of natural resources. These ambitions of the Territorial Agenda 2030 are reflected in the strategic positioning of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE. With the preparation of spatially and thematically integrated inner-city development concepts, the region is also adopting the basic principles of good urban development policy defined in the New Leipzig Charter: Besides an urban development policy aimed at the common good, the Charter calls for an integrated, participation-oriented approach to urban management. Spatial development should be able to operate across administrative boundaries (multi-level approach), but also be location-specific. (cf. European Union, 2020a; European Union, 2020b)

Through the ISEK<sup>4</sup> concept, central objectives of the new Austrian Spatial Development Concept 2030 (ÖREK 2030) are put into practice, for instance the strengthening of polycentric structures, planning in functional living spaces, as well as climate-friendly and sustainable spatial development (cf. ÖROK, 2021). In conjunction with the possible introduction of an urban development support funding (Städtebauförderung) in Austria, a so-called ÖROK partnership was set up by the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK). The result of this partnership are "Expert Recommendations for Strengthening Local and Urban Cores in Austria" with ten specific proposals. They address, among other aspects, the legal, administrative and instrumental framework conditions – for example, the preparation of integrated urban development concepts (ISEKs) is proposed. The document also includes very specific recommendations for the technical work in the development of such concepts (cf. ÖROK, 2019).

Coordinated spatial development projects in cross-border regions like ISEK<sup>4</sup> provide an important contribution to the long-term development of Europe as well as to the European integration. Beyond that, transnational cooperation promotes the active participation and commitment of citizens, politicians and administrative institutions. For more than 30 years, the EU has been focusing on structural policies for border regions. In 1988, the existing European Structural Funds (ESF, EAGF), ERDF) were integrated into an overarching Cohesion and Structural Policy, which focused on the poorest regions and was linked to a multiannual programming. The first three INTERREG programs (from 1990 to

2006) made distinctions between transnational, cross-border and interregional cooperation. Starting with the fourth edition of the program in early 2007, the ETC (European Territorial Cooperation) program was established with the aim of tapping the potential of cross-border regions (cf. Große Hüttmann and Wehling, 2020). The INTERREG programs are now embedded in the main ETC program and support joint activities within the framework of cross-border cooperation. They still differentiate between cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. In the 2014-2020 funding period, around 10.1 billion € (cf. European Academy, n.d.) were provided from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Along with other projects in the framework of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE cooperation, ISEK<sup>4</sup> was partly funded through the INTERREG Italy-Austria programme.

### 3. The ISEK<sup>4</sup>-Project

Designed as a pilot project for the development of a new planning instrument, ISEK<sup>4</sup> addressed two spatial spheres that – despite obvious necessity – are rarely considered together in the existing planning toolkit: the inner city and the functional region. Complementing the conventional *ISEK*<sup>1</sup> approach, ISEK<sup>4</sup> includes a so-called regional symbiosis, in which the local initiatives of the four ISEKs are consolidated and a common

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<sup>1</sup> ISEKs (Integrated Urban Development Concepts) are a modern form of sectorally and spatially integrated planning. So far, the approach has primarily been used in German-speaking countries. ISEKs are informal planning instruments with a self-binding character, offering prospects for the active shaping of the future in (inner) cities and urban districts. The instrument focuses on the sustainable development of neighbourhoods, taking into account the constantly changing conditions and requirements in cities. In Germany, the urban development support funding (Städtebauförderung) is already linked to the existence of local ISEKs (cf. Heinig, 2022; Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung [BMVBS], 2013). In the ISEK<sup>4</sup> project, the classic ISEK approach was supplemented with a comprehensive regional perspective on the four local concepts.



regional vision of the future is developed.

**Fact Box**

**Clients:**

The four cities of Bruneck (South Tyrol), Hermagor-Presegger See (Upper Carinthia), Lienz (East Tyrol), and Spittal an der Drau (Upper Carinthia).

**Duration:**

May 2022 – February 2023

**Funding:**

The ISEK<sup>4</sup> project was financed through multiple funding sources. In addition to an INTERREG funding for the cross-border cooperation between Bruneck (South Tyrol) and Lienz (East Tyrol), the Austrian Federal Ministries for Climate Protection (BMK) and Agriculture (BML) as well as the province of Carinthia supported the project.

**3.1 Process Design**

The integrated spatial inner city development concept ISEK<sup>4</sup> was developed in a planning process involving (predominantly politically appointed) local steering groups from the four cities, each set up in a gender balanced way. The members of the steering groups actively participated in the workshops during the development process. In addition, selected stakeholders, and on-site experts were invited to certain events. There was a constant exchange between the steering groups and the ISEK<sup>4</sup> project team during the project (*see figure 3*) with the aim of content improvement and quality assurance.

