



International conference

Local communities, cultural landscapes and heritage: Management of cultural landscapes

(6)7-8 October 2016, Palmse, Lahemaa National Park, Estonia

Report

The 2nd day of the conference (7th Oct. 2016) was organised by the Estonian University of Life Sciences in the frame of the LIFE Viva Grass project. Moderators: Heidrun Fammler (Baltic Environmental Forum) & Kalev Sepp (Estonian University of Life Sciences)

Welcome speech, Ms. Heidrun Fammler, Baltic Environmental Forum

Ms. Fammler introduced the LIFE Viva Grass project, which main aim is to find out how with help of planning to come over of the problem of marginalisation and abandonment of grasslands.

Sustainable futures for Europe's heritage in cultural landscapes, Prof. Hannes Palang, Tallinn University

Abstract: According to the European Landscape Convention, landscape is an area as perceived by people. During recent decades, instead of an area of everyday hard work, landscapes have turned into playgrounds. On the one hand there is a need to better describe the past in order to maintain the link with the past landscapes that is crucial for future management but alternatively understanding the present condition is necessary for sustainability. In 2005, Marc Antrop called the concept of sustainable landscapes a utopian goal. His argument was that new lifestyles generate new landscapes and landscape change is anyway a chaotic process. Recently, research has been started into cultural sustainability (e.g., Soini and Birkeland 2014). Cultural sustainability has been defined as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, and if so, there are openings for research into the interrelationships between the four pillars. Research is also needed into how culture can be understood as a necessary foundation for meeting the aims of sustainable development in the first place.

The speaker stressed that it is not policy that changes landscapes but it is people. Environmental science should not be only for institutions, it is also a community science.

Discussion:

- Scientists and politicians develop positions on what should be protected, which are often different from the real life and traditional knowledge. Shouldn't protection of landscapes be more real life-based?

- Scientists are also people but landscapes are a complicated issue that needs convincing people. But there are so many people and everybody has own ideas. The main problem with landscapes is that they are too complex. Hercules project (www.hercules-landscapes.eu) developed cultural landscape index, however the same index cannot be used for all landscapes.
- The best way to teach kids to understand landscape is taking them out to the fields and forest.

Protection and management of agricultural landscapes of Lahemaa National Park, Ms. Maaria Semm, Prof. Kalev Sepp (Estonian University of Life Sciences)

Abstract: The presentation provided an overview of historical land cover change in Lahemaa NP. For the analysis of historic land use change, developments were presented that occurred between 1900 and 2000 using land cover maps from different periods. This study shows that, compared with the beginning of the 20th Century, the landscape of Lahemaa NP has become more enclosed. During 100 years land use in 93% of the forest land area stayed the same but by contrast only 21% of the grasslands remained spatially stable. The major changes in the national park land use included the expansion of forest into abandoned grasslands and conversion of grasslands into arable land. At the same time the forest and grassland patches have fragmented and the borders have become more gradual. Landscape diversity of arable land has decreased: the number of field patches has decreased and the average area of field patches has increased. The results of the study allow zoning the landscape into natural (old-forests and wetlands) and cultural (landscapes affected by agricultural activities). It is also possible to estimate the proportion of heritage landscapes accurately and the degree of preservation village by village. As the forest cover has increased during the past hundred years, it has become necessary to value and preserve the well-maintained open cultural landscapes in the National Park. The database of land cover provides the necessary data for making decisions related to restoration and the definition of priority areas for conservation activities.

Discussion:

- When determining value classes, did you compare the value from maps, time laps and value classes by locals? Do they value the landscapes the same way?
 - The value classes were determined based on analysis of available information. There was also feedback from local people. For some places that had a special meaning for locals, they proposed to increase the value category, e.g. alluvial meadows by the rivers.
- Policy uptake of research results?
 - The research results are used in the frame of development of management plan and protection rules for the National Park. The question is how to consider the results in special plans of municipalities.
- Are you proposing clear cuts to restore cultural landscapes?
 - Yes, in some cases. But at first an inventory must be done.
 - If it is private land and there is an active farmer then cultural landscape has more value than the forest. If it is state land then some experts say that we

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- could protect it as new forest habitat type (pioneer forest habitat).
- State Forest Management Centre can cut forest only with the permission of the Environmental Board. More scientific info is needed to take the right decision.

