

# Sustainable Geotourism Region Mattertal (Switzerland): **Valorisation of natural and cultural landscapes through new products and services**

Experiences from a Swiss «Modellvorhaben»

Institute of Management & Regional Economics

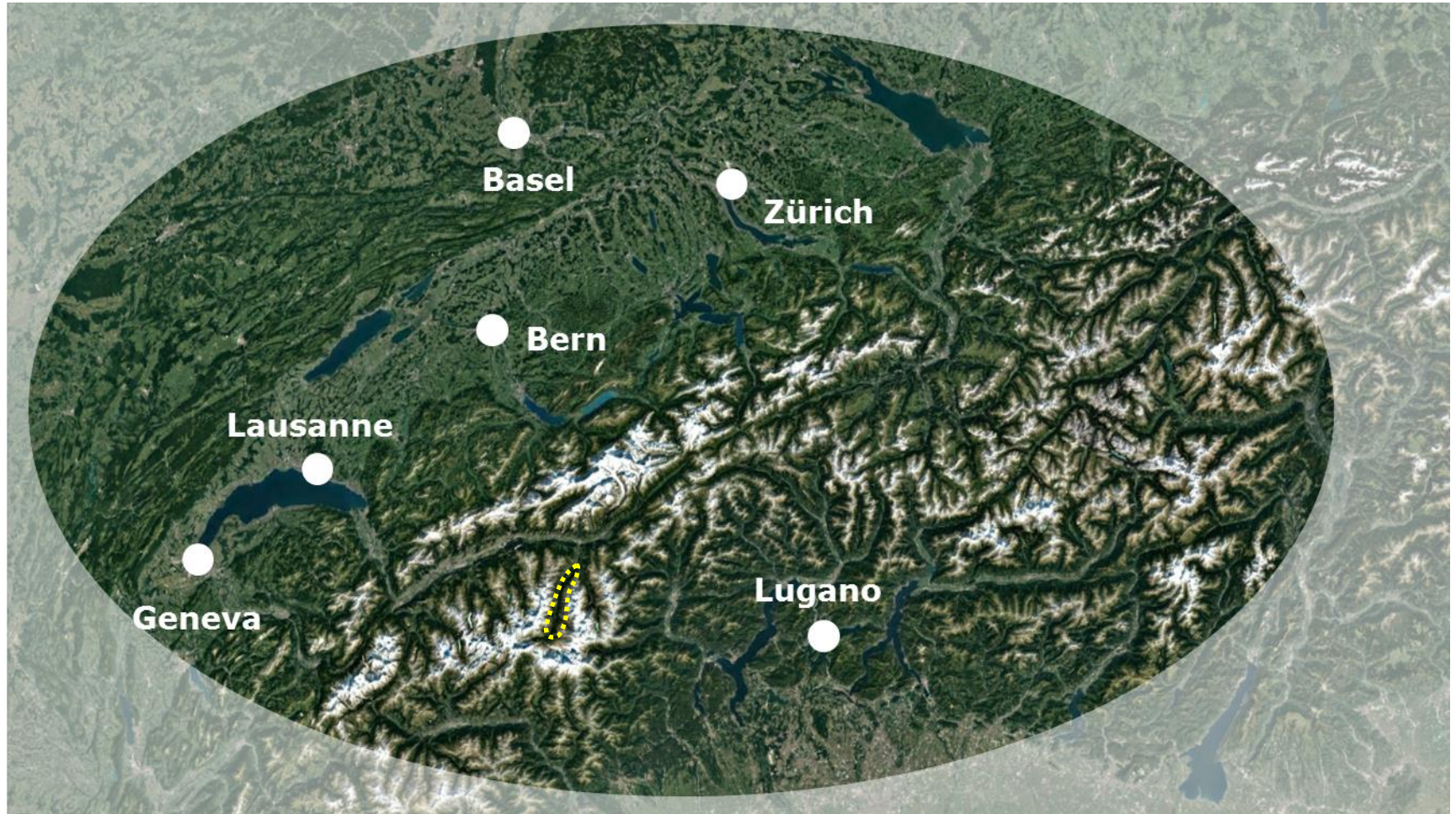
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AlpWeek, Grassau

