

Editorial

This summer work with people in the project regions stood in the focus of TransEcoNet. Excursions were carried out to inform local residents about ecological networks and the cultural history of their region. Interviews were made with local contemporary witnesses addressing the way how they perceive landscape change. One main activity in this respect was also the preparation of documentary films covering Central European border landscapes. We talked to the director of the films, Lenka Ovčáčková, about her experiences with the people in the regions. Additional information about activities of other Euro-pean projects dealing with ecological networks and cultural landscapes are also covered in this issue of TransEcoNet News. We wish you a pleasant reading!

The Project Team of TransEcoNet



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Landscape and Memory

Documentary films about people and landscapes in Central European border regions

Some of the actions implemented within TransEcoNet aim at raising awareness for ecological networks and for the general need to maintain and restore biological diversity. Therefore, a series of documentary films is being implemented covering the development of the relationship between humans and their environment from the beginning of the 20th century until today. The films portray various landscape sceneries, for example the Czech White Carpathians, the Austrian Seewinkel, the Hungarian Órség or Slovene Goričko protected areas. All have in common a relatively remote location at Central European state borders.

The border and the landscape

The border regions which were selected have a long history. While in the early decades of the 20th century people along these borders often lived together as if living in one country, the tragic events of the 2nd World War altered socio-cultural traditions and also changed natural and cultural characteristics of the landscape. Now, more than twenty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, there are new developments and different attitudes. The films show how old and young

people cope with this challenge and how they establish their way of life in the border landscapes. They reflect on their daily routines and how they transfer former traditions and experiences to the present landscape. The films show how younger people set impulses for a new perception and definition of the rural landscape. Many of them have moved from the



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Vespertine landscape scenery of the Pošumaví, one of the settings of the documentary films



cities to the small villages in the White Carpathians or Beskid Mountains to create and live new ways of sustainable agriculture or to find room and inspiration for their artistic ideas in the remote landscape.

The people and their landscape

One of the movie scenes set on the small farm of a 81-year-old inhabitant of Francova Lhotá, a small settlement in the Beskid Mountains on the Czech-Slovak border. The farmer is mowing grass with a scythe while talking about the landscape: how it was years ago and what has changed since then. For instance, buildings which were important for the social and economic life in the village at the beginning of the 20th century, like the water mills down by the brook, are now ruins. He remarks that today less people know how to cultivate land in a sustainable way to get something to eat, as it was a necessity in former times. He is very thoughtful while binding together the mowed grass in a leathern wrap – exactly as it was done years ago.

In Nový Přerov in South Moravia, not far from the Dyje river and the Austrian border, a young couple has reconstructed a historical estate to establish a farm with horses, goats and other animals. They offer accommodation and horse rides for tourists and want to convey understanding for the landscape typical for the Dyje floodplains. As the estate is a significant historical building of Nový Přerov their revitalisation efforts help to protect the cultural heritage of the region. Also other young people have moved to rural places to continue or renew old farming and land use traditions. Thus, Soňa, 37 years old, from Prague has moved to the village Lažiště in the foothills of the Czech Šumava Mountains. Together with her family she has a small farm and supports sustainable landscape conservation by extensive pasturing.

The films show that years ago land use claims dominated the discourse about landscape because people needed land as resource to survive. Since people nowadays can buy their food directly from the farmer or in the supermarket, landscape has become a different meaning. It is going to be newly defined in a more

emotional, aesthetic and also protective sense which is illustrated by the documentaries.

Documentary film screenings

Four regional films are being produced and displayed at local screenings in the respective regions (see box). The subtitles are adapted according to the respective spoken languages, so that people coming from both sides of the border can understand it. For the screenings contemporary witnesses are invited and discussions of the films are carried out. The film material will also be integrated into travelling exhibitions, workshops and excursions dealing with biodiversity conservation, ecological networks and landscape history. A fifth transnational documentary film will provide a compilation out of the regional documentaries and will be available in English.

The first documentary film covering the Austrian-Czech and Czech-Slovak border areas has already been shown in the framework of local events in Dresden/DE, Mikulov/CZ and Fratres/AT this summer. In autumn further screenings are planned in the Bojkovice/CZ (20.10.) in the White Carpathians, in Francova Lhota/CZ (22.10.) in the Beskids, in Rabensburg/AT (5.11.) at the Morava river as well as in Prague/CZ (9.12.).