Landscape character: enhancing understanding and governance of cultural landscapes,
Mr. Jonathan Porter (UK, Countryside)

Abstract: Landscape characterisation is an integral part of landscape protection, management and planning in the UK, following a tradition that developed in the early 1990s and reinforced by the ratification of the European Landscape Convention in 2006. Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Landscape Characterisation have been carried out at national, regional and local scales resulting in complex overlapping spatial frameworks of landscape types and areas. National Character Areas are an accepted framework in England for landscape monitoring, and for landscape quality objectives to enhance cultural landscapes, biodiversity and delivery of ecosystem services. At a sub-regional scale many studies have been carried out to support land-use planning and land management decisions. The Landscape Strategy for the Peak District, the first UK National Park, integrates different perspectives on cultural landscapes, recognises and communicates the considerable variation across the park and provides an important tool for protection of the special qualities of the landscape. Landscape characterisation is being applied more widely at a community level following the adoption in the Localism Act of 2011, which gave communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area through the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan. At all these different scales characterisation can support landscape governance by broadening debates from a focus on dominant issues such as housing development, flooding or renewable energy. Technology now allows greater integration of characterisation with local knowledge and other disciplinary perspectives while supporting wider engagement in landscape governance.

Discussion:

- For the Lithuanian national landscape plan it is planned to prepare landscape schemes. What aspects should be considered?
 - Typically the contracts for landscape characterization are for 6 months or a year to enable also considering the seasonal variation. Can send internet links for more info.
- The key issue is to involve the whole local community and not only the more wealthy people that usually tend to participate. Therefore we need to develop website etc. to engage more people in future.
- How landscape characterization is related to management advice?
 - Farm environment plans are applied in the frame of the agri-environmental scheme to bring conservation aspects into farming. Another thing is the relation between products and landscape.
- Since 2010 new government everybody can make a neighbourhood plan but it is only made for some places, it is grown out from local scale.



Good practice on viable grassland management. LIFE Viva Grass project.

Dr. Anda Ruskule (BEF Latvia)

Abstract: The area of semi-natural grasslands in the Baltic States has considerably decreased due to estrangement of people from traditional rural life styles and changes in agricultural practices. Land abandonment in parallel to agricultural intensification or production of energy crops has led to the loss of grassland biodiversity and ecosystem services. The LIFE Viva Grass project aims to support maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystem services provided by grasslands, through encouraging ecosystem based planning and economically viable grassland management. One of the project activities involved comprehensive evaluation of past experiences and current practices in grassland management. For this purpose, the project has carried out a survey of the projects dealing with grassland management in European countries. In addition, as well as organised study tours to UK, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Slovenia and the Baltic States to learn about good practices, opportunities of income diversification, alternative use of grassland biomass and grassland restoration practices have also been investigated. The good practice examples of grassland management investigated by the project show that the solutions lie in multi-functional use of grasslands, diversification of income and building of co-operation networks within local communities. Currently maintenance of semi-natural grasslands is ensured by the interest of nature conservation authorities and NGOs and availability of subsidies. However, opportunities and benefits provided by grasslands should be better used to make grassland management more sustainable and less dependent on subsidies. Grassland management restricted to nature conservation objectives does not work – only economically viable landscape structures are long-lasting.

Discussion:

- How easy it is to get state subsidies for extensive farming from agri-environmental schemes in Latvia?
 - LIFE Viva Grass project is supporting farmers with developing business models based on findings of the project on possibilities for use of grasslands. A lot of seminars and workshops with local stakeholders are organised. Almost all owners of agricultural lands rely on subsidies. There are conditions that farmers have to meet but agri-environmental schemes are still very popular and widely used.