Development process of the ISEK<sup>4</sup>

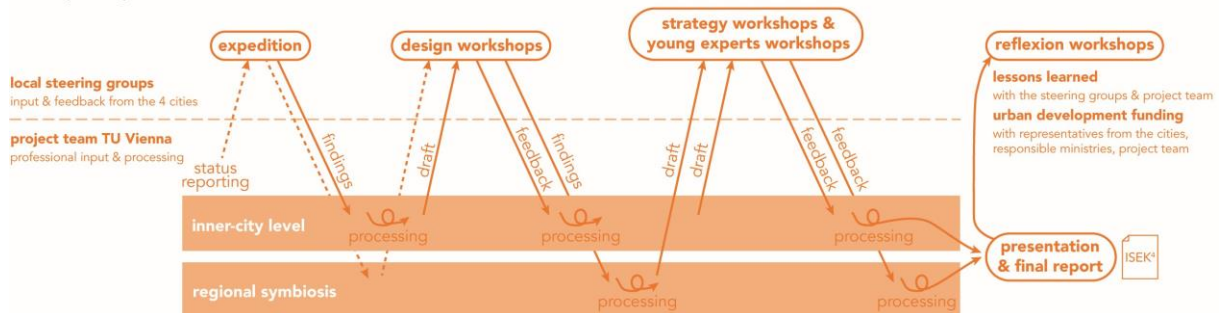


Figure 3. Development process of ISEK<sup>4</sup>

Initially, the focus was put on the identification of key development factors within the inner cities as well as on the spatial and actor-specific analysis, which provided a basis for the integrated urban development concept. This primary and secondary analysis was aimed at identifying so-called *focus areas* as well as opportunities and weaknesses. The spatial and structural analysis took place at the regional, city and district levels, also taking

into account current developments (completed and current projects or plans). An excursion to the identified focus areas revealed new perspectives on the urban structures and city centres.

During the local design workshops, future visions of the four cities were developed together with the steering groups and local experts from the cities. Taking an integrated perspective on the core topics from the analysis helped to define the common objectives and approaches to solving the existing challenges. The focus areas were reflected upon as possible sites for integrated urban development processes, and modified in some cases. The regional scale was constantly under consideration as the participants were asked to reflect the positioning of their individual city within the region. The Visioneering method, which employs different (audio-)visual techniques (e.g. photo collages, infographics or mental maps), was used in this process (cf. Salzmann, 2013).

In the next stage, the future visions were refined during the strategy workshops using the Design Thinking Lab method (cf. Lewrick, Link and Leifer, 2020, pp. 17-27). The objective was to outline collective questions and develop concepts or strategies for action based on these questions. In the subsequent *marketplace of ideas*, suggestions of all participants were collected in an open setting. The Project Canvas method (cf. *ibid.*, p. 309f.) was used to outline rough concepts (time frame, actors, goals, etc.) for the implementation ideas. The project team later condensed and structured the sketches of ideas. These sketches were divided into two categories, *local* and *regional*, in the follow-up to the *marketplace of ideas*.

During the two aforementioned workshops, the cornerstones of the regional symbiosis were also discussed and reflected upon together with the steering groups. This feedback loop allowed for ideas or drafts from the four individual ISEKs to be merged at the regional level. Based on the inputs from the design and strategy workshops, the project team developed a comprehensive regional vision.

Beyond that, young experts were occasionally involved in the preparation of the ISEKs using different participation mechanisms. These individually designed formats drew on youth participation processes that had already been successfully implemented in all four cities. The local youth centres played an important role here, providing the contact to the young experts. The formats included on-site workshops, online surveys and interactive knowledge generation via posters.

In a concluding reflection workshop, lessons learned from the ISEK<sup>4</sup> process were collected. The aim was to identify the dos and don'ts at a local, regional and national level and to reflect on the project's transferability. The reflection workshop took place online with selected members from the steering groups that had been involved in the process. In addition, a workshop discussion on the possible introduction of an urban development support funding (Städtebauförderung) in Austria was held after the submission of the

draft report. It involved the coordinator from each of the four cities , representatives from the responsible ministries and the members of the ISEK<sup>4</sup> project team from TU Wien.

