

THE JULIAN ALPS (SLOVENIA): BETWEEN PROTECTION AND »MODERNIZATION«

JULIJSKE ALPE (SLOVENIJA): IZMEĐU ZAŠTITE I »MODERNIZACIJE«

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Sažetak

Julijske Alpe su najviše planine u Sloveniji, čiji je glavni dio danas u sastavu Nacionalnog parka Triglav, jedinog nacionalnog parka u državi. Njegov nastanak seže u rane godine dvadesetog stoljeća, točnije, godinu 1924., kada je Dolina Triglavskih jezera bila zaštićeni park alpske prirode. Godine 1981. park se proširio na gotovo današnje područje od oko 840 km². Paralelno sa željom za zaštitom, nastale su i proturječne ideje o »modernizaciji« Julijskih Alpa s ciljem jačanja turizma; točnije, izgradnje željezničke cijevi, skijaškog središta i meteoroloških opservatorija.

Ključne riječi: Julijske Alpe, Nacionalni park Triglav, planinski turizam, skijalište visokih Alpa, meteorološki opservatorij, Slovenija

Keywords: Julian Alps, Triglav National Park, mountain tourism, high-alpine ski center, meteorological observatory, Slovenia

1. INTRODUCTION

With a maximum elevation of 2,864 m, the Julian Alps are the highest mountains in Slovenia. They cover 1,542 km² or 7.6% of the country's territory.¹ Their highest peak (Mount Triglav) is a major national symbol, which is the central motif on Slovenia's coat-of-arms, among other things.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, when what is now Slovenia was part of Austria-Hungary, the Julian Alps and other Slovenian mountains attracted the interest of Austrian-German hiking societies (e.g., the *Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein* and *Österreichischer Touristenklub*), which started laying paths and building lodges. This not only boosted mountain tourism,² but also marked the territory as German. To counter this, the Slovenian Mountaineering Society (*Slovensko planinsko društvo*, or SPD) was established in 1893. For Slovenians, the SPD had the distinct purpose of ethnic promotion; that is, to »recover« the Slovenian character of the mountains through Slovenian lodges, paths, and signposts. It was at that time that Jakob Aljaž (1845–1927), a priest in the village of Dovje below Mount Triglav, purchased

¹ Perko, D., Orožen Adamič, M. (eds.) 1998: Slovenija pokrajine in ljudje. Ljubljana, Mladinska knjiga, 735 p.

² cf. Mikša, P., Zorn, M. 2016: The beginnings of the research of Slovenian Alps. *Geografski vestnik*, 88 (2), pp. 103-131.

the summit of Mount Triglav (16 m²) for patriotic reasons for one florin (at that time the equivalent of fifty eggs, ten liters of milk, or four pigeons) in 1895 and erected a metal tower on top, which still stands today.³

Alongside the »ethnic struggle«⁴ for the Julian Alps, ideas also arose about protecting this landscape on the one hand, and on the other hand boosting mountain tourism even more with »modernization« of the mountains. This article offers a short overview of both.

2. PROTECTION OF THE JULIAN ALPS

The bulk of the Slovenian part of the Julian Alps is protected today as Triglav National Park, with Mount Triglav in the center (Figure 1). It is the only national park in the county.

The first attempts to establish a protected area in the Julian Alps date back to the first years of the twentieth century. In 1908 Albin Belar (1864–1939), an esteemed Slovenian natural scientist and seismologist, proposed a »nature conservation park above the rock-wall of Komarča« northwest of Lake Bohinj. Further coordination was interrupted by the First World War. These attempts in Austria-Hungary were connected to the drafting of the Protection and Conservation of Natural Monuments Act in 1901. In 1903, the Ministry of Education and Worship issued a decree⁵ to gather data on natural monuments in the Austrian part of the empire. The Provincial District Board of Upper Carniola requested help from Albin Belar, who prepared a catalogue of natural monuments in Carniola (*Kranjska*). In addition to a list of natural monuments, it also offered a few suggestions for protecting areas, including the Triglav Lakes Valley.⁶