Livestock breeds and cultural landscapes

Prof. Stephen Hall (University of Lincoln, UK; Emeritus professor of animal science)

Abstract: Livestock are the agents by which people converted pristine environments to cultural landscapes, but remarkably little academic attention has been paid to the current roles of specific breeds in these settings. Discussion of the cultural significance of livestock breeds does not appear to have a theoretical framework, and most reports are case studies. After considering the definition of “breed”, the speaker examined the significance of distinct breeds in extensively grazed wooded landscapes, pasture-based commercial systems, communal systems and nature reserves, in the UK. Particular reference was made to the Chillingham cattle, the Jersey cattle of Jersey Island, North Ronaldsay sheep, and horse and cattle breeds

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used in conservation grazing. Implications for policy are reviewed. Practitioners of conservation grazing should consider which breeds of livestock to use. Policy for central support of these genetic and cultural resources needs models for prioritization of particular breeds, and of historically and culturally important flocks and herds. Breeds without clear function in modern agri-food systems, and breeds subject to genetic admixture from elsewhere, need special consideration.

The speaker suggested two beef cattle breeds as possible options for Estonia: the Belted Galloway and Hereford. An informed choice of breed can greatly enhance the landscape and understanding the breeds is essential for understanding rural cultural landscapes!

Discussion:

- Sheep wool is a side product of which different products can be made, e.g. pencil cases etc.
- There are data on rare breeds as results of specific heritage sheep projects but no central database. Protected local breeds should be used if possible but more important is to consider how good the breed is for management of the grasslands.

Management of cultural landscapes in Estonian National Parks

Mrs Kaja Lotman, Environmental Board, Estonia

Abstract: National parks are located in different landscape regions of Estonia. Lahemaa NP is intended for the protection coastal landscapes of Northern Estonia; Karula NP, for the protection of the hilly moraine landscapes of Southern Estonia; Soomaa NP, for the protection of the mire landscapes and floodplain landscapes of transition zone of Estonia (Estonia intermedia); Vilsandi NP, for the protection of the coastal landscapes of the Western Estonian archipelago; Matsalu NP, for the protection of the characteristic biotic communities of Western Estonia and of the natural and cultural heritage of the Vainameri Sea region. Management of cultural landscapes is largely combined with measures for conservation of semi-natural habitats within Natura 2000 network, and is based on the relevant national guidelines for management and restoration of relevant habitat types as well as management plans for the national parks in question. In some cases, spatial planning within the municipalities also fulfils a role. Restoration of the semi-natural habitats is based on national funding and includes measures such as the cutting of scrub (in some cases also stump removal), topping of high overgrown grass, erecting fences and other similar measures that precede resumption of mowing or grazing. Regular management of semi-natural habitats in Natura 2000 areas is included in the Rural Development Plan. It includes appropriate grazing of pastures and mowing of meadows, with removal of the hay, after an agreed pre-determined date. The transport of grazing animals to the islands is also supported. Landscape measures include opening up views, management of the old parks and alleys (for example Palmse in Lahemaa NP), and conservation of old trees. There is also control of the building development and other activities with visible impacts in order to contribute to landscape conservation.



Native breeds and forestry - horses

Mr. Ennu Tšernjavski, Vanaküla village, Aaviku farm, Estonia

Abstract: Ennu Tšernjavski is aged 64 years and is a local person. After high school he worked as a builder on a collective farm and also in an agricultural business involving grain driers. In 1989 his grandparents' farm was returned to him. He raised sheep, pigs, and animals for meat. From 1994 he led the Kuusalu department of the forest company Sylvester. After 2002 the sale to the Stora Group Ensole he had the chance to buy back shares. For the last 11 years he had raised Estonian Draft horses. His family owns Aaviku farm Ltd. Presentation discussed how national park, forest management and traditional Estonian animal breeds can exist together for their mutual benefit.

Discussion:

- Forestry with horses (max 5-8 m³ timber per day) is not competitive compared to forestry with tractors (more than 100 m³ timber per day) but with horses the soil damages can be avoided.
- In national parks forestry with horses could be demonstrated. It is environmentally friendly solution for forest management that is included also in the management plan of Lahemaa National Park.
- In winter horses can work in forest, in summer they can be used for grazing, also for some other works (hilling of potatoes, hay-making). Ennu keeps horses mostly for preserving the native breed.
- The horse equipment for forestry works Ennu has made himself because it is not available in shops. Some horse equipment can be ordered from internet.
- The population of Estonian Heavy Draught includes 362 animals, 70 of them are in Finland where there is a separate organisation for preserving this breed.