13.10.2016

## Mattertal – where is it?

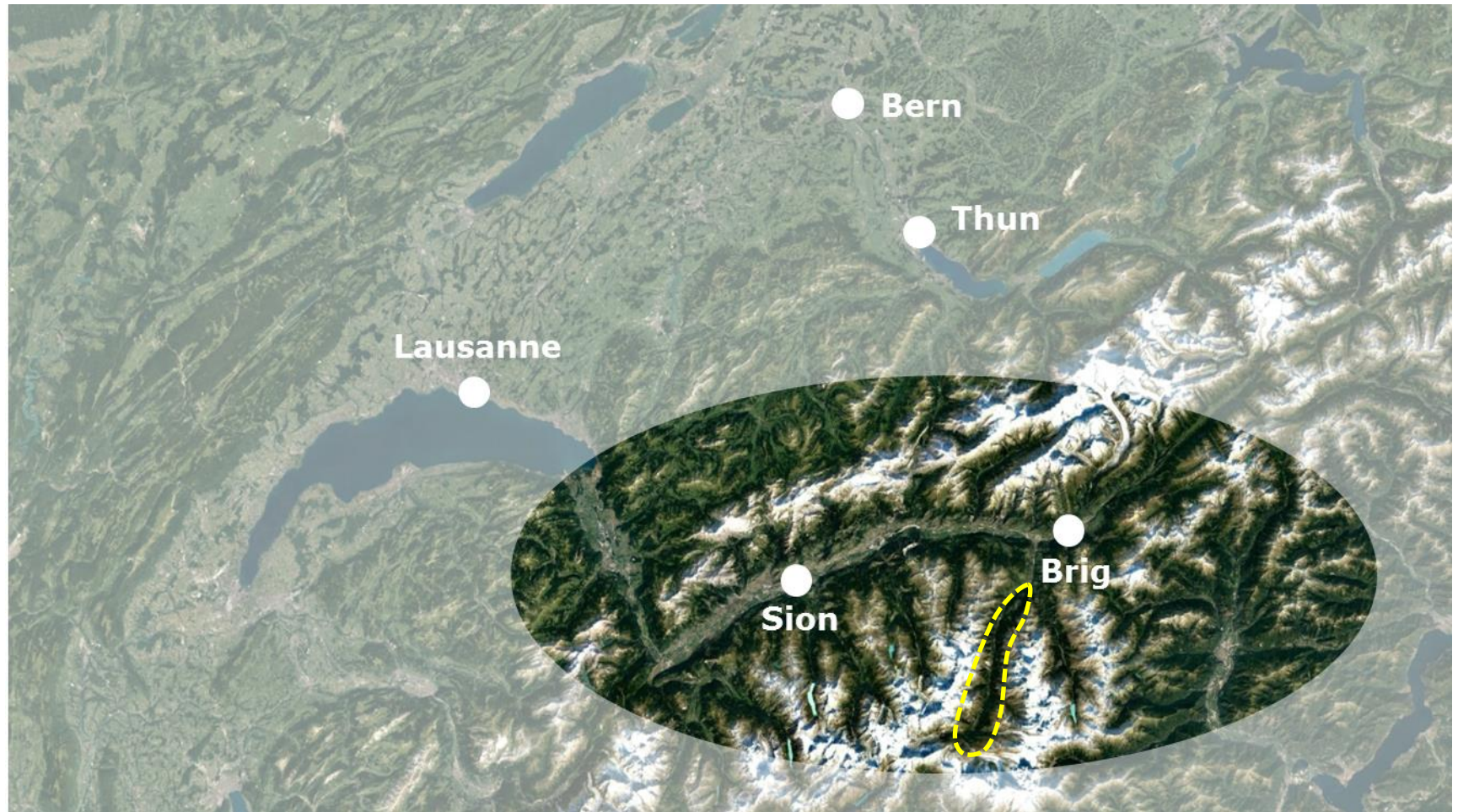
=> Switzerland





## Mattertal – where is it?

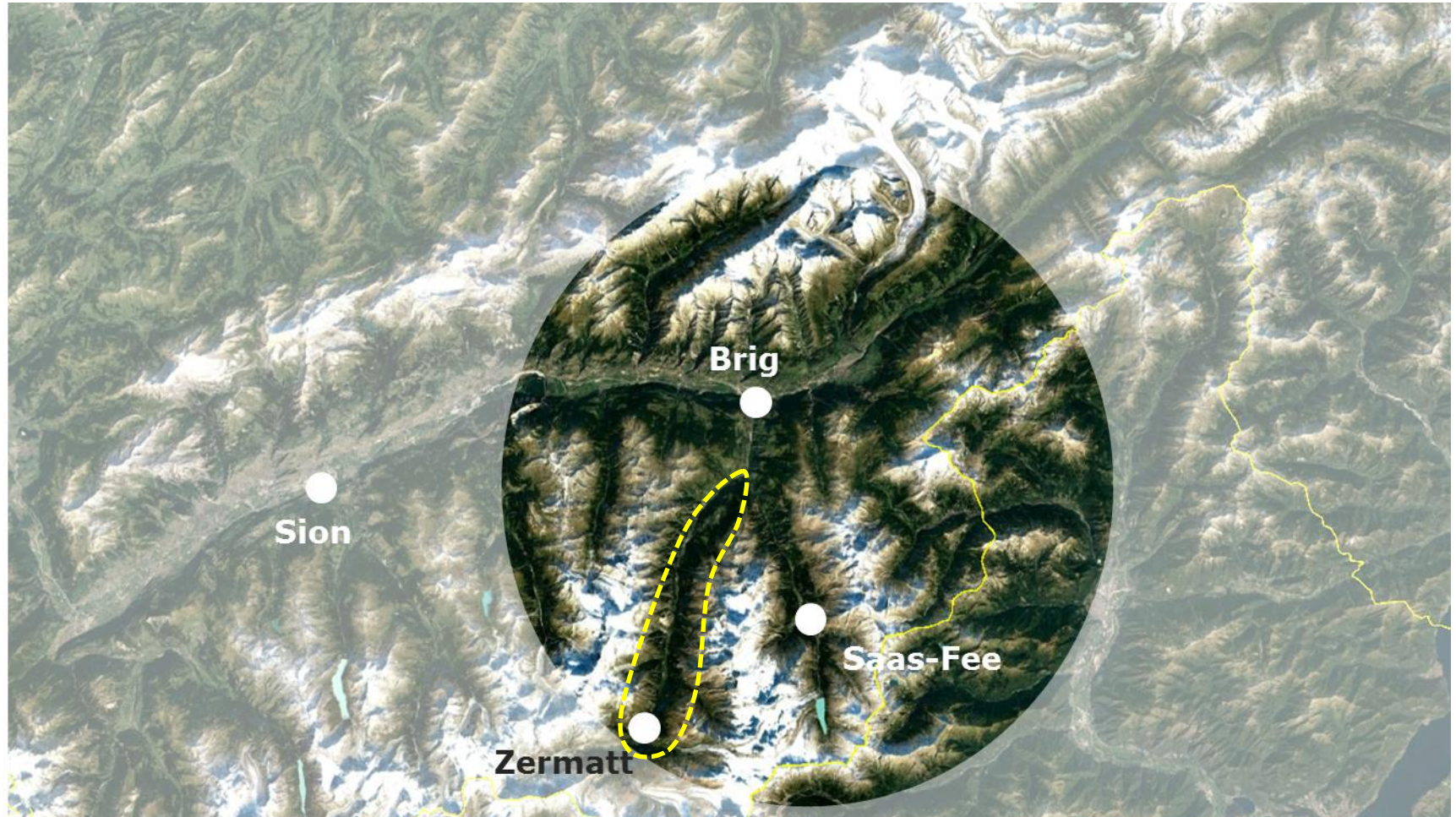
=> Canton of Valais





## Mattertal – where is it?

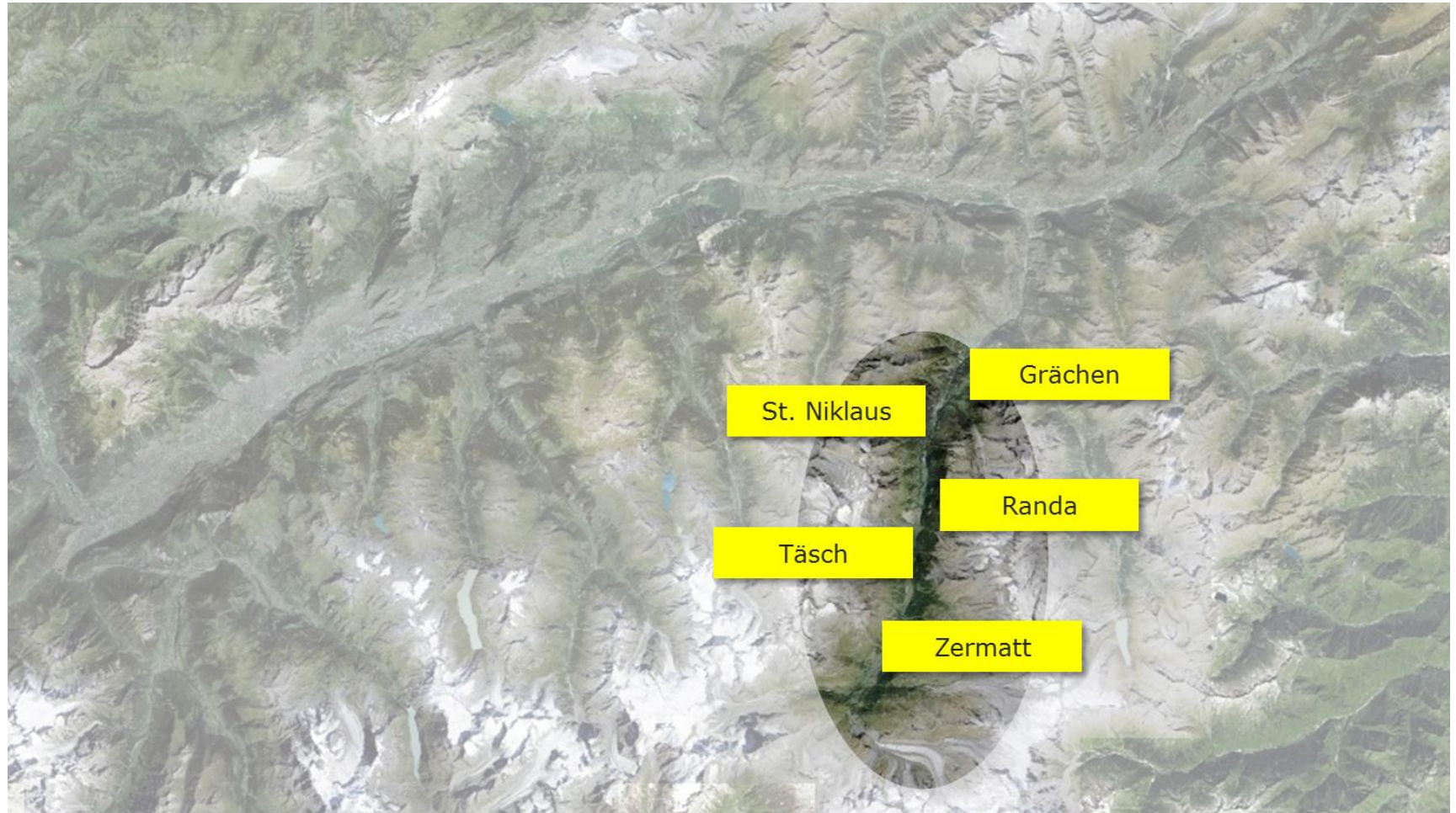
=> Upper Valais





# Mattertal – where is it?

=> Municipalities



## Strengths

- Unique natural and cultural landscape
- Impressive glaciers, permafrost areas
- Traditional cultural landscape
  - traditional water pipes
  - alpine farming
  - religious buildings
- High biodiversity

## Impressive glaciers





## Traditional water pipes





## Alpine farming



## Religious buildings





## Challenges

- Out-migration
- Decline in jobs
- Declining regional value added
- Occupancy of hotels and second homes is subject to high seasonal fluctuations
- Natural resources and traditional landscapes are under pressure
- The municipalities in the front part of the valley hardly benefit from Zermatt as internationally known holiday destination

## The Swiss «Modellvorhaben»...

...is a funding program from the Swiss Confederation to support new and innovative approaches for a sustainable regional and spatial development.

