

## **The management of an Alpine Area: The extension of the Alpe d'Huez ski resort**

By Caroline Prevot

One of the biggest French ski resort, the Alpe d'Huez, is currently working on a project to build an important mountain water reservoir below the Sarenne glacier. This famous ski resort in the Alps is hosting every year a huge amount of tourists attracted by the pure nature and wilderness of its environment.

The tourism in Alpine area can have different facets. On the one hand tourism is essential for the economy of Alpine region and the sustainability of mountain areas. Moreover it is a real asset for the local population: it brings jobs and can add value to the region. On the other hand tourism can also disrupt and degrade the local environment. Indeed it can deeply change the local culture and increase the cost of living, and therefore can drive the local people away from their own village. Then the most important negative impact of tourism is the pressures on the environment and natural areas: it, among others, consumes huge amount of water and energy, disturbs ecosystems, degrades landscapes and disrupts fauna and flora. The management of tourism involves taking into account these three dimensions: economic, socio-cultural and environmental. However the cooperation between the different stakeholders isn't easy and can lead to conflicts.

The construction of the mountain reservoir would allow supplying snow cannons implanted along the Sarenne Slope. The addition of artificial snow has a purpose of opening the slopes longer during the winter (120 days instead of 80 days), and thus attract more tourists. Indeed the Sarenne slope is very known for her 16 km of length and represents therefore the symbol of the Alpe d'Huez. The aim of this project led by the managers of the ski resort and supported by the city mayors of the nearby villages, is to develop more and more the economy of the ski resort, and attract more tourists. On the other side, some local people and the people in favor of the protection of the environment are fighting against this extension. They defend the preservation of the environment, the mountain landscapes, and the biodiversity. They fight against the over-development and intensive tourism in the Alpe d'Huez.

The problem in this conflict is the difference of power between the both clans. Indeed the city mayors and the managers of the ski resort are fully empowered. Moreover, in France, there is no specific regulation about the installation of snow cannons. Decisions taken for the management of the ski resort don't take into account researchers opinions and environment

professionals. The management of the Alpe d'Huez is realized without any cooperation between different stakeholders from different fields, which could allow having different point of view and avoiding mistakes.