

1 Foreword

When the first idea was born, more than ten years ago, to initiate a new international meteorological programme, including a large field experiment, to study severe weather phenomena in the Alpine region, the Austrian meteorological community was willing to take upon substantial parts of the necessary organizational and operational work due to the essential role, mountain meteorology plays for Austria. Roughly sixty percent of our territory, albeit not covering the highest peaks, is consisting of Alpine countrysides. This is more than for each of the other states – except Liechtenstein. From 1994 on, when MAP started officially, the planning became more concrete on how, when and where the field experiment should take place. The necessary precondition for the choice of the MAP Operations Centre was a location with an airport in or close to the Alps. Realistically an airport in southern Bavaria, Austria or Northern Italy was seen as a possibility since Switzerland, hosting the Operations Centre for ALPEX, 1982, was out of the game. It took a rather long time after a hard but fair competition between the final candidates Innsbruck and Milano to come to the final decision at the end of 1997, just one and a half years before the field experiment started.

It was one of the rare and lucky coincidences that a few people from the meteorological community in Austria, Herbert Pümpel from the Austrian Aeronautical Meteorological Service ACG, Peter Parson from Austrian General Weather Service ZAMG, Harald Schellander from the University of Innsbruck IMGI and myself from the University of Vienna IMGW - just to name the central four leaf clover - with support from numerous other people from all over Austria were equally fascinated about the unique possibility to carry out the MAP field experiment from their home town. They were willing to take the responsibility – and risk – to give the MAP community the feeling that the MOC Innsbruck was the right decision. Raising funds, building up the necessary facilities, infrastructure, logistics, telecommunication, public relations, etc., meant for us laymen - what concerns organizing events of such dimensions - to forget about unions rules, weekends and even neglect our families for a considerable time.

Now, having recovered somehow from the stress and strain of that work, we have the feeling that our effort was worthwhile, the MAP family could collect a data set which is really unique. It will keep its worth for years to come and help to uncover some further secrets from mother nature, who presented us more interesting phenomena during the ten weeks SOP than we could expect from climatology. We hope that, besides some shortcomings with the inter(mittent)-net, the participants of MAP will keep some fond memories of Innsbruck and its surroundings.

The present brochure wants to give some information on the organizational structure of the MOC, on operational activities and on some preliminary scientific achievements.

Vienna, July 2000

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