

Challenges and Opportunities in Transboundary Cooperation

Examples from the German-French Biosphere Reserve *Palatinate Forest and Northern Vosges*

Biosphärenreservat
Pfälzerwald-
Nordvogesen



The German-French Border

in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Pfälzerwald-Vosges du Nord

- The border region between Germany and France, especially between the German Palatinate and the French regions of Alsace and Lorraine, has been marked by centuries of war and territorial struggle
- In the 1930s, the Westwall (Siegfried Line) and the Maginot Line were built as lines of deterrence and defense, also between the Pfälzerwald (Palatinate) and the Northern Vosges (Alsace/Lorraine)
- Nowadays the border between Germany and France in the Biosphere Reserve is hardly visible



Remains of the Westwall near Eppenbrun, Germany (Foto. Günther Wagner)