### Main goals of the Swiss «Modellvorhaben»

- Supporting the development of **innovative approaches** and working methods in «application-oriented laboratories» of spatial development.
- To contribute to concrete, long-term and **cross-sectoral implementation of various spatially relevant public policies**;
- Strengthening **co-operation between different institutional levels** (municipalities, cantons, Confederation);
- Fostering the **exchange of knowledge** and the transfer of knowledge between the different policy areas and stakeholders;
- Develop and **disseminate knowledge** that is useful to other cities, municipalities, regions and cantons as well as to the Confederation.

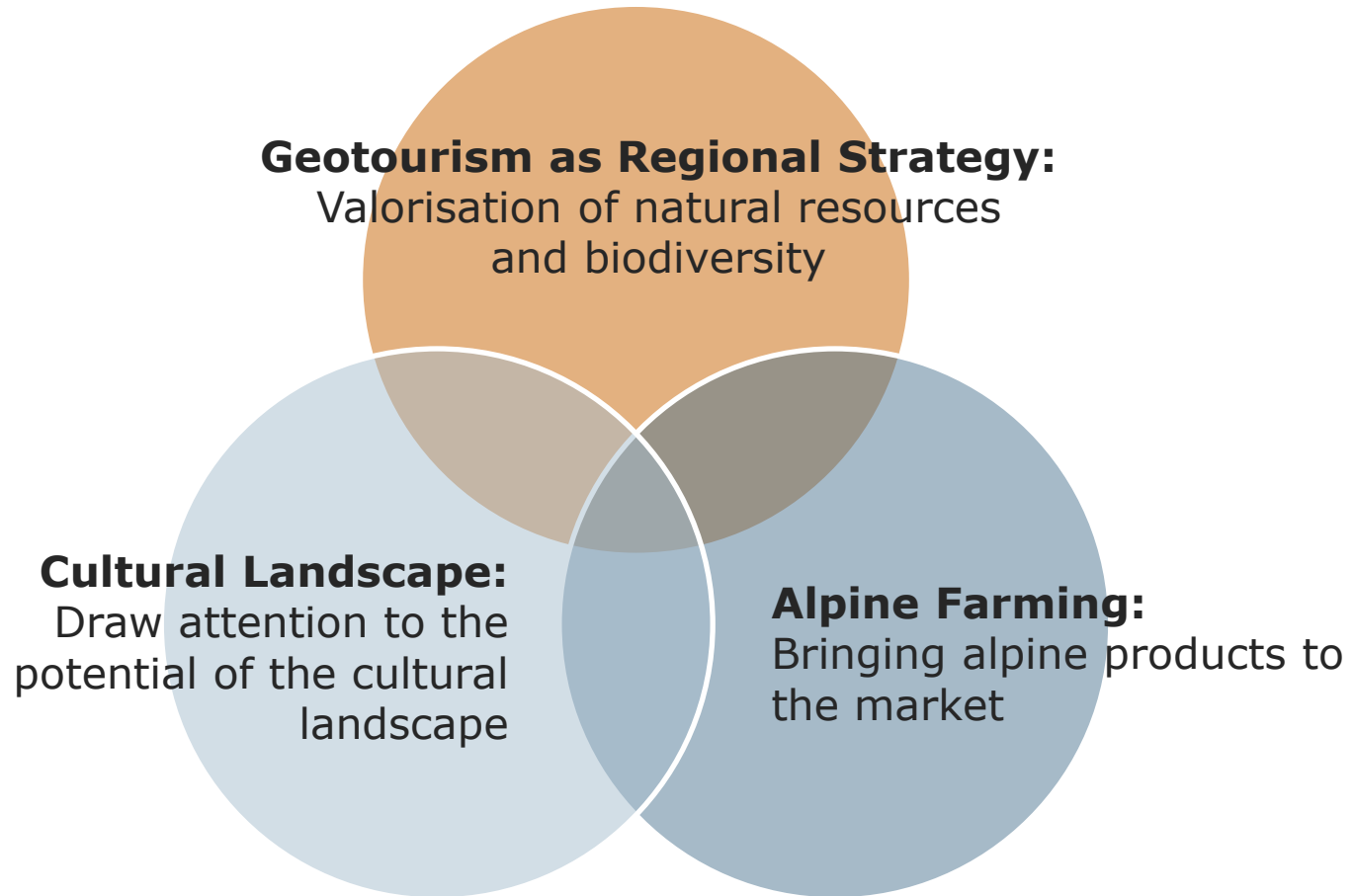


## Objectives of „Geotourism Region Mattertal“

- Development of a **Geotourism strategy**.
- Development of a **concrete product portfolio** for putting a monetary value on natural and cultural landscapes.
- Improvement of **regional and sectoral cooperation**.
- **Raising awareness** of stakeholders in tourism and municipalities for regional approaches in the field of sustainable tourism.
- Improving the **exchange of experience** among sustainability-oriented tourism destinations.

# Strategy

## **Concrete products in three thematic areas:**





## Work Packages

The strategy and the corresponding measures are developed in a multi-stage, participatory process.

### **WP 1: Potential analysis and strategy development**

- Potential analysis, best-practice analysis
- Development of a vision, goals and strategies

