



Summary Report

Current Issues of Biodiversity Protection and Participatory Development



18 - 21 April 2012

Vallée du Drugeon, Haut Doubs
France

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Summary report

After workshops in Estonia, Poland and Slovenia, as well as an additional workshop in Greece, Forum Synergies, Global Nature Fund and Fédération des conservatoires d'espaces naturels held the concluding 5th workshop about "Current Issues of Biodiversity Protection and Participatory Development" in Vallée du Drugeon, Haut Doubs in France from 18 to 21 April 2012.

Overview of previous workshops:

Lake Võrtsjärv, Estonia /15-18 June 2009/	19 participants from 8 countries 12 guests from the Ukraine-Moldova
Milicz Ponds, Poland /21-24 October 2009/	14 participants from 5 countries
Triglav National Park, Slovenia /21-25 April 2010/	28 participants from 12 countries
Nestos Delta, Greece /22-26 September 2010/	48 participants from 15 countries
Val de Drugeon, France /18-21 April 2012/	50 participants from 12 countries

With 50 participants from 12 countries this workshop was the largest so far.

After the four preceding workshops in 2009/2010, this concluding event should open up perspectives for future cooperation alongside follow-up cooperation. Following priorities were determined:

1. Ecological and technical issues of habitat restoration in mires, littoral zones and water bodies
2. Development of appropriate rural and eco-tourism strategies in Natura 2000 areas that comply with protection requirements and raise local acceptance
3. Biodiversity and climate change: Afforestation and wetland preservation as carbon sequestration strategies, state of the art in measurement and implication standards, perspectives for future financial rewards in the frame of UN clean development mechanisms (expert input).

Particular awareness was given in all issues to participatory strategies, involving stakeholders in efficient ways to raise effectiveness of Natura2000 and Water Framework Directive implementation and developing tangible synergies from NGO – administration – stakeholder cooperation.

FCEN – Fédération des Conservatoires d'espaces naturels co-organised the event from the French side. FCEN federates 30 Conservancies, established in nearly all the French regions. Their task is to find the way to improve knowledge, protection, management and public awareness about natural and semi-natural sites of all kinds that are present in the country. They are especially active in implementing measures linked to the Natura 2000 network. FCEN also operates the French Mire Resource Centre (Pôle-relais tourbières) devoted to mires and wetlands, located on the foot of the Jura Mountains, where the event took place.



The Workshop Site

The **Dugeon Valley** follows a wide ancient glacial basin covering about 170 km². The basin lies in a geological formation of Jurassic age forming a plateau across which the river winds its way for more than 30 km before joining the Doubs. The valley is richly endowed with more than 2.000 ha of wetlands. This is due to the presence of semi-permeable glacial morainic material left covering the permeable bed-rock 15.000 years ago after the retreat of the glaciers towards the end of the last ice age.

The Dugeon basin possesses over 30 different types of natural habitats. Besides river these include lakes, smaller areas of open water, and different kinds of wetlands varying from flooded meadow to alkaline valley marsh containing both raised peat and wooden bog. The multitude of habitat types, coupled with a specific agricultural land usage, has given rise to an explosion of outstandingly rich flora and fauna.

The exceptional quality explains the presence of 50 different protected plant species. Almost 250 bird species can be seen in the Dugeon Valley. The insect fauna is also very rich. Over forty species of butterfly and fifty species of dragonfly have been observed, some of them are protected in France and the EU.

History of the restoration work

Because the valley bottom was largely marsh land and peat bog, the whole valley was a subject of major drainage work between the 1950's and early 70's. The aim was to convert 2.000 ha of wetland into ground suitable for cultivation. The river course was straightened throughout its 40 km length and a vast network of channels and ditches was dug in wet areas. However no significant agricultural results were obtained; awareness of the damage done to natural habitats only started as late as 1990 when environmental pressure groups and public authorities finally joint forces.

The European Union, the French Government, water authorities and elected bodies for both the Franche-Comte Region and the Doubs have provided a strong backing for the "Syndicat Mixte" for the Dugeon Valley and Frasne Plateau to takeover responsibility for the valley's future management. From 1993 to 1997 a project within the frame of the European LIFE programme was implemented in the valley and resulted in the restoration, management and conservation of not only the valley's plant and animal life but also its remaining habitats.