## **4. The Results**

### **4.1 The Regional Symbiosis**

In order to facilitate a holistic approach to the future development of the four inner cities and the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE, a general operational (planning) framework was developed first. The framework contains a set of steering criteria that are intended to provide the foundation for a common future, regardless of the specific spatial situation (city centre, overall city or functional region). In a co-productive approach, these shared planning values were formulated to ensure an inclusive, environmentally conscious, adaptive and thus crisis-resilient development. The operational framework comprises the following six criteria:

- Strengthening of cities and regions of short distances
- Land conservation and reuse of existing facilities
- Making and keeping cities resilient to climate change
- Ensuring equal opportunities for everyone
- Learning from each other and growing together
- Establishing a resilient SOUTH ALPINE SPACE

The framework acts as the common understanding of future developments in the inner cities and the region. It focuses on the sustainable use of land resources, the (re-)distribution and consolidation of essential spatial functions, as well as on the development of a proactive and participatory approach to tackling the climate crisis.

Based on the operational framework, seven spatial guiding principles were developed together with local and regional stakeholders. The guiding principles link the operational framework with the spatial context on the regional and inner-city level. The guiding principles are echoed throughout the ISEK<sup>4</sup>, all the way from the city-specific future images and development ideas to the regional vision, as well as in the local and regional idea sketches.

#### *4.1.1 Riverbanks and Free Spaces – Perceptible and Nature-Oriented*

A common characteristic of the four cities in the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE is their location along rivers, which can facilitate the development of high urban qualities. In the light of the advancing climate crisis, river areas are gaining significance as recreational sites and natural air-conditioning systems in the urban fabric. By removing visibility barriers, improving accessibility (while at the same time taking natural hazards into account), and integrating high-quality pedestrian and bicycle connections, possibilities for new uses are

generated. These newly usable riverbanks are a part of a dense network of (green) free spaces which cover the cities and connect them to their immediate surroundings.

#### *4.1.2 Mobility Transition – Lived and Liveable*

Priorities in the choice of transportation mode in cities will shift considerably towards walking and cycling in the foreseeable future. Given their sizes, the cities in the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE are predestined to become cities of short distances: Virtually all important destinations can be reached within 15 minutes by walking, cycling or via complementary services (city bus, shuttle, sharing vehicles, etc.). A dense regional public transport network as well as attractive interregional bike paths between the cities can provide an appealing alternative to cars. The shift in mobility helps to reduce traffic-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and will free up more space in the cities for alternative uses.

#### *4.1.3 Railway Station Districts – Integrated and Activating*

Train stations function as important drivers of sustainable mobility. In their capacity as mobility hubs, they connect (supra-)regional with local transportation networks. At the same time, they bring together a wide range of uses: Local amenities, gastronomy, meeting places, logistics, sharing services, etc. This spatial concentration of different uses reduces the distances travelled in day-to-day life and at the same time offers the potential to activate and revitalise the surrounding urban spaces. A spatial and functional integration of these station quarters into the urban fabric creates a link between transnational mobility axes and inner cities.

#### *4.1.4 Tourism – the City Centre as an attraction*

In the future, the touristic potential of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE should be linked more closely to the inner cities' activities. In this context, attention should be given to providing convenient connections to tourist destinations via public transport, as well as to integrating touristic bicycle routes into the inner-city mobility networks. This also helps to increase the visibility of the city centres along these routes. Establishing a joint brand identity focused on sustainable and healthy tourism can contribute to an increase in the number of overnight stays and to a strengthening of the cooperative culture in the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE.

#### *4.1.5 Building and Planning Culture – Reuse and Renew*

A state-of-the-art building culture requires the careful consideration of existing structures. In times of the climate crisis, it is vital not to waste the grey energy contained within existing buildings. The housing stock often offers qualities that simply need to be restored or retrofitted to adjust to future needs. (Re)developing the existing building structures to a high standard is only possible if a comprehensive planning culture is established in the region. An actively practised planning culture provides the opportunity to tailor region-specific solutions to contemporary global challenges.

#### 4.1.6 Planning for all Generations – Attractive and Inclusive

A comprehensive planning approach for the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE should strive to create attractive living conditions for people of all ages and from all walks of life. This includes the provision of affordable and high-quality housing for young families, students and elderly people, as well as the improvement of childcare services. The region benefits from a diverse spectrum of leisure facilities in the cities. Providing barrier-free public spaces will make the cities more accessible and experienceable for people with disabilities.

#### 4.1.7 Regional Resources – Use and Expand

In light of the complex challenges prevalent right now (climate crisis, energy crisis and tight municipal budgets), a reorientation towards regional strengths and local resources has become essential. The diverse palette of regional products in the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE can increase the quality and security of grocery supply. Expanding renewable energy makes an important contribution to the efforts against the climate crisis. Tackling challenges jointly as a region and focusing on key issues is more efficient on strained municipal budgets.