Shortly after the First World War, at a general assembly in

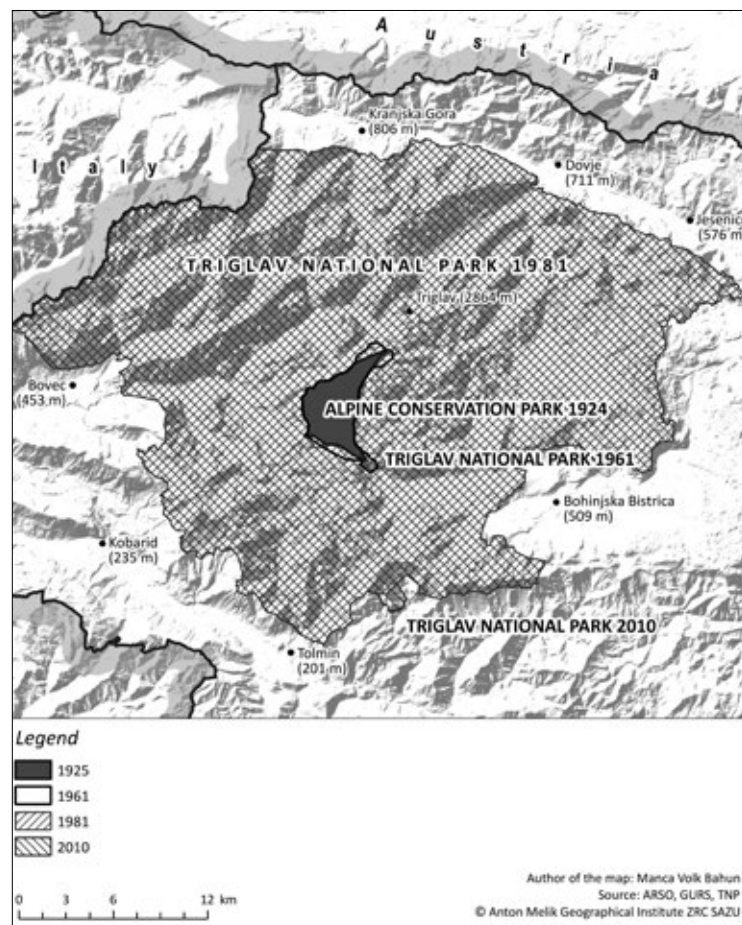


Figure 1: The evolution of Triglav National Park from 1924 to 2010. Zorn, M., Smrekar, A., Skoberne, P., Šmuc, A., Brancelj, A., Dakskobler, I., Poljanec, A., Peršolja, B., Erhartič, B., Ferk, M., Hrvatini, M., Komac, B., Ribeiro, D. 2015: Dolina Triglavskih jezer. Geografija Slovenije, 32. Ljubljana, Založba ZRC, 140 p.

³ Mikša, P., Ajlec, K. 2011: Slovene Mountaineering. Ljubljana, Planinska zveza Slovenije, 188 p. Mikša, P. 2015: "Da je Triglav ostal v slovenskih rokah, je največ moja zasluga": Jakob Aljaž in njegovo planinsko delovanje v Triglavskem pogorju. Zgodovinski časopis, 69 (1-2), pp. 112-123.

⁴ Mikša, P. 2015: "Da je Triglav ostal v slovenskih rokah, je največ moja zasluga": Jakob Aljaž in njegovo planinsko delovanje v Triglavskem pogorju. Zgodovinski časopis, 69 (1-2), pp. 112-123.

⁵ Erlass der k. k. Ministerium für Kultus und Unterricht, Z. 38.212. Wien, 1903.

⁶ Zorn, M., Smrekar, A., Skoberne, P., Šmuc, A., Brancelj, A., Dakskobler, I., Poljanec, A., Peršolja, B., Erhartič, B., Ferk, M., Hrvatini, M., Komac, B., Ribeiro, D. 2015: Dolina Triglavskih jezer. Geografija Slovenije, 32. Ljubljana, Založba ZRC, 140 p.

1919, members of the Slovenian Museum Society adopted an initiative to appoint a special group to prepare a nature protection program for the new state (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). Thus, the Nature Conservation Department (*Odsek za varstvo prirode*) was established. In 1920 it submitted a Memorandum⁷ to the Provincial Government of Slovenia, which for the first time defined and substantiated the key requirements for nature conservation in Slovenia. After a series of formal procedures in 1924,⁸ a protected zone called Alpine Conservation Park (*Alpski varstveni park*), was established in the Triglav Lakes Valley (Figure 1), which covered 1,400 ha. This was initiated by the Slovenian Museum Society, which concluded a twenty-year lease agreement with the landowner. The landowner received compensation for lost pasture rental, and all activities except for hunting and mountain tourism were prohibited. The local residents, who had lost their traditional grazing rights, were not included in the negotiations on the protected status.⁹ The protection thus started with a conflict between conservationists and locals, which has largely remained an issue until today. Even before the expiry of the lease agreement, a proposal was prepared in 1940 for expanding the protected area, but the expansion was thwarted by the Second World War. The lease agreement expired during the Second World War. It could not be renewed after the war due to political changes and especially ownership changes.

The park is considered to have been born for the second time in 1961, when a national park was established, already called Triglav National Park,¹⁰ which was only slightly larger (2,000 ha) than the prewar park (Figure 1). It was named after Mount Triglav, although the mountain was not included in the park. Soon after, various proposals were presented to expand the park, which was intended to include a major part of the Julian Alps.¹¹ A discussion was held on a bill prepared in the early 1970s. It included politicians, experts, and public institutions, but excluded private landowners and residents. This bill was fairly modern in going beyond mere nature protection. One of its objectives was »to ensure to the resident population a modern living standard. ..., opportunities for suitable employment and education, and improvement of the communal infrastructure and provision«. ¹² It was in line with the concept of polycentrism at that time. Based on several years of expert and political discussions in 1981, the Triglav National Park Act was passed.¹³ The park expanded to approximately the same area as it has today (Figure 1), with Mount Triglav in the center. After the reestablishment of multiparty democracy in 1991, it became evident that this law was only conditionally applicable because it conflicted with the new spatial planning legislation.¹⁴ In 2010, after long discussions, a new Triglav National Park Act was adopted, specifying new protection arrangements and areas, and new development orientations regarding the manner of allocating incentives and funds to the park's local communities and residents. The park currently covers 83,982 ha, or approximately 4.1% of Slovenia's territory.¹⁵

The motive for the first protection in the 1920s was nature conservation (e.g., also excluding grazing), whereas after 1981 threats to natural and cultural heritage (e.g., maintenance of traditional alpine grazing) were treated on an equal basis.¹⁶

⁷ Spomenica Odseka za varstvo prirode in prirodnih spomenikov, 1920. Glasnik Muzejskega društva za Slovenijo, 1 (1-4), pp. 69-75.

