

Retz/Znojmo Austrian and Czech Borderland: searching for environmental security

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Aims:

- ✓ To compare changes in environmental situation in both parts of the Austrian/Czech borderland after the fall of the Iron Curtain of 1989, environmental loads and risks/hazards in particular
- ✓ To fulfill this aim, Vienna and Brno research groups will be established for joint environmental survey in RZA
- ✓ To empower initiatives in the field of environmental cooperation between Retz and Znojmo which will pursue sustainability, security, stewardship and sound science at the local level (R.T.Wright: *Environmental Science*) -
- ✓ To apply principles of multilevel governance and governmentality (local-regional-national-the EU; non-state actors will become subjects of governance) which will render possible the dissemination and transfer of the gained experience regarding environmental security at all levels
- ✓ Publication covering joint environmental research and survey in Retz/Znojmo Area intended for target groups in public administration (Znojmo, Retz regional bodies), rural communities, business/entrepreneurship, education, nature/landscape management(national parks – Dyje/Thaya), stakeholders/citizens, visitors with texts, photos, maps, tables

Activities:

1. To conduct an environmental survey portraying physical and cultural landscapes of Retz/Znojmo Area (RZA), landscape ecosystems and their capital provisioning goods as well as services in the light of "The Millenium Ecosystem Assessment" and "Ecosystems and Human Well-being: A Framework for Assessment"; intended output: a report containing maps of RZA landscapes, interviews, visual documents (video + images)
 - ✓ Terrain mapping of physical and cultural landscape in the scale of 1:100 000 in RZA
 - ✓ Tables of generic landscape ecosystems providing goods and services
 - ✓ Social research/interviews in villages and towns of RZA
 - ✓ Two workshops: May 18th and in the first half of September (Znojmo-Retz)
2. To establish a close rapport with local communities in order to find out their environmental imagination and perception of RZA (incl. environmental hazards) as well as performed actions. The output of this rapport will be the production of mental maps done by local communities and ethnographic thick description done by students and activists
 - ✓ A survey of environmental perception in rural and urban communities based on questionnaire (environmental mental maps)
 - ✓ Talking to people for 'thick description' of environmental performance in RZA
3. To examine social capital of RZA, reveal environmental practices, and analyze the degree of public-private cooperation in environmental stewardship; the means of this activity: a joint workshop and group discussions bringing together the following stakeholders: representatives of public administration/councils, The Thaya/Dyje-river

National parks Management, NGOs, firms, group and individuals initiatives as well as students and teachers.

Scientific relevance and methodology:

- Environmental security is a new and dynamic topic which links previously separated realms of the “political/social” with the “environmental/ecosystem”, thereby strengthening the concept of sustainability in risk society. The key assumption is that environmental security should be aimed at individual and communities and solved locally, and only those issues that cannot be solved at the local level will be passed onto other levels in multi-level governance structure (reflects the principle of subsidiarity). The attention to environmental security is supported by answering the question concerning the global warming manifested first of all in growing frequency of natural extremes – long cold winters, floods, short summers etc. This approach provides us with an integrative perspective on landscape ecosystems as they :
 - provide goods and services
 - regulate benefits of ecosystems processes
 - support services that maintain conditions for life on earth (common good)
 - obtain cultural non-material benefits – spiritual, recreational, aesthetic, inspirational, communal, educational, symbolic
 - natural hazards in environmental performance – floods at the Dyje/Thaya river, measures/adjustment to mitigating their consequences
 - risks of drought, flash floods, air/water quality, accelerated soil erosion
- Sound science of environmental security will possess the following characteristics:
 - juxtaposing quantitative and qualitative methods of research (methodological triangulation)
 - tackling absolutely essential questions appertaining to nexus between environmental practices and regimes of governance and governmentality, e.g. *politics of landscape*
 - the scope of the analysis includes six interlinked dimensions/prisms through which any examined area can be conceived of: economy, society, culture, ecology, politics/policy, and technology
 - furthermore, the proposed analysis will investigate into these linkages as informed by the notions of coproduction (S. Jasanoff) and dominance/oppression and power/knowledge relations ((M. Foucault)

The European perspective and future prospects:

- The proposed project is informed by the EU activities leading to support integrative, environmental sustainability projects, e.g. FP6
- The project as outlined reflects the increasing vertical dynamics which meshes localities with regional and global changes; as a result, a new hybrid phenomenon of glocality/glocalization needs to be examined (its local impacts in particular)
- The proposed project is informed by other European projects such as the EECONET, the NATURA, or an implementation of the AGENDA 21.
- The strengths of the location of the proposed project in the Austria-Czech borderland can be summarized as follows:
 - ecologically sensitive landscape ecosystems (The Thaya/Dyje-river National Parks)
 - country towns of Retz and Znojmo with their suburban fringes

- similar rural environment of arable land with different spatial pattern in Lower Austria and South Moravia, minor landscape protected sites, vineyards and villages settled after World War II by newcomers
- differences in the watercourses network management, especially the Thaya/Dyje-river, irrigated/meliorated tracts
- remarkable history of cultural landscape and its heritage as a part of culture
- The proposed project is designed as the first and the most important phase for potential future cooperation in Lower Austria/South Moravia focused on environmental security, the topic deepening the concept of sustainability
 - Sustainability is one of the targets in EU FP6 – common research investigating landscape ecosystems from the point of view their production/reproduction
 - Respect to European Convention on Landscape covering landscape planning, education, awareness and The Aarhus Convention on public approach to environmental data, management
 - Both countries – Austria and Czech Republic have their own state environmental policies including environmental indicators, The Lisboa Protocol applications etc.
 - Sustainability includes not only nature but also society, culture, economy and technology changes not threatening future generations