Native breeds and management of grasslands – sheep

Mrs. Imbi Jäetma, Kolga village, Sae farm, Estonia

Abstract: Imbi Jäetma is educated as a philologist but also acts as a crisis psychologist. Her home is in Sae farm village at the western edge of Lahemaa National Park which has belonged to her husband's family for over 200 years. With her husband they have managed the farm almost 25 years. They are dedicated to finding Estonian indigenous domestic animals, preserving and disseminating the message of their importance through various training sessions, information days and the media. The farm has a flock of over 200 head of the Estonian native sheep, 5 marenna abruzzi sheep dogs and 20 Estonian native hens.

The presentation focussed mainly on Estonian Native sheep and on their role in helping to preserve cultural landscapes in Lahemaa National Park. During the two hundred years that the family has lived on Sae Farm, there has always been a flock of sheep kept on the farm. These sheep are not only to maintain the quality of the fields, pastures and forest, but also to provide family with wool, skin, meat and bones for everyday life needs. Imbi started looking for Estonian Native Sheep in 2004. In 2005 they brought the first sheep found in Tali county to their farm. Today they are proud owners of about two hundred sheep originating from 15 different households (12 regions). They use native sheep wool in its natural colours (that



varies from deep black to bright white) for making numerous knitted or felt items to conserve the local traditional heritage. “Where did our grandmothers get wool for socks and mittens”- our native sheep know!”

Discussion:

- In Kenozero national park a native sheep breed has also preserved. How do you manage financially, do you have workers?
 - Everything that sheep give is used. Imbi and her husband both have also another job. There are no additional workers but children also help.
- The first Maremma Abbruzzi sheep protection dogs were bought from Switzerland. It is important to buy working dogs, not just show dogs.
- There are 5 lines inside Estonian native sheep breed but only Kihnu native sheep is officially registered as native breed.

Panel Discussion:

*How to guarantee sustainable management of agricultural landscapes – new challenges.
How to promote community-centered heritage protection?*

- The concept of sustainable landscape is a nice vision for us. We are not sure when and how we can reach it but it is important that we all have the same vision. But not all people have the same vision, steps need to be taken towards it. LIFE Viva Grass will hopefully also bring some solutions.
- The landscapes will be there also in future and also some people and probably also sheep and cows but landscapes will change. The question is which changes we can accept and which not. And what we should do if we lose control over some processes? This is the question of how well we can accept that sometimes we lose.
- The workshop demonstrated well that lot of people give a lot of effort into this, it is not a utopia but hard work.
- People work in countryside because they love what they do but also to get money for living - if this is not enough then people have to make decisions. To keep people in countryside certain needs have to be met (schools, etc.). The landscapes will be there but the question is in what shape. We need positive environment, regional policy.
- We have to train people that countryside means also animals. People did not like the electric fences (they looked like soviet border guard fences), but now they are already asking when the cows are coming to grasslands in spring. So it is possible to change the opinion of people.
- To understand the landscape we need to know the history of landscape. Sustainability is not just local but a global issue.
- Lahemaa NP has been sustainable because people have been living here 4000 years and kept the landscape. That gives hope, our obligation is to maintain it.
- Sustainability of grassland management was one of the questions giving motivation for starting the LIFE Viva Grass project. We were discussing what are the drivers for land abandonment. The presence of people is nowadays not a precondition for keeping the land managed but if people are not living at place then the social component is lacking in the system. It is a question of regional policies, we need a change of thinking, change of lifestyle.
- If there are two reasons for management – maintaining landscapes as well as feeding

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the animals - then it can be sustainable.