The documentaries portray the following border regions:

Film 1:

Germany/Czech Republic: Pošumaví, Ore Mountains, Bohemian-Saxon Switzerland

Czech Republic/Poland: Jizera and Giant Mountains, Jeseníky

Film 2:

Czech Republic/Slovakia: Beskids, White Carpathians
Austria/Czech Republic/Slovakia: Morava and Dyje floodplains, Austrian Wine Quarter

Film 3:

Austria/Hungary/Slovakia: Szigetköz, Lake Neusiedl/
Fertő-tó, Heideboden-Seewinkel, Hanság, Sopron

Film 4:

Austria/Hungary/Slovenia: Irrtokö, river valleys of
Pinka and Raab, Órség, Goričko

Ensuring an active listening to the people to understand their relation to the landscape

Within TransEcoNet Lenka Ovčáčková implemented a series of documentary films of Central European border landscapes. Lenka did her master degree in Environmental Studies at the Masaryk University Brno/CZ. Previous to TransEcoNet she already made documentaries about landscape and history.

What was your basic concept and motivation when preparing the documentary films about people and landscapes in border regions? What are the benefits of the oral history approach you chose for the documentaries?

While preparing and during the shootings I asked myself the basic questions: To what extent do landscapes mirror the life of the people living in them from the past until nowadays? Which patterns and values of life were taken over and in which direction are they carried on and in how far are they revitalised? From a philosophical point of view the perception of the naturalness itself was important for me. That means the deep relation of the people with the land and with the place where they have lived for a longer or shorter time and, thus, their ability to observe and describe landscape changes. I also concentrated myself on a comprehensive perception and depiction of the term "border". That means, the border surrounding us and the border inside us, descriptions of subjective experiences with situations of a political closed border and their opening later on, descriptions of the border of possibilities of certain ways of life and views on borders of human life. These views and ways of thinking accompanied my interviews with people of all age groups.

My method of oral history was based on an active listening to the people and subsequently on questions connected to the nature and experiences of these people. Thus, they became my active interview partners.

What has been the most interesting experience you made during the work with the people on the spot?

The most important experience was to get to know many interesting, active and creative persons who are strongly linked to the nature around them. These are people who experience the accord and harmony with nature in their daily activities and work and thereby vitalise border landscapes in a sensible way.

Which impressions of local cross-border activities and collaboration did you gain during the film shootings?

The degree of cross-border cooperation depends on the respective border regions. So far as I noticed



more transboundary contacts and projects exist along the Czech-German and Czech-Austrian borders. The Austrian-Hungarian border area has a huge potential related to future cross-border cooperation. Since 1993 the Czech-Slovak border is, in my opinion, not only officially but also in the heads of the people recently drawn, which might be a hindering factor for possible activities in cooperation.

What can you say about the role nature protection and landscape conservation plays for the people you have spoken to?

Many of the people I have talked to perceive nature protection not only as a possibility to deal with nature in a more sensible way, but they also actively contribute to the sustainable cultivation of the protected landscape areas, which is often related to their education or specific knowledge. For other interview partners nature protection does not play a major role, because anyway they see nature in its wholeness anyway and thus behave naturally in an ecological and nature-sensible way. Often their way of living is connected to more decentralised thoughts. In particular, projects aspiring regional self-sustaining forms of living become manifest in the activities of younger people.

What should people take home from the documentary film screenings and discussions?

I would be very glad, if the documentary films could stimulate an active discussion about the plurality of ways of life which exist in border areas and, if the films could evoke reflections on a sensible relation to nature and landscape. The films can also serve as inspirations for debates on the history of border landscapes and, from today's point of view, they can present positive examples of transboundary cooperation and perception.

Life in the back of beyond: Nature and landscape in the “Šluknov hook“

In the framework of TransEcoNet a one-day field trip was organized by the Information Centre of the Saxon Switzerland National Park to raise awareness for ecological networks and land use changes in the Czech-German border area. Altogether 16 participants from Saxony and the Czech Republic were invited to discover the history of the landscape around the village Lipová in the so-called “Šluknov hook“, the northernmost part of the Czech Republic extending into Saxony and surrounded by protected areas like the Elbe Sandstone Mountains south and west and the Lusatian Mountains north and east.

In the morning, the group visited a local biocorridor of the Czech national system of ecological stability (see article in TransEcoNet News, issue 9) consisting of a small brook connecting small ponds which were formerly used as washing area and water reservoir for each house standing adjacent to the corridor. Mountain ashes, hedges and other groves are surrounding this water corridor which will be further optimized as local biocorridor next year.