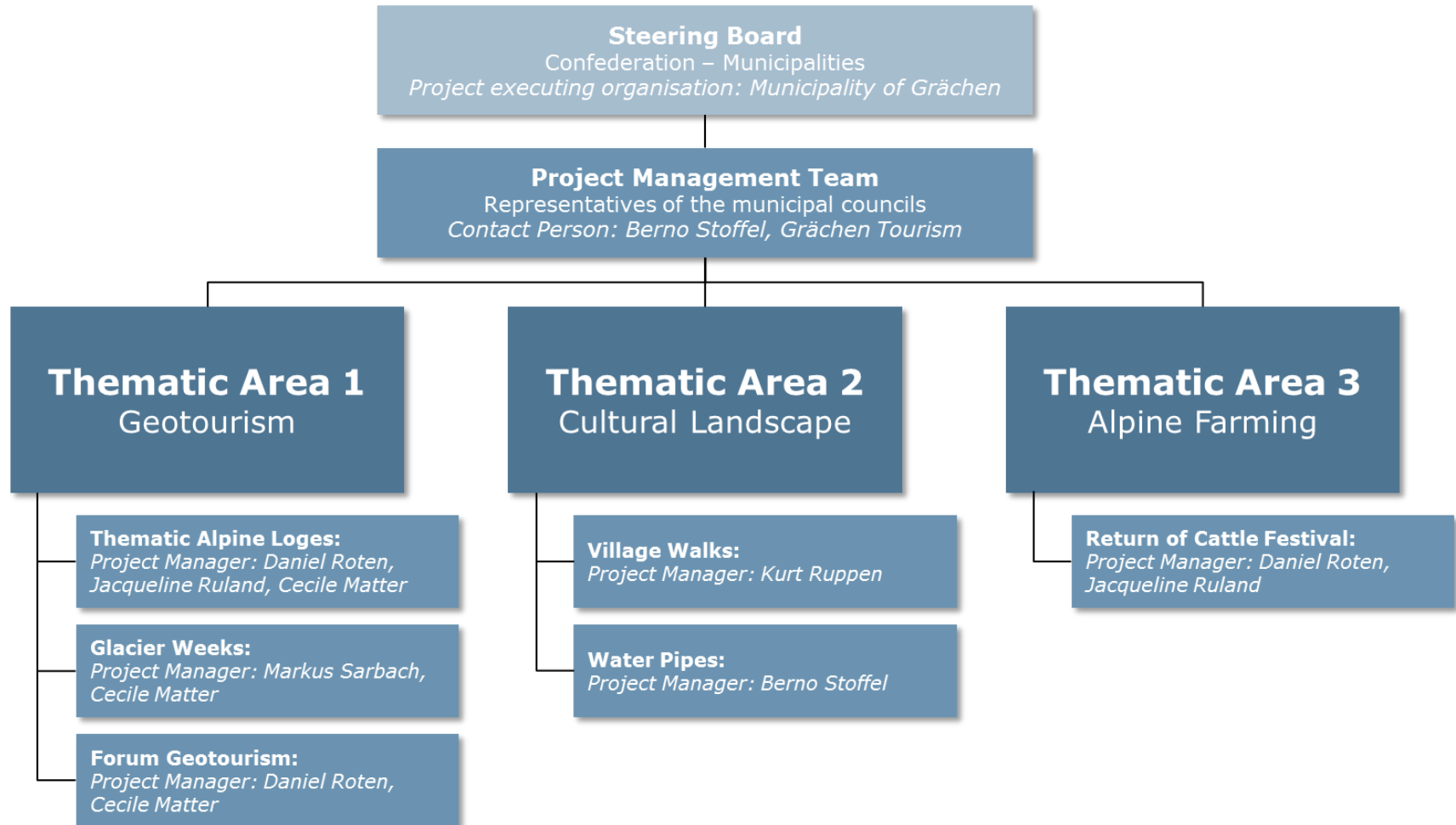
### **WP 2: Implementation**

- Launch of concrete products within the three thematic areas
- Additional fundraising

### **WP 3: Evaluation and further development (after 2017)**

- Internal Evaluation of the project
- Further development of the project

# Project Management



## Budget

### Budget

- The project costs for the period from 2014 to 2017 are **CHF 360'000.-**
- The **Confederation pays CHF 180'000.-**
- The **municipalities of the Matteredal pay CHF 180'000.-** (approx. CHF 9'000.- / year / municipality)

### Expenditures

- Approx. 10% for project development
- Approx. 5% for communication
- Approx. 15% for basic activities (secretariat, reporting, meeting etc.)
- Approx. 70% for concrete projects



## Products

**Thematic Alpine Loges:** Mountain lodges in the region are coherently positioned and promoted. Information and activities on locally visible natural phenomenon and geological features are offered.