⁸ Šivic, A. 1924: Prirodni varstveni park pri Sedmih Triglavskih jezerih. Šumarski list, 48 (8), pp. 423-424.

⁹ Zorn, M., Smrekar, A., Skoberne, P., Šmuc, A., Brancelj, A., Dakskobler, I., Poljanec, A., Peršolja, B., Erhartič, B., Ferk, M., Hrvatini, M., Komac, B., Ribeiro, D. 2015: Dolina Triglavskih jezer. Geografija Slovenije, 32. Ljubljana, Založba ZRC, 140 p. Gabrovec, M., Komac, B., Kozina, J., Polajnar Horvat, K., Nared, J., Smrekar, A., Topole, M., Urbanc, M. 2017: Triglav National Park, Slovenia, and its contribution to regional development. Eco.mont, 9, special issue, pp. 57-65.

¹⁰ Odlok o razglasitvi Doline Sedmerih jezer za narodni park. Uradni list Ljudske Republike Slovenije, 18/1961. Ljubljana.

¹¹ Peterlin, S. (ed.) 1975: 50 let Triglavskega narodnega parka. Ljubljana, Prirodoslovno društvo Slovenije, 86 p.

¹² Ibid., p. 36.

¹³ Zakon o Triglavskem narodnem parku. Uradni list Socialistične Republike Slovenije, 17/1981. Ljubljana.

¹⁴ Gabrovec, M., Komac, B., Kozina, J., Polajnar Horvat, K., Nared, J., Smrekar, A., Topole, M., Urbanc, M. 2017: Triglav National Park, Slovenia, and its contribution to regional development. Eco.mont, 9, special issue, pp. 57-65.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The Julian Alps are a popular tourism and recreational area, attracting large numbers of visitors. Unfortunately, there is little information on the number and distribution of visitors.

There is no information on the number of visitors to the park because visits are not systematically recorded, although in the past some estimates of visits were made. In the late 1980s, the park management estimated the number of visitors at two million per year, and since Slovenia became independent in 1991 the number has continually grown. There is more information on visitor trends and structure. The number is greatest in the summer months, and it grows from the middle to the end of the week. The peak season is in August and the first week of September.¹⁷

3. »MODERNIZING« THE JULIAN ALPS

In spite of the protection efforts, since the beginning of the twentieth century parts of the Julian Alps have been included in certain plans that would degrade the natural environment in what is today the core of Triglav National Park around Mount Triglav. According to one of these plans, an enormous five-story observatory would stand at the top of Mount Triglav, with a gondola leading up to it. Another plan included a cog railway that would run from Bohinj to just below the summit of Mount Triglav, and another one a system of first-class ski slopes and cableways around Mount Triglav with hotels and restaurants. The planners of the ski center envisaged that such »modernization« would create a »genuine« twentieth-century Alpine tourist paradise in Slovenia.¹⁸

The construction of mountain lodges and paths in the late nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, when the »ethnic struggle« over the mountains resulted in a branched infrastructure,¹⁹ is not viewed as highly problematic with regard to the degradation of the mountain landscape. However, these projects entailed construction on a much larger scale and consequently much greater environmental pressure from many more visitors.

Project 1: Road, Cableway, and Cog Railway to Mount Triglav

In 1897, the journal *Planinski vestnik* first mentioned a railway project to Mount Triglav. Jakop Aljaž wrote of his vision of an electric train leading to Mount Triglav and to a Grand Hotel at its peak.²⁰ His vision of the future of the Triglav Range is connected with »modernization« projects across the Alps; for example, in 1893 a cog railway was built leading up to the Kleine Scheidegg Pass beneath Mount Eiger in Switzerland (at an elevation of 2,061 m); in 1896, construction began on a railway higher up, leading to the Jungfrauoch Saddle at an elevation of 3,454 m.

Ten years passed before further mention was made of the railway connection to Mount Triglav. This time it was more earnest. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the newly built Bohinj railway, opened in 1906, turned life upside down in remote Bohinj in the southeastern Julian Alps and brought about a genuine boom in tourism for the previously difficult-to-access region. The Bohinj railway was a direct link between the north and northeast lands of Austria and the Adriatic Sea or the Port of Trieste. Thus, increasingly more tourists started coming to the Bohinj region by train. Bohinjska Bistrica became a popular exit point for travelers. Hundreds of travelers would disembark from the train there every day.²¹

Local tourism workers and civil servants started coming up with new ideas for bringing the nearby, though still remote, Triglav Range closer to the masses—reaping as much profit as possible in the process. As the highest and most impressive peak in the Julian Alps, Mount Triglav was very popular; for this reason, as soon as the Bohinj railway was opened, their enthusiasm gave rise to the idea of building

¹⁷ Cigale, D., Lampič, B., Mrak, I. 2010: Turistični obisk in zavarovana območja – primer Triglavskega narodnega parka. Dela, 33, pp. 75-96.