Components of the long-term management policy:

- restoration work began in 1997 and has reinstalled 7 km of meanders,
- clearance of both wetland and meadows invaded by scrub,
- maintenance of open habitats in wetlands by scrub clearing,
- improvement of water quality,
- putting in place Prefectural-by-laws to protect 3.000 ha of wetland.



The Workshop

Presentations

Geneviève Magnon, senior officer of the association of local municipalities “Communauté de communes Frasne-Drugeon” (CFD) presented the issues of **habitat restoration, eco-tourism and climate change as current local issues in Val de Drugeon.**

Michael Bender, Grüne Liga, presented current issues of **Implementation of the EU-Water Framework Directive and Nature Conservation.** Grüne Liga is a network of mainly Eastern German environmental NGOs, many of whom originated in the transition time of socialist breakdown.



Roger de Freitas, member of the GNF Advisory Board, presented the work of Living Lakes partner organisations on different **topics of sustainability and stakeholders' involvement** and made some suggestions for a fruitful NGO-work concentrating on developing partnerships between NGOs and other stakeholders.

Dr. Tobias Salathé, Regional Coordinator of Ramsar Europe, focused in his presentation on **current ecological and technical issues of Wetland habitat restoration.**

The **carbon sequestration issue** (using climate mitigation money to finance conservation measures) had been announced as a conference issue in an earlier version of the programme. Udo Gattenlöhner, Global Nature Fund, explained briefly the principles of CO₂ emission trading via CER and VER certificate standards. However the regulation is tailored to very large players and normally is not feasible for local projects like a peatbog restoration. For more detailed information on the topic, Global Nature Fund has published a paper and a leaflet which can be downloaded from the GNF website¹.

All the presentations can be downloaded at the project website www.globalnature.org/development-lake-areas.

¹ The document can be downloaded here: http://www.globalnature.org/31768/PROJECTS/Energy-Climate/Forest-Climate-Protection/02_vorlage.asp



Field Trips: Local experiences with participatory development

Visit of **Frasne mire** and its boardwalk, included in a Regional Nature Reserve; Discussion with Mrs Françoise Vagneur, Office National des Forêts (National Forest Board), on mires and forest management.

Varot watchtower (observatoire du Varot): general view of Dugeon valley and its wetlands; meeting with local farmers; discussion on tourism and environmental policy, land planning.



Visit of the **water treatment plant at La-Rivière-Dugeon** – a new plant cleaning all the used waters of the valley; meeting with Christian Bouday, vice-president of the Département (Conseil general) and with Jean-Noël Resch, hydrobiologist at CFD: how can the green technologies developed in such a plant improve the situation of a wetland? The plant are being used for environmental education purposes.

Lac de St-Point – because of rain it was impossible to visit the reed bed with a trail open to the public near the lake at Oye-et-Pallet; Geneviève Magnon (CFD) explained the situation around the lake during a short stop on the shore.

Reflection on the local situation

Generally, the workshop participants were excited by the work done in the region and a high level of community involvement. Both guests and hosts had various opportunities to come into discussion during the workshop. After presentations and field trips, several suggestions and thoughts were expressed by workshop participants to contribute to positive changes in the area.

- As the landscape is a pastoral one, farmers do not feel themselves & their activities threatened by nature conservation → good willingness of farmers to cooperate on conservation/restoration projects.
- The population is not very tense → minor potential for conflicts.
- It was helpful for the successful conservation projects in Dugeon valley to have a strong leader (the mayor) who was respected by the farmers, + one constant coordinator (Geneviève Magnon for the Dugeon Valley). The leaders are respected when they are a part of community itself.
- The region has traditionally been a peripheral region based on farming & forestry. Now a lot of new houses are being built. Very strong price pressure comes from Switzerland; lower prices motivate Swiss people to come & build houses here. It is bad for wetlands & farmers because of the lack of land. Also people from Northern

France are moving here and go to work in Switzerland. All these people often don't feel connected to the region and don't participate in the village life. On the other side, they pay taxes and it means support for projects like river Drugeon-restoration project.