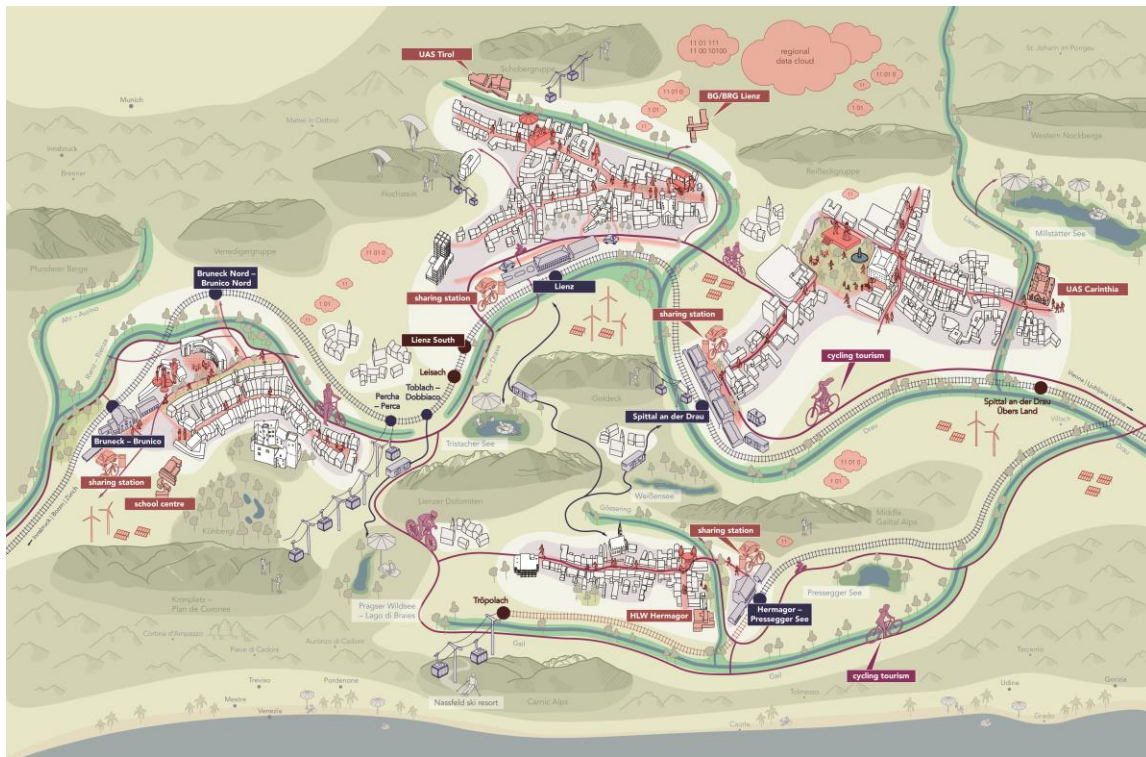


Figure 4. Regional symbiosis

In the so-called *regional symbiosis* (see figure 4), the individual strengths of the four cities

were brought together and combined into a common vision. This vision was visualised as a picture in which the inner cities have merged into a strong region. The SOUTH ALPINE SPACE as an interconnected region is diverse, connected and future-oriented, but also traditional and mindful of its local resources. The four inner cities form important anchor points and provide impulses for the development of the entire area. The visualisation neglects the topography and brings the four cities closer together. At the same time, it highlights the potentials and strengths of each individual city and the region.

The need for regional collaboration in the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE is reflected in the structure and conception of the ISEK<sup>4</sup>: Local activities should be understood in the context of regional framework conditions, potentials and goals. To bundle the region-specific targets, the seven spatial guiding principles described above were developed. Apart from the close links between the guiding principles and the local interventions, the regional integration of local projects into a regional symbiosis was the main reason for the decision to combine all ISEKs within one document.

#### **4.2 The Inner City Visions**

The four local focus points of the ISEK<sup>4</sup> each include a status report, an overview of current developments and concepts, a vision for the future as well as local intervention plans. They do not deal with the entire city centres, but concentrate on particular spatial focus areas (short to medium-term development) and perspective areas (long-term strategic development). The spatial extent of the "inner cities" was not defined specifically, allowing for the consideration of additional inner-city relations and for more flexibility in development processes.

#### **5. Lessons Learned and Next Steps (Evaluation)**

Previous ISEK approaches exclusively focused on single cities or physically connected urban structures. The innovation of the project – especially in contrast to previous ISEKs – is the simultaneous consideration of multiple cities in a regional context.