¹⁸ Triglavske žičnice: program, 1962. Bled, Zavod za izgradnjo turističnih centrov v Triglavskem gorstvu, 16 p.

¹⁹ Mikša, P. 2011: Narodnostni boji v planinstvu na Slovenskem do 1. svetovne vojne. Zgodovina za vse, 18 (2), pp. 59-69.

²⁰ Aljaž, J. 1897: Kaj bodo naši potomci s Triglavom počeli? Planinski vestnik, 3 (12), p. 192.

²¹ Železnica na vrh Triglava, 1908. Promet in gostilna, 1 (1), pp. 9-10; 1 (3), pp. 29-30.



Figure 2: The planned cableway (project A; left) and cog railway (project B; right) to the summit of Mount Triglav. Zorn, M., Smrekar, A., Skoberne, P., Šmuc, A., Brancelj, A., Dakskobler, I., Poljanec, A., Peršolja, B., Erhartič, B., Ferk, M., Hrvatin, M., Komac, B., Ribeiro, D. 2015: Dolina Triglavskih jezer. Geografija Slovenije, 32. Ljubljana, Založba ZRC, 140 p.

a railway from Bohinjska Bistrica to the very summit of Mount Triglav.²²

Slovenian newspapers²³ were already mentioning a possible railway to the summit in 1907, when the Ministry of Railways awarded Fritz Steiner from Prague, adjunct to a national railway company, a one-year permit for technical preparatory work for a railway from Bohinjska Bistrica to Mount Triglav. Based on his findings, two detailed plans for a railway to Mount Triglav were drafted in 1909, known as *Das Triglavbahnprojekt* (The Triglav Rail Project).²⁴ They were prepared by Steiner and the Slovenian engineer Maks Klodič, who had already worked on the construction of the Bohinj railway and was familiar with the local terrain. The two experts prepared

projects A and B (Figure 2). Project A foresaw a road and cableway to Mount Triglav, whereas Project B foresaw an adhesion and cog railway.²⁵ According to Project A, a new road would run from Stara Fužina (547 m) at Lake Bohinj to the Velo Polje Pasture (1,680 m) and from there tourists would be taken to the summit by cableway. According to Project B, a cog railway would run from Bohinjska Bistrica (509 m) directly to Mount Triglav. It was to be a narrow-gauge line with a track gauge of 1,000 mm. The first section, approximately 13 km long, was to be an adhesion one, whereas the second one, 11.4 km long, was to be a cog one. The entire ride from Bohinjska Bistrica to Mount Triglav, including changing trains, would take two and a half hours.²⁶

Steiner calculated that if they could count on fifteen thousand visitors per year in the beginning and later twenty thousand guests, the projects would become profitable. It was speculated that plans A or B were feasible and could be carried out in slightly over a year.²⁷ If the number of visitors became a reality, this railway would have almost surely been the busiest railway in Slovenia and it would have soon recouped the initial investment and become a highly lucrative business. The fact that such railways are highly profitable is seen from the example of the railway to the Jungfrauoch Saddle in Switzerland. In 2015 it carried over one million visitors and generated an income of over CHF 100 million. The impact of this daily burden on the environment is indicated by the fact that in 2015 there were forty-two days with five thousand visitors each and 117 days with over 3,500 visitors carried.²⁸

The idea was not realized in part because of the strained international events in the years that followed (the First World War and the collapse of the Austria-Hungary).

²² Ibid.

²³ e.g., *Železnica na Triglav, 1907*. Domoljub, 20 (31), p. 486.

²⁴ Steiner, F. 1909: *Das Triglavbahnprojekt*. *Allgemeinen Bauzeitung*, 2, pp. 1-34.

²⁵ Sorč, E. 2006: *Skrivnosti Bohinjskega predora*. Ljubljana, Holding Slovenske železnice, 304 p.

²⁶ Steiner, F. 1909: *Das Triglavbahnprojekt*. *Allgemeinen Bauzeitung*, 2, pp. 1-34.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ *Geschäftsbericht 2015 Jungfrauobahn Holding AG, 2016*. Jungfrauobahn Holding AG, Interlaken, 92 p.