- Rodent pesticides: There is a resolution and some more restrictions, but those are not really effective. Now farmers can use it only on low density of corn plants.

Francis Müller hosting the meeting stressed that the interest of people from 12 European countries coming to the region motivates everybody on site to ask themselves "Is it so exceptional what we do here, what we have here? Should we do something else?" – It is a kind of "added value" of the workshop for local people.

Common project ideas & Working groups



After the reflexion session, the project ideas developed during the previous workshops in Slovenia and Greece were presented (environmental education, habitat restoration, and eco & rural tourism). Speakers of the three groups explained what had happened during the last 1 ½ years since the Greek workshop. The information was simultaneously entered into a Mind Map.

Dr. Peter Lengyel invited all the participants to join a new European exchange platform in English; he will put the addresses onto the mailing list.

The participants discussed the importance of exchange for all the projects. So, both Polish and French colleagues went to other European countries before starting some restoration projects. Exchange & learning from others is an important factor for successful project implementation. We have to involve different partners from the very beginning, if there are different partners (not only NGOs), there will be also funding available. It is possible to start something even with the local money.

To consider possibilities for cooperation, workshop participants organised working groups and developed some ideas for future exchange.

Evaluation

Workshop

Generally, the participants were very content with the workshop and stressed good organisation as well as interesting composition of the group. Some impressions are listed below.

- *Geneviève Magnon, Communauté de communes Frasne-Drugeon*: Good exchange, interesting participants with valuable experiences, surprised by local farmers telling that they are proud of their region.



- *Francis Müller, Fédération des conservatoires d'espaces naturels*: Some time is needed after the workshop to understand the effects. We keep in contact, and it may result in a common project. The workshop was a little bit too short, 3 days would be better. From now we are keeping to be a part of a European “organisation” even if not officially “organised”.
- *Michael Bender, Grüne Liga*: It was a very good experience to participate in all 5 workshops, to get to learn people from different countries, potential partners who you can rely on.
- *Tillmann Stottele, City of Friedrichshafen*: this workshop confirmed all others: local activists exchange different experiences of involving stakeholders in environmental processes. The idea of the workshop is not only to exchange but also to try to implement new things learned. A challenge for all of us is how to involve ordinary people. It is possible to find a committed mayor and via him to go to people. Many NGOs are small, some people work alone. This can not be really “sustainable” in a long term, so, you need a wider network. If you can convince your neighborhood, you can even find local funding. We are lucky that we were able to organise a workshop in France to get an inside into the nature conservation processes here. We’ve got in contact with different people in Europe with a great potential for cooperation.
- *Gwilym Wren, Milverton Parish Council/Natural England*: Thank you for the workshop and the opportunity to visit sites I would otherwise never have seen. It was very interesting to see how different the situation was. Everywhere NGOs work with local people. And it is nice to see that there are places where the situation may not be perfect but where there is a stable positive development, and they look “reasonably sustainable”. Now I can talk to people and understand how Europe is working.
- *Udo Gattenlöhner, Global Nature Fund*: It is my 1st workshop, and it was very interesting and well-balanced one. I had the impression that we were more than 3 days together, and there was enough time for exchange. When sharing ideas, we should be ready to share also the vision. My vision is “an ideal picture of the future”: we will leave our world to our grandchildren in a beautiful state.
- *Titus Bahner, Forum Synergies*: Thanks to everybody participating in the organisation and conduction of this workshop series. We tried to combine two main components by sharing tasks: environmental component by GNF, participatory strategies by Forum Synergies. As a conclusion I can say: It is only possible to save nature by working with people. And I am optimistic that our network will continue.

Evaluation of the whole workshop series & Follow up

Evaluation of the whole workshop series will be done basing on the questionnaires distributed among the participants of all the workshops. The data will be used by project partners for improving future events and establish a strong base for future cooperation. New project ideas developed during the workshop series will be continued as well as the “informal network” established will continue in different forms.