**Glacier Weeks:** Tailor-made offers for schools and families including transportation, accommodation, meals, excursions, teaching materials etc.

**Forum Geotourism:** The regional potential in geology and geomorphology is made visible in the form of a public series of events (the last event was on the huge rockslide in Randa, 1991).

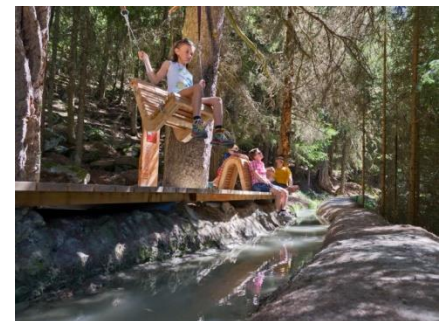


## Products

**Village Walks:** Upgrading existing village walks to make the charm of the villages more enjoyable and to enhance the holiday experience of the tourists.

**Water Pipes:** Traditional water pipes and irrigation systems (Suonen) are brought to life for locals and tourists through specific installations and staging.

**Return of Cattle Festival:** Coordination and staging of the return of cattle from the alps in all municipalities of the Mattertal valley.



## Example: Glacier Weeks

During the „Glacier Week“, a school class from the grammar school Zurich Nord developed a promotion video for a regional tourism offer.