Project 2: Meteorological observatory at the summit of Mount Triglav

After the Second World War there came a time of »great« ideas in new socialistic Yugoslavia that were intended to contribute to rebuilding after the war. Following the example of some countries that had modern meteorological observatories at their highest summits—for example, Zugspitze Peak at 2,962 m in Germany, since 1900; Kasprowy Wierch Peak at 1,987 m in the Polish Tatras since 1937 (Figure 3), and Lomnický štít Peak, at 2,654 m in the Slovak Tatras since 1940²⁹—Slovenia and Yugoslavia, too, were to build something similar at the very summit of the highest mountain. Before the war, Yugoslavia had its only high-elevation meteorological station at Mount Bjelašnica (2,067 m) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was burned during the war.³⁰

The first meteorological observations in the Julian Alps were conducted in 1897 by the keepers of the Triglav Lodge at Mount Kredarica (2,515 m) just below Mount Triglav, which had been built just one year earlier.³¹ Soon these measurements were taken over by meteorologists that had a problem with the reliability of the data, especially due to wind. This was also the one of the main arguments why an observatory ought to be built on the summit of Mount Triglav.³² The idea of the observatory was presented in early 1946.³³

Only a few peaks in Slovenia could be used as a suitable location for setting up a modern meteorological observatory, but because the designers considered the possibility of money flowing in from tourism to be very important, the highest peak, Mount Triglav, was given priority. With this observatory, the Yugoslavia of the time would have acquired the fourth-highest-elevation building in Europe; the only three higher ones would have been Switzerland's Jungfrauoch Sphinx Observatory (3,571 m) Austria's Sonnblick (3,107 m), and the aforementioned German Zugspitze.³⁴

The observatory on Mount Triglav would also have become a highly frequented tourist attraction because many such buildings on impressive peaks are accessible by gondola lifts and provide a diverse selection of restaurants for tourists. For example, thanks to its cable car, Kasprowy Wierch Peak (Figure 3) ranks first as the most frequently visited mountain summit in Poland. Every year it has as many as one million visitors.³⁵

The project of setting up an observatory was ordered by the Federal Hydrometeorological Institute (*Zvezni hidrometeorološki zavod*) in Belgrade, which would have also financed its construction. Five sketches and one model were produced (Figure 4).³⁶ In 1949, the first blasting operations were carried out and that summer the newspapers warned visitors to Mount



Figure 3: Meteorological observatory on Kasprowy Wierch Peak, 1,987 m (Polish Tatras) on the left and upper gondola station on the right (Photo: Matija Zorn).

²⁹ cf. Škodič, D. 2015: Observatorij na vrhu Triglava. *Planinski vestnik*, 115 (4), pp. 10-14.

³⁰ Čadež, M. 1946: Vprašanje višinskih vremenskih opazovalnic v naših gorah. *Planinski vestnik*, 46 (1), pp. 36-38.

³¹ Mikša, P., Vehar, M. 2016: Kredar'ca: ob 120-letnici postavitve prve kočice pod Triglavom. Ljubljana, Planinsko društvo Ljubljana-Matica, 59 p.

³² Trontelj, M. 1994: Vreme v visokogorju: 40 let meteoroloških opazovanj na Kredarici. Ljubljana, Mihelač, 47 p.

³³ Čadež, M. 1946: Vprašanje višinskih vremenskih opazovalnic v naših gorah. *Planinski vestnik*, 46 (1), pp. 36-38.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ URL: http://www.zakopane-online.eu/75,kasprowy_wierch_-_most_famous_p.htm (11. 3. 2017).

³⁶ Škodič, D. 2015: Observatorij na vrhu Triglava. *Planinski vestnik*, 115 (4), pp. 10-14.



Figure 4: A model of the observatory on the summit of Mount Triglav
(Source: Archives of the Slovenian Environment Agency).

Triglav of the danger of falling rocks and advised them to visit the peak in early morning hours and leave it by 10 am, when preparatory work for the observatory foundations commenced.³⁷

The sketches differ from one another; however, it seems that they all envisaged rooms for visitors, who would also have a special lookout terrace at their disposal. A cableway would lead to the observatory because that would have also been the means by which the observatory could be constantly supplied.³⁸

Of course, not all were satisfied with such development of

mountain tourism. The public was upset over such »violence« against the Slovenians' »holy mountain« and the work came to a halt overnight.³⁹ From today's perspective, the observatory on top of Mount Triglav appears to have been thought up in order to garner prestige and not primarily to benefit meteorological measurements. Regarding the technological opportunities for obtaining data, it was already becoming clear that the weather station at Mount Kredarica would suffice.⁴⁰

Project 3: Ski center

At the end of the 1950s, at a time of general modernization in Yugoslavia, the idea arose to build a high-alpine sports and tourist center, thus bringing the »untapped« mountain world closer to the working masses. The idea of a ski center around Mount Triglav was backed by the 1968 study »Analysis of Possibilities for Developing Winter Tourism in Slovenia.« in which it was stated that the Julian Alps and Mount Triglav in particular offered the best skiing conditions in Slovenia.⁴¹ The earnestness of this idea is also demonstrated by the fact that the predicted increase in traffic in the Upper Carniola (*Gorenjska*) region due to the ski center was an important factor when arguing the need for building a modern freeway from Ljubljana to Jesenice.⁴²

Two options were weighed: Velo Polje Pasture and Triglav Cableways.⁴³ According to the first option, the main center was to be built on the Velo Polje Pasture (Figure 5).⁴⁴ In the beginning, in late 1950s, the preparations were led by the Committee for the Velo Polje Pasture Winter Sports Center (*Odbor za zimsko športni center Velo polje*) at the Slovenian Tourist Association. Afterwards an Institute for the Development of Velo Polje Pasture (*Zavod za izgradnjo Velega polja*) was established in 1961, with its headquarters in Bled.⁴⁵ In 1963, it was renamed the Institute for Building Sports and Tourist Centers in

³⁷ Planinci pozor!, 1949. Slovenski poročevalec, 10 (173), p. 4.

