Changing character of transfrontier landscapes, case studies: Hungary-Austria, Hungary-Slovenia, Germany-France

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Landscape’s oral history - 20th c.

Perceived landscape character and its transformation in Central European transboundary areas

TransEcoNet Central-European Research project Interreg Central 2008-2012
Research questions

- „How local people and stakeholders, experts and non-experts do perceive the character and the changes of the landscape?
- What is important, what are the values and the threats in the landscape for locals?
- How do people consider the differences between the neighbouring countries and the transformations with regard to the ecological network?
- How do they value the changes, what is positive or negative, what is ideal for them?
Method: Interviews based survey by semi-structured questionnaire

HU-AU-SLO
200 interviews in 2010-11 with experts and non-experts

GE - FR
30 experts interviews in 2013-15
Where are the boundaries of people’s own landscapes?

- As far one’s activities extend - overwriting geographical boundaries
  - my garden
  - my region etc.
  "praktisch unser Lebens- und Wirkungsbereich"
- Diversity is considered as characteristics of a larger area and not as a difference between landscape types

- Within the eyeshot from the places of one’s everyday life
  „Alles was i, wenn i am Kogelberg oben steh, mit dem Augen (seh), des gehört alles zu mir dazu."
Hungary-Austria
Lake Fertő world heritage cultural landscape and Sopron

Austria:
Fine structured, well kept, intensively used agricultural and recreational landscape with protected semi-natural patches

Hungary:
Large semi-natural protected areas and intensive use beyond it.
Fertő/Neusiedlersee landscape in Austria and Hungary

Even non-experts are aware of the major differences
Fertő/Neusiedlersee landscape in Austria and Hungary

Hungary

Austria
Hungarian – Slovenian borderland „Őrség”

Emotional attachement to „their” HOMELAND

“...hilly, wonderful world slashed by meadows and fields”

“Őrség is totally different... houses are more distante, the structure is more spacious.

„...even the green is different –more intense”

“harmony with nature”
Land cover change on the Hungarian side

NP seeks at preserving grasslands and promote sylviculture respecting nature
Első katonai felmérés

Második katonai felmérés

Harmadik katonai felmérés

Late 18th century

Mid 19th century

Late 19th century

2000
Ideal is the Slovenian side of „Őrség”

- according to the description of the Hungarians where the open landscape has been preserved
Location of the project regions

Baden Württemberg – Elsas

DAAD founded research: at the Albert Ludwig University Freiburg 2013–…
How landscape is understood?

Germany
- 'Nature' – 'Cultivated land' outside the settlements

France
- Space of interactions
How far the environmental awareness plays a role in the countries?

**Germany**

Majority of the answerer talk on nature, natural biotops and on landscape scenery.

Landscape is a construction of the nature impacted by man.

**France**

Many talk on unity, on inseparable connection between man and nature.

Landscape is obviously formed by man, however nature is the „materia“ the precondition of everything – still the human idea is in the center!

Both Germans and French are aware and acknowledge that environmental awareness is higher in Germany!
Human impacts considered

positive till the industrialisation and mainly negative recently

with some exception: e.g.
Southern Black Forest
Do the answers relate to the state of the landscape, the factual changes or the impacts, the underlying causes and the goals?

**Germany**

Answers are predominantly factual.
What is there, what has been changed. The causes are mainly factual too.
The approach is clearly quantitative – natural scientific. It can be mostly measured with GIS or with numerical economic indicators what was mentioned.

**France**

The main concern is:
What has been and is being done?
What are the driving forces?
From where do we start and where do we go?
Who are the actors?
How can we communicate, let things understand?
The approach is more qualitative – much more social scientific.
What are the driving forces?

**Economical**
CAP subsidies have absolute priority: e.g. biogas – corn déserts
Minimal wage and cheap east-european workers
Location of the main European traffic corridors
Touristic and recreational demand

**Environmental**
Florida effect in Germany

**Consequences**
- Serious endangerment of underground water
- Disappearance of small ecotones
- Diversity vs. homogenisation
- More and more barriers for wildlife by industrial, infrastructural development and continous agglomerations
- Closing landscape – giving up of animal husbandary
- Significant grows of new residents and need of built up areas
The ideal landscape

**Factual answers**
- Diverse
- Rich in water
- Etc...

**Conceptual answers**
- Where the land use is adequate to the potencialities
- Ecological landscape
- Harmonious!

LIKE THIS?
Favourite places

- "Vater Rhein" – riparian forests
- "Ried"
- "Infinity of the plain"
- Kaiserstuhl – absolute favourite
- Cultural heritage
  - Vine Route
  - Breissach with the wiev of the cathedral
- Scenery, diversity
  - Schwarzwald – forest-grassland mosaic, Schwarzwaldhof
Common in the 3 project region

- Interviewees appreciate diversity of the landscape:
  - “This change between open land, forest and rocky areas I find amazing.”
  - transition from Pannonian to Alpine (Hu/Au) “a harmonious aggregate of hills, mountains and waters”

but respondent also perceive the threats
- The abandonment – depopulation
- The increased traffic load by transit and tourism
- The speeding urbanisation and disappearance of traditional building style
- …
Transboundary co-operation

- The hidden, but still existing sensibilty caused by the historical traumas can’t be disregarded – language obstacles …
- Therefore communication and cooperation is limited:
  - Official commitees have regular meetings – effectiveness is questionned
  - EU facilitates transboundary research – the embeddedness and acceptance of the result still remains open
  - Couple of local initiatives – GERPLAN or regional projects founded by EU: e.g. PANANET
  - Economic competition exists - eventually detrimental e.g. differences in incomes (AU-HU) distort the labour market.
Conclusions

Interviewees – both experts and non-experts are aware of

- major landscape change processes and the threats, that are mainly environmental conflicts, degradation
- landscape is the result of the natural processes and socio-economic activities - but the estimation of the role of local initiatives is different!
- economy’s absolute desisive role – politics impacts through subsidies – „heritage: e.g traditional building style, open landscape are kept if they can bring money or contribute to the well being”
- Ecological network, green infrastructure are the new magic instruments – opinion is far not just positive
- Ideal is factually diversified, conceptually harmonious
Outlook

Either we change the system toward sustainability (considering environmental, economic and social problems as parts of one integral system) **including cooperation and communication instead of competition**

or we run after the speedy changes and the **scissor opens**

(between conservation of selected values, economic wealth of the privileged and growing environmental and social degradation at large scale)!

Our beloved Europe is at risk!
Thank you for your valuable attention!

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