The regional symbiosis provides a major added value for the future development of the four cities and the region, helping to join activities of inner city development. These common activities are the basis for further exchange and an even more intensive cooperation between the four cities. The regional vision (for which a cartographically abstract representation was deliberately chosen) enables the cities to move closer together. The graphical vision has become a symbol of cooperation between the cities according to the local actors. An exchange between the four steering groups would have been beneficial to the project, but unfortunately could not be realised. A cross-city discourse would have been of great importance, especially for the development and

refinement of the regional vision.

Surrounding municipalities in the vicinity of the four cities were hardly involved in the project. With the goal of an integrative planning approach in mind, it is recommended to include the perspective and needs of the surrounding communities in future projects. The question of how the ISEK<sup>4</sup> affects the surrounding municipalities remains unanswered, yet professionally exciting. The implication of a more spatially comprehensive view of the region might be tested in another (pilot) project.

Regional cooperation could serve as an incentive for new funding mechanisms. Care should be taken not to construct random cooperations ("pseudo cooperations"). Cities that have already done a lot in terms of inner city development should continue to be confirmed and motivated in their actions – through funding measures in favour of holistic inner city development in the sense of the ISEK<sup>4</sup>. An exclusive focus of the funding instruments on the (historic) inner city is counter-productive for these cities.

The steering groups in the four cities took on a dual function in the project organisation: They acted both as an information source and as a development partner. The composition varied from city to city, ranging from an exclusively political group to a mixed groups of politicians and persons from civil society. The number of members in the steering group also varied greatly. The participatory approach is the right way to bundle synergies and to work out development perspectives for the cities and the region that are as broadly supported as possible. A recommendation on the optimal composition and number of participants cannot be derived from the experience of the ISEK<sup>4</sup>. It is much more important to take local conditions and cooperation cultures into account. In any case, it is recommended to involve the political representatives from the beginning and to coordinate the composition of the steering group at the beginning of the process in cooperation with the city and the region.

In general, the aim should be to have as diverse a group as possible in terms of gender, age, social class, affiliation, etc. The aim should be to include all the people living in the city. The aim is to give all groups living in the city a voice in the process.

The ISEK<sup>4</sup> does not represent an implementation strategy and does not contain any detailed elaborated or implementable projects. The intensive involvement of the cities in the process through the steering groups was completed at the end of the project. Through the public joint presentation and the book, the project has been completed, and the implementation has been handed over to the cities. The task of the cities will be to use or create organisational structures at city and regional level – also to adjust funding schemes. The elaboration of a strategy for implementation or realisation would be useful.

Despite evident regional similarities, differences in planning culture and urban development structures proved challenging in the process. These differences manifested

not only in the composition of the steering groups but also in the mindset the participation workshops were met with in the four cities. While in some cities it appeared commonplace to actively involve thematic civil interest groups in the visioning and idea generation process, other cities tended to have a more political focus to the workshops. As a result, the focus and the level of detail of the local ISEKs also vary to a certain degree.

## **6. Transferability**

The combination of the ISEK as a local tool with the regional scope of action is an innovation in the Austrian planning landscape and in the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE. Working across several provincial and national borders posed a special challenge for the project team.

The existence of (proven) cooperations in a region is beneficial for the elaboration of a regionally integrated ISEK. In the case of the SOUTH ALPINE SPACE, the existing charter from 2019 formed an appropriate foundation for common action. In addition to such institutional links, however, functional and thematic interdependencies are essential for enabling lasting and longer-term cooperation.

The larger the region gets the more differences in planning systems and cooperation culture might occur. Reflecting on the legal framework, experience in cooperation and transnational projects helps to secure a sound project process, provided the project design is flexible enough to react on the specific circumstances.

The size and characteristics of a particular region are by no means the decisive factors. Rather, it is important for cities to shift their focus to challenges that might be easier to tackle together – especially in the face of tight municipal budgets and urgent (global) crises. Bringing different perspectives and points of view into discussions on the future development of a region also promotes a climate of learning from one another. The added value of different perspectives became particularly evident in the cross-border work in the ISEK<sup>4</sup> project.

Finally, the project funds have to be secured. The more actors and funding bodies are involved, the more criteria and requirements need to be fulfilled. This poses a huge challenge to the implementation. Dedicated new funding programs or more flexibility in existing ones would stimulate regions to work on common concepts and booster the European dimension of integrated regional planning.

**Acknowledgements.** The ISEK<sup>4</sup> project was financed through multiple funding sources. In addition to an INTERREG funding for the cross-border cooperation between Bruneck (South Tyrol) and Lienz (East Tyrol), the Austrian Federal Ministries for Climate Protection



(BMK) and Agriculture (BML) as well as the province of Carinthia supported the project financially.

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