³⁸ Kunaver, P. 1948: Observatorij vrh Triglava. Planinski vestnik, 48 (11-12), pp. 334-336.

³⁹ Škodič, D. 2015: Observatorij na vrhu Triglava. Planinski vestnik, 115 (4), pp. 10-14.

⁴⁰ Čadež, M. 1946: Vprašanje višinskih vremenskih opazovalnic v naših gorah. Planinski vestnik, 46 (1), pp. 36-38.

⁴¹ Iten, J., Rey, M. 1968: Analiza možnosti razvoja zimskega turizma v Sloveniji: predhodno poročilo. Turistični vestnik, 16 (6), pp. 203-222.

⁴² Arhiv Republike Slovenije: SI AS 1130 - Republiški sekretariat za turizem Socialistične republike Slovenije (1963-1965): Documents: 26/61-63-Je/I (14. 7. 1963), 351-1/63 (31. 7. 1963), 177/1-63 (8. 10. 1963), box 2: 44/2. Ljubljana.

⁴³ Maher, I. 1991: Ogroženi triglavi očiak. Planinski vestnik, 91 (9), pp. 379-381.

⁴⁴ Gams, I. 1962: Velo polje, tako kot je in kot naj bi bilo. Planinski vestnik, 62 (5), pp. 217-223.

⁴⁵ Maher, I. 1991: Ogroženi triglavi očiak. Planinski vestnik, 91 (9), pp. 379-381.



Figure 5: *Velo Polje Pasture (1,680 m), where a ski center was to be built in a high-mountain area around which ski slopes were planned (Photo: Matija Zorn).*

the Triglav Range (*Zavod za izgradnjo športno-turističnih centrov v Triglavskem gorstvu*). In 1967, the institute was annexed to the Institute for the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Bled (*Zavod za pospeševanje in razvoj turizma na Bledu*).⁴⁶

On Velo Polje Pasture a large ski center would be built with hotels and catering facilities and, simultaneously, a federal high-alpine center for training elite competitors. Ski slopes would be set up across the vast slopes and valleys in the vicinity, ski jumps would be built, and in the summer it would be a high-alpine hiking destination visited by the masses.⁴⁷

After thorough study and research, more support and priority was given to the second option: the Triglav Cableways project (Figure 6). This was a planned system of cableways for connecting the Krma Valley east of Mount Triglav with the high-alpine area around Mount Triglav.⁴⁸ The project foresaw

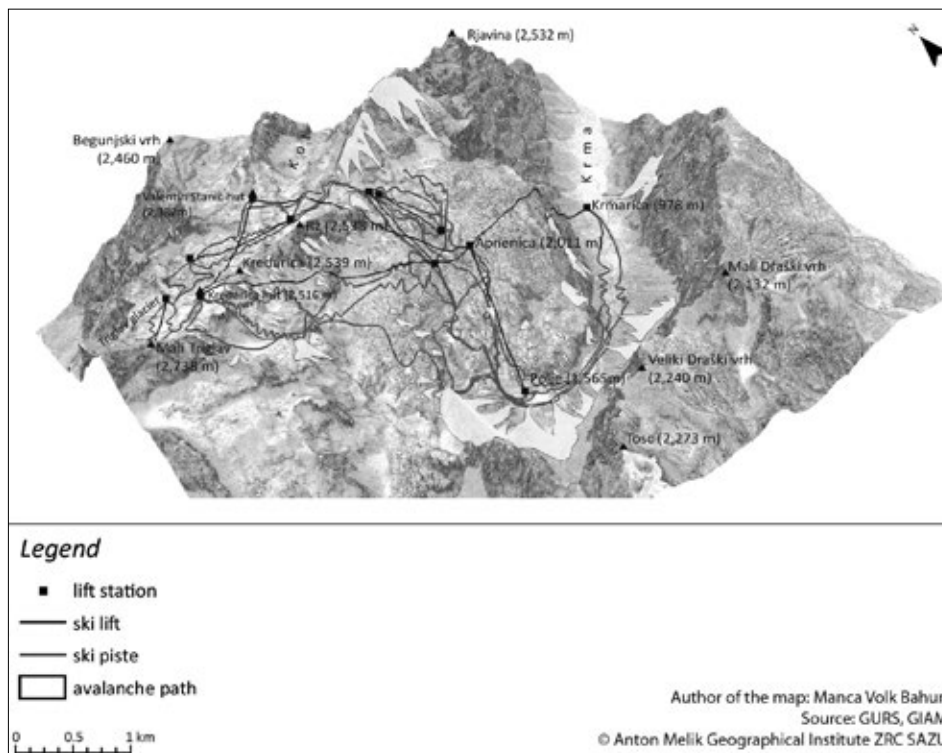


Figure 6: *Sketch of the envisioned ski center on Mount Triglav. Triglavske žičnice: program, 1962. Bled, Zavod za izgradnjo turističnih centrov v Triglavskem gorstvu, 16 p. Turistični vestnik, 1966, 14 (6), pp. 259-271.*

⁴⁶ Benedik, B. 1968: Projekt "Triglavske žičnice". *Turistični vestnik*, 16 (6), pp. 244-246.