The former state of the landscape and the economical prosperity of Lipová were highlighted and compared with the present state. Once, this part of the Czech Republic was one of the richest areas of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. Where at that time factories produced cardboard boxes, knobs, textiles or beer there can now be found industrial ruins or just shrubberies and overgrown places. While in the 1930s Lipová had around 2800 inhabitants there are now just living 600. Where formerly arable lands and grasslands alternated there are today green meadows pastured with cattles and sheep. The catholic past of the region and the traditions and practices connected to the religion were also depicted. In particular, former



Location of the Šluknov hook within North Bohemia



The excursion group on the way to the church of Lipová paths of pilgrimage, which were often accompanied by tree rows in the open landscape, are no longer existing because of agricultural planned economy in socialist times. The participants visited one of the relatively well conserved places of pilgrimage which was regularly visited by the inhabitants of Lipová years ago. In the afternoon the excursion group crossed the border to get an impression of the adjacent Saxon landscape. For more than 20 years the border can be



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Views on the village Lipová: prospering life on historical postcards (left) and today's reality, the building on the left are the residuals of a former weaving mill.

crossed without any problems. To raise awareness for that a hiking trail was opened along the national borders between the districts of Lipová on the Czech and the neighbouring municipality of Sohland on the German side.

The excursion provided an overview of the rich history and development of cultural landscapes in Northern Bohemia using the example of one of the most remote regions of the Czech Republic. The participants went with mixed feelings because of the historical happenings in the area (displacement of the population in 1945, Czechoslovakian planned economy, transformation efforts after 1989), the existing structural problems, but also because of the natural and cultural beauties and potentials of the “Šluknov hook”, which have to be rediscovered by residents and visitors in the future.



Hiking along the border trail between the Czech Republic and Germany

Knowledge exchange between two CENTRAL EUROPE projects

Discovering vital landscapes in the Austrian-Czech border region

The cooperation between TransEcoNet and the CENTRAL EUROPE project VITAL LANDSCAPES led by the Land Company of Saxony-Anhalt/DE made it possible to accompany the partner consortium on a 3-day field trip to Austria and the Czech Republic. The project aims at a sustainable development of cultural landscapes in Central Europe by creating local economic life cycles and by considering the integration of all concerned stakeholders into regional development processes.

The field trip introduced to two pilot regions of the project: the Mühlviertel in Upper Austria and the Šumava region in the Czech Republic. The participants got to know the history and presence of the city of Freistadt surrounded by the typical hilly landscape of the Mühl-

viertel, which is mostly cultivated with spruce forests, pastures and arable lands. Also various herbs grow on sparse granite soils, as the group experiences in a local herbage cooperative which was founded in 1986 by farmers who were searching for an alternative source of income alongside the conventional livestock farming. The company guarantees the biological cultivation of a number of herbal species, for instance, peppermint, calendula or stringing nettle, and therefore contributes to a diverse cultivation of the landscape. Also mixed orchards are a significant element of the landscape. Thus, a young couple decided to continue the family farm by amending it with a modern cidery compressing fruits from the local mixed orchards. Here each client gets back the juice



Landscape sceneries along the border river Malsch: intensive cultivation in the Austrian Mühlviertel near Leopoldschlag on the left and extensive used land near Tichá in South Bohemia on the right.

of exactly the fruits he has brought. Also the local school distributes the apple juice from this cidery. The aim is to stimulate local economic life cycles for the production of domestic fruit juices and ciders.

On the second day of the field trip the group visited the info centre of the Natura 2000 site of the Maltsch, the border river between Austria and the Czech Republic. The area has a size of 348 ha and comprises wet meadows and riparian wood stands around the aquatic corridor. The protected site is part of the Central European Green Belt and hosts a number of rare species like the freshwater pearl mussel, the fish otter, the corn crake or hazel grouse. The aim of the Natura 2000 management along the Maltsch is to develop concepts for landscape conservation and species protection by integrating all stakeholders concerned. By the way: The immediately adjacent Czech shore area of the river is not designated as Natura 2000 area.

After further interesting insights into local initiatives related to renewable energies, culture, tourism and rural development the participants got to know the Šumava region which currently owns three protection statuses: national park, landscape protected area and biosphere reserve. The local regional development agency tries to communicate the term “biosphere reserve” as a reliable concept to conserve landscape and nature, its ecosystems and species, and coevally foster a sustainable regional development which is mainly based on tourism activities. In the information centre of the Šumava National Park in Stožec the excursion group was introduced to the management of non-forested open landscapes in the national park. Currently the worst problem for the Šumava region is the invasion of the bark beetle which is still raging in the forests and which is far from under control.