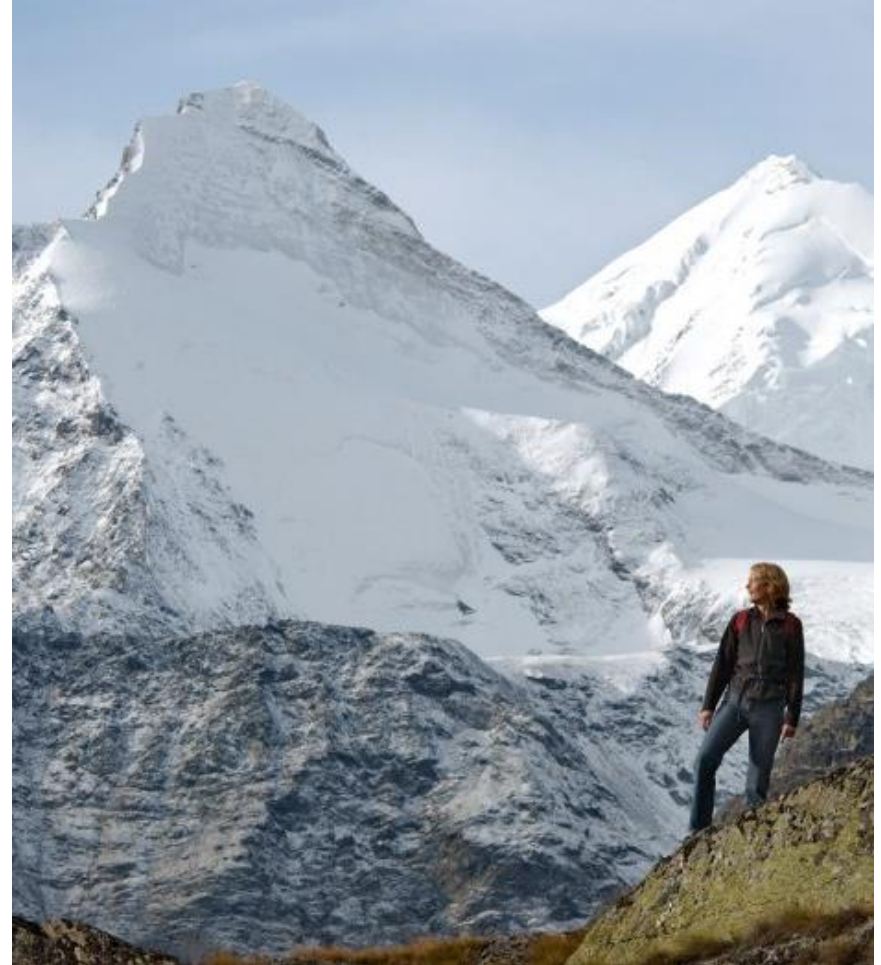
<https://youtu.be/BHUXMZnBMWk>



## Example: Thematic Alpine Loges

The Geotourism Region offers two **3-day hikes**, guided by a professional guide:

- **Tour „Pillow Lava and Edelweiss“**: On this tour, the guests can see lava created in the form of pillows at 3000 meters above sea level as well as large meadows with Edelweiss surrounded by the highest peaks of Switzerland.
- **Tour „Rolling Stones“**: On this tour, the guests can walk over rolling stones on an “ice-assembly line”, cross a glacier and reconstruct rock falls from the last 400 years with the help of trees.



## Learnings

- **Implementation:** The big challenge is not to develop ideas and strategies, but to implement them! The inclusion of stakeholders for the implementation of regional products requires political flair and well-established, networked and accepted persons in the driver-seat.
- **Products:** The focus on the development of concrete products has proven itself in practice. Concrete products are easier to communicate and to explain to stakeholders. The value added is easier to see.
- **Quick wins:** The best way to implement products is to create win-win situations. This means: start with simple products, where a visible success can be achieved with relatively little effort.
- **Political will:** A central role plays the (political) representatives of the municipalities within the project team. Thanks to them the idea of a Geotourism Region is accepted in the executives of the local municipalities.
- **Awareness:** The joint work on the regional products developed a constructive co-operation between the municipalities. The awareness for regional approaches in the field of sustainable tourism has clearly risen.

## Conclusion

- **Incentive-oriented funding programs** with a competitive character such as the „Modellvorhaben“ prove to be smart instruments for regional development. They are more effective and – above all – more efficient than top-down approaches.
- An effective and credible policy for spatial development is therefore not a top-down approach, but is essentially based on **bottom-up processes** and **local knowledge resources**.



## Discussion

- What are your experiences with the **implementation of regional products** in a regional development context? What are critical success factors? What are „stumbling blocks“?
- What are your experiences with **competitive approaches** in regional development? What are critical success factors? What are „stumbling blocks“?



**Many thanks for  
your attention!**