⁴⁷ Maher, I. 1991: Ogroženi triglavi očak. *Planinski vestnik*, 91 (9), pp. 379-381.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*



Figure 7: Skiing competition on the Triglav Glacier in August 1975 (Source: Delo photo documentation archive).

building a circular system of gondola cableways and a few additional smaller ones. Individual stations were to contain catering facilities with restaurants, bars, and accommodations. The foreseen construction is presented in detail in the journal *Turistični vestnik* (1966). Setting up the cableways would have additionally required road access to the Krma Valley, electrification, setting up telephone lines, regulating the flow of mountain streams, and building various protective structures against avalanches. Triglav Cableways was to have become the most important

and attractive facility offered to tourists in Slovenia. It was to make skiing possible all year round on the Triglav Glacier (today at an elevation of approximately 2,500 m) and thus provide tourists with the chance to ski regardless of the season. When the idea for a ski center arose, the glacier had a surface area of approximately 10 ha and skiing competitions (Figure 7) were held during the summer months. The glacier also made summer training possible for the Yugoslav ski team. The glacier has now shrunk to approximately half a hectare (Figure 8),⁴⁹ and so it is no longer suitable for summer skiing.

Because of the large-scale plan, the program could not have been carried out at once, and construction was foreseen in two stages. In the first stage, a gondola lift would be built from the Krma Valley to Mount Kredarica and three corresponding two-seater chair lifts. In the second stage, new lodging and other support facilities would be built.⁵⁰ Slovenian newspapers wrote a great deal about this construction, but most of the contributors had doubts about the profitability of the project.⁵¹

As mentioned, in 1967 the Institute for Building Sports and Tourist Centers in the Triglav Range was annexed to the Institute for the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Bled, and in the years that followed the idea for cableways around Mount Triglav slowly faded away. This was probably also due to the failure to include the proposal in the seven-year national plan for tourism development in Slovenia.⁵² This idea is considered one of the biggest unrealized tourism projects in Slovenia.

Today there is one high-alpine ski center in Triglav National Park: the Vogel Ski Center south of Lake Bohinj at elevations between 1,535 and 1,800 m. It started operating in 1964, when this part of the Julian Alps was not yet part of Triglav National Park. The ski center was included in the park with its enlargement in 1981. Today a modern gondola can transport more than 950 people per hour from the valley to the ski slopes.⁵³ In 2015 it carried around 190,000 visitors, with peaks in February and August.⁵⁴ Because the ski center is inside Triglav National Park, it is bound by all of the restrictions connected with nature protection (e.g., construction of new ski slopes and ski lifts is limited, and artificial

⁴⁹ Gabrovec, M., Ortar, J., Pavšek, M., Zorn, M., Triglav Čekada, M. 2013: The Triglav glacier between the years 1999 and 2012. *Acta geographica Slovenica*, 53 (2), pp. 257-293. Gabrovec, M., Hrvatin, M., Komac, B., Ortar, J., Pavšek, M., Topole, M., Triglav Čekada, M., Zorn, M. 2014: Triglavski ledenik. *Geografija Slovenije*, 30. Ljubljana, Založba ZRC, 252 p.

⁵⁰ Triglavske žičnice: program, 1962. Bled, Zavod za izgradnjo turističnih centrov v Triglavskem gorstvu, 16 p.

⁵¹ e.g., Benedik, B. 1963: Financiranje triglavskih žičnic. *Turistični vestnik*, 11 (6), pp. 173-174.

⁵² Arhiv Republike Slovenije: SI AS 1130 - Republiški sekretariat za turizem Socialistične republike Slovenije (1963-1965): Documents: 26/61-63-Je/I (14. 7. 1963), 351-1/63 (31. 7. 1963), 177/1-63 (8. 10. 1963), box 2: 44/2. Ljubljana.

⁵³ URL: <http://www.vogel.si/summer/vogel/history> (11. 3. 2017).

⁵⁴ Žičnice Vogel Bohinj: Poslovno poročilo, 2016. Ukanc, Žičnice Vogel Bohinj, 23 p.

snow production is prohibited,⁵⁵ which hinder its development, according to the management.

The second high-alpine ski center in the Julian Alps is located on Mount Kanin on the Italian border: the Kanin Ski Center. It started operating in the early 1970s. It extends across elevations between 1,600 and 2,300 m and it is thus the highest ski center in Slovenia. Since 2009 it has been connected with the Sella Nevea Ski Center on the Italian side of Mount Kanin. The Kanin Ski Center is not part of Triglav National Park, which means fewer nature protection restrictions. The record ski season was in 1983 with 144,000 skiers.⁵⁶

4. CONCLUSION

None of the »grand plans« for building an »Alpine paradise« around Mount Triglav were carried out. Even though certain ideas were starting to be realized (e.g., the observatory), the construction itself never took place. The reasons why the railway, observatory, and ski center were never built have one thing in common: finances and the infeasibility of funding the project. The demanding nature of the construction and the consequent high costs resulted in abandoning the ideas. The railway was never built in part because of the strained international events in the years that followed (World War I and the disintegration of Austria-Hungary). In the case of the observatory, the public was extremely upset over such »violence« against the Slovenian »holy mountain,« which is why the work came to a halt just days after it began.⁵⁷

In the case of the ski center, the emerging consciousness of the need to protect nature⁵⁸ played an important role. Because of the environmental degradation during construction, which would have been followed by overcrowding of the high mountains, such a project would be unsustainable, which led to diminished support from politicians.