The excursion provided a good exchange of experiences among the Austrian, Czech and German project partners. They got a comprehensive overview of development potentials and perspectives for rural border regions like the Mühlviertel and the Šumava. More information about the CENTRAL EUROPE Project Vital Landscapes you can find [here](#).



On-site inspection of the Natura 2000 area along the Maltsch river in Austria



Admiring the mixed orchards of the Mühlviertel



How to manage the succession in the former open landscape? - like here near Kubova Huť in the Šumava mountains

Measure catalogue for an improved ecological connectivity in the Alps

In March 2011 the Ecological Continuum Initiative, constituted by the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (ALPARC), the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) and the International Scientific Committee Alpine Research (ISCAR), has published a catalogue of possible measures to strengthen ecological networks all over the Alpine space.

Preliminary the catalogue provides information about the legal framework according to the implementation of ecological networks in the Alps and about the political sectors and actors concerned. The measure database contains a wide range of activities which improve the functioning of ecological networks. Examples from the Alpine countries show how areas and linear structures serving as connecting elements of the ecological network can be created, preserved or restored, for instance, the preservation of individual trees, plantations along transport corridors with native vegetation or no-fly zones over sensitive areas. The measures are described on info sheets and have been assessed on various social, technical, ecological and economic criteria. Selected measures are further described on the basis of concrete best practice examples, e.g., wetland restoration in the Bavarian Alps or managed



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Landscape mosaic of the Austrian Upper Rhine valley

mowing of roadside verges in Isère/France.

The measure catalogue will be regularly amended by further activities and should be used also by other regions beyond the Alps who aim for the development and maintenance of ecological networks. But the measure catalogue can only serve as a starting point. For the concrete planning and realization of selected measures additional investigations will be necessary.

[Link to the measure catalogue](#)

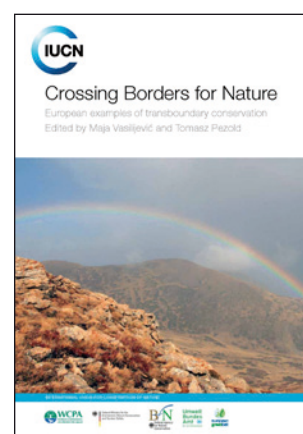
Publications on ecological networks

Conservation without borders – nature helps Europe overcome political divides

The recent publication of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) draws on cross-border conservation in Europe highlighting its challenges and benefits. It was published as part of a project led by IUCN and the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) which aims to improve transboundary conservation in the mountainous border zone between Albania, Macedonia and the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

“Due to isolation in the past and recent political instability in the area, the border between those countries was strictly guarded for decades,” says Tomasz Pezold, IUCN’s Project Officer and one of the publication’s editors. “As a result, it now represents one of the last intact natural sites in Europe with some of the largest populations of species, such as bear, wolf and lynx. Cross-border conservation in this region creates the opportunity to preserve this unique natural heritage in its integrity and brings together countries that were isolated for years.”

Examples also from other cross-border protected areas in Central and South-Eastern Europe show the success and challenges of transboundary cooperation within nature conservation and landscape management. Three focal areas of TransEcoNet, namely the Giant Mountains Biosphere Reserve (CZ/PL), the National Park Neusiedler See-Fertő (AT/HU) and the trilateral protected area of Goričko-Raab-Őrség (AT/HU/SI) are mentioned as well.



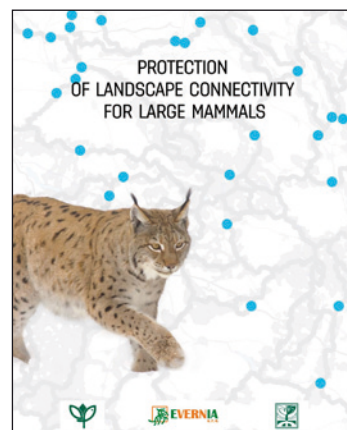
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Protection of landscape connectivity for large mammals

The publication envisages existing concepts of improving landscape connectivity for large mammals in the Czech Republic which are investigated by a research project. An overview is provided on the conservation status, distribution range and behaviour of selected focal species, as the brown bear, the grey wolf, the Eurasian lynx, the red deer and the Eurasian elk. The main types of migration barriers in the Czech landscape and its cumulative effects according to the migration behaviour of the focal species is pointed out. Further chapters of the book provide an insight into elaborated habitat models and landscape potential models. Hence, special migration areas and long-distance migration corridors are defined and brought into relation with the existing protected areas in the Czech Republic and with the national ecological network, the Territorial System of Ecological Stability (see TransEcoNet News, issue 9). Also initiatives and projects fostering transboundary migration corridors to the neighbouring countries Austria, Germany, Slovakia and Poland are described. Measures how to protect the migration permeability of the landscape for

large mammals completes the research work.