- It is important to create economic opportunities for people in countryside, in remote landscapes. We have to find possibilities for added value, e.g. sell organic products with higher price.
- Not necessarily everything needs to be maintained, it is more important to have society agreements.
- It does not make sense to try to keep with all means something that is changing. The primary function of rural areas used to be food production but it is not anymore the most important function of rural areas. Now we are maintaining landscapes to satisfy our other needs than food.
- We have to keep people in countryside who want to work here and maintain what our ancestors have created. Not all the areas can be mown, we need grazing animals to maintain the landscapes. Due to the high price of land only rich people can buy it who do not want any animals but only summer houses.
- Land ownership can be a problem, those people that we would like to have here cannot buy lands because of high price. We do not need too many people in countryside, just a little bit more. Estonia has set the goal to maintain 45 000 ha of seminatural habitats by 2020.
- There are also some good examples of people who bought a house as summer cottage but later started to live there, took animals and started hobby farming.
- Even in such a small country like Estonia there are very big regional differences. The reputation of rural life is not very good and it is magnified by the politicians. We have to find ways to convince people. This conference is a part of diplomatic mission to bring together policy makers and local people.
- We can benefit from ideas and initiatives of local community - local breeds, using horses in forest management, having less environmental impact.
- National park is a mixture of landscapes, we should break it down into particular places that people can talk about. The historical view is important because it shows how landscapes have changed in time.
- Nowadays very important for regional policies is to ensure the same standards in countryside as in towns concerning communication/internet.
- We should not be afraid of problems, officials should talk to local people
- Lahemaa NP has a good network and possibilities for local people to participate. This experience should be promoted to other communities.
- We have lot of problems, stereotypes that living in countryside is very expensive but it can be cheap if you have forest, knowledge on traditional building etc.
- In Lithuania sometimes the relationship between newcomers and local people can be complicate. Often we welcome our guests but do not welcome newcomers/new neighbours. Newcomers have to be very strong to survive in the village. Sometimes it is much easier to build a new farm outside of the village.
- Many villages in Estonia are empty already (100 villages from 4500 are empty) or there are only old people, therefore it is not so hard for newcomers to go to a village.
- Lahemaa is quite a happy place, there is still local community. There are places in Estonia where people are happy if anybody comes, even for summer holidays.
- In Lithuania there are a lot of problems, lots of communities getting older, young people leaving to big cities. But we have to create and promote opportunities for them in countryside.

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- Preconditions for sustainable landscape management?
 - We need human rights issues to be clarified, clear economic incentives, key environmental objectives clarified.
 - To make grassland management viable one of the conditions is cooperation between local community and authorities - resistance for cooperation is limiting the possibilities.
 - The first condition is the environment itself, fresh air, water, etc. that is missing in huge towns. The second condition is people.
 - In Estonia there is quite good system of subsidies but CAP could be better.
 - Economic aspects are important but also motivation to live somewhere. It is important to develop common understanding of aims and values, then it is easier to find good ways to achieve them. It is important to involve leaders of local communities and specialists.
- We need livestock and we need to educate our consumers (most of which are in Tallinn and other cities) to buy local products.
- The cultural landscape is changing all the time, it is linked to changes in agriculture. It is important to maintain functions, features and values. Concerning cultural heritage we have to learn to create unique because this will be the main aim in future. We have to learn and teach others why diversity is good.
- It is relatively easy to create a community but how to have and keep up strong communities? It is usually voluntary work to be active in a community.
 - Different activities in a community should have different leaders. The leadership must be spread out, not only one leader, otherwise it is not sustainable. Most important is communication in a community.
 - It is voluntary work but the results are worth doing it.
- It is important to talk to the community, even several times about one thing if necessary. It is important not to misuse the trust of the community and when community says something you must deal with it.
 - The rules for communication: be open, respective, creative to solve problems, and if things going out of hands then agree on rules for communication.
 - It is important to think when to go to different groups, how to bring different groups together, how to involve different groups, adults and children.

SATURDAY, 8th of October - Field trip about agricultural landscapes

Palmse-Võhma (Diana Pärna)-Uuri küla (Imbi Jäetma)-Vanaküla (Ennu Tšernjavski)-Palmse
 The trip was guided by **Kalev Sepp & Kristiina Jürisoo**

In Võhma village ancient fields were visited followed by a tour to a dairy farm together with the owner, Diana Pärna. The possibilities and sustainability of medium scale farming activities in the National Park were discussed. The next stop was at the Sae sheep farm where there was a guided tour led by Imbi Jäetma, followed by lunch. Sae farm has been home of her husband's family for over 200 years. Today they are proud owners of about two hundred sheep originating from 15 different households (12 regions). They use native sheep wool in its natural colours (varying from deep black to bright white) for making numerous knitted or



felt items to preserve traditional heritage values. The last stop was at the farm of Ennu Tšernjavski. For the last 11 years he had raised Estonian Heavy Draught horses and has been testing their use in forest management.

Report by Merle Kuris, Baltic Environmental Forum Estonia