Today the primary aim of Triglav National Park »is the protection of nature, conservation of outstanding nature and culture, protection of endemic, rare and threatened plant and animal species, natural ecosystems and elements of inanimate nature, as well as the conservation and maintenance of the cultural landscape,« and to ensure sustainable development with proper management.⁵⁹ These tasks would

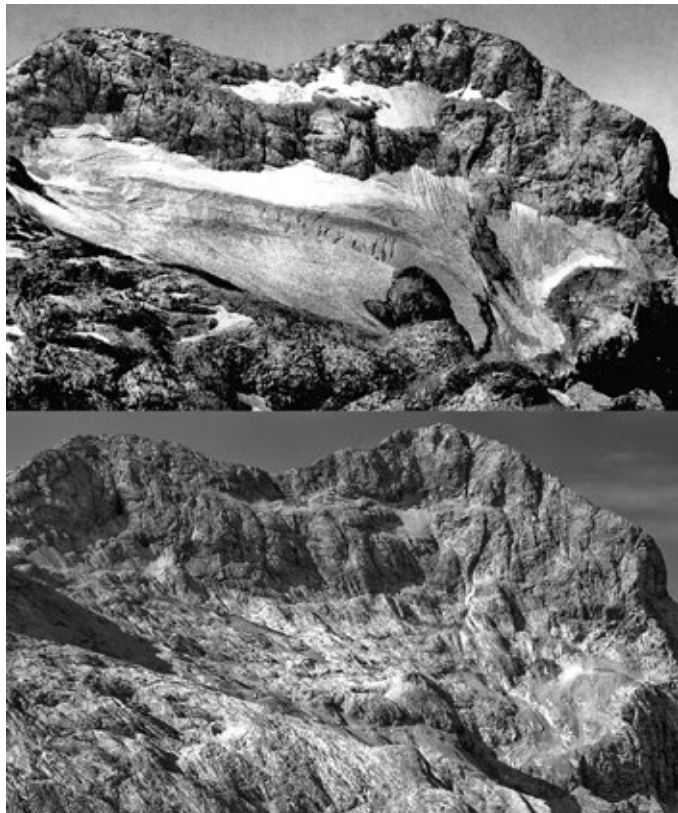


Figure 8: Mount Triglav with the Triglav Glacier, which measured around 40 ha at the end of the nineteenth century (above; Photo: Alois Beer) but had shrunk to only half a hectare by 2012 (below; Photo: Jaka Ortar).

⁵⁵ Zakon o Triglavskem narodnem parku. Uradni list Republike Slovenije, 52/2010. Ljubljana.

⁵⁶ Blazetič, N. 2013: Žičnica sama ne more preživeti. Primorske novice, 5. 12. 2013. URL: <http://www.primorske.si/Priloge/Na-sneg/Zicnica-sama-ne-more-preziveti.aspx> (11. 3. 2017).

⁵⁷ Planinci pozor!, 1949. Slovenski poročevalec, 10 (173), p. 4.

⁵⁸ cf. Polajnar Horvat, K., Smrekar, A., Zorn, M. 2014: The development of environmental thought in Slovenia: a short. *Ekonomski i ekohistorija*, 10, pp. 16-25.

⁵⁹ URL: http://www.tnp.si/get_to_know/C177/ (11. 3. 2017).

be difficult to achieve if the aforementioned project had been realized. Even today, without any cable cars leading to Mount Triglav, the area is overcrowded during the high season in the summer. During this time, the top of Mount Triglav is visited by up to three thousand hikers per day,⁶⁰ and altogether around fifty thousand hikers are believed to visit the summit every year, which of course places a great burden on the mountain environment.⁶¹ In order to ameliorate this, since the 1990s the Alpine Association of Slovenia has carried out a »quality number« program through which it seeks to more uniformly distribute visits to Slovenian mountains across all of Slovenia's high mountains,⁶² which—in the case of Mount Triglav as a Slovenian national symbol that »every Slovenian must climb«—is difficult.

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SUMMARY

The Julian Alps are the highest mountains in Slovenia, the major part of which is today part of Triglav National Park, the only national park in the country. Its origin dates back to the early twentieth century, in 1924, when the Triglav Lakes Valley was protected as Alpine Conservation Park. In 1981 the park expanded to almost its present area of approximately 840 km². Parallel with the desire to protect, contradictory ideas on the »modernization« of the Julian Alps also arose with the aim of boosting tourism; that is, construction of a cog railway, ski center, and meteorological observatory.

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