The publication contains, among others, results of the Large Mammals Migration Workshop, which took place in Prague in April 2010, and attracted professional actors from all over Central Europe. It is a collaboration of the Czech Agency of Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection (AOPK CR), the Silva Tarouca Research Institute for Landscape and Ornamental Gardening and EVERNIA s.r.o.



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Species protection beyond borders

Cross-border protection of the Western Pannonian Great Bustard population

The Great Bustard is one of the heaviest birds that is able to fly. It is a globally threatened species with a total population of about approximately 50.000 individuals, with about 2.400 living in Central Europe. The protection of the Great Bustard in the Austrian-Hungarian-Slovakian border area is already running since 2004 when the first LIFE-project was initiated on the Hungarian side. The activities in the Slovak habitat followed during the years 2005 and 2009. Now, after five years of successful work in the five Austrian bustard habitats the project will further be funded by the LIFE+ Programme until 2015.

The main aim of the project is to ensure barrier-free habitats for the species, in particular through the transfer of life-threatening power lines below the soil or by signing them with bird warning flags. Therefore, a close cooperation with the national energy supply companies is required. The actions should contribute to a further long-term increase of the whole cross-border West Pannonian Great Bustard population. For maintaining living conditions and food supply for the species in Austria in a good state, an efficient cooperation of nature conservation with local farmers and hunters will also be required in the future. At the moment around 550 farmers and more than 100 hunt-

ers are involved in the project.

Based on the bustard protection the unique value of the cultural landscape and the need for integrated nature conservation in the framework of Natura 2000 und LIFE should be continued and communicated to the wider public. As Great Bustards don't mind borders, an intensive co-operation between Austria and its neighbouring countries Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic will be carried out in the future within the project.

[For further information on the project](#)



A group of great bustards in the Austrian-Hungarian-Slovak border region

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Transboundary synergies between Natura 2000 and rural development

The project aims to identify and strengthen synergies between nature conservation and rural development with a special focus on Natura 2000 sites in the Ore Mountains on the border between the Czech Republic and Germany. The local awareness of the ecological network of Natura 2000 areas should be improved. First of all, an inventory of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with regard to interdependencies between nature conservation and rural development was carried out. Based on that the project partners prepared concepts in close cooperation with local stakeholders to better integrate the Natura 2000 network into rural development on both sides of the border. These concepts show how Natura 2000 sites can be maintained in a favourable condition by permanently integrating economic and educational aspects. The combination of nature conservation, product marketing, tourism, and environmental education is designed to improve the acceptance of ecological connectivity as important concept of nature conservation, especially among land users. Thus, during the project realisation the involvement of local stakeholders is considered to ensure a close cooperation and a regular exchange of ideas within participative workshops and conferences facing matters of sustainable tourism, nature conservation, agriculture and landscape care.

The project is managed by the Leibniz-Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development which is cooperating with the J. E. P. University in Ústí nad Labem and two landscape care associations of the Central and Western Ore Mountains. The project lasts until December 2011 and is implemented by the European Territorial Cooperation Programme Czech Republic-Saxony 2007-2013.

[For further information on the project](#)



The species-rich meadow - a transboundary biotope type which often occurs in the Ore Mountains

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Event calendar

4-6 October: 3rd Baltic Green Belt Forum – Heritage at the Green Belt, Tallinn, Estonia [\[more\]](#)

6-8 October: 4. Anwendertreffen GIS in Nationalen Naturlandschaften (German), Hohenzieritz, Germany [\[more\]](#)

12-14 October: IALE-D Jahrestagung - Modelle, Monitoring und andere quantitative Methoden in der Landschaftsökologie (German), Berlin, Germany [\[more\]](#)

13-15 October: Research Workshop “Protected Areas as Tools for Regional Development – Perspectives for Research and Management”, Regional Nature Parc Chartreuse, France [\[more\]](#)

4-6 November: International Conference “Environment – Landscape – European Identity”, Bucharest, Romania [\[more\]](#)

17 November: MountainTRIP Final Conference, Brussels, Belgium [\[more\]](#)

25 November: TransEcoNet Workshop “Ecosystem services and ecological networks as basis for a possible reorganization of a transboundary biosphere reserve“ (German and Hungarian), Illmitz, Austria [\[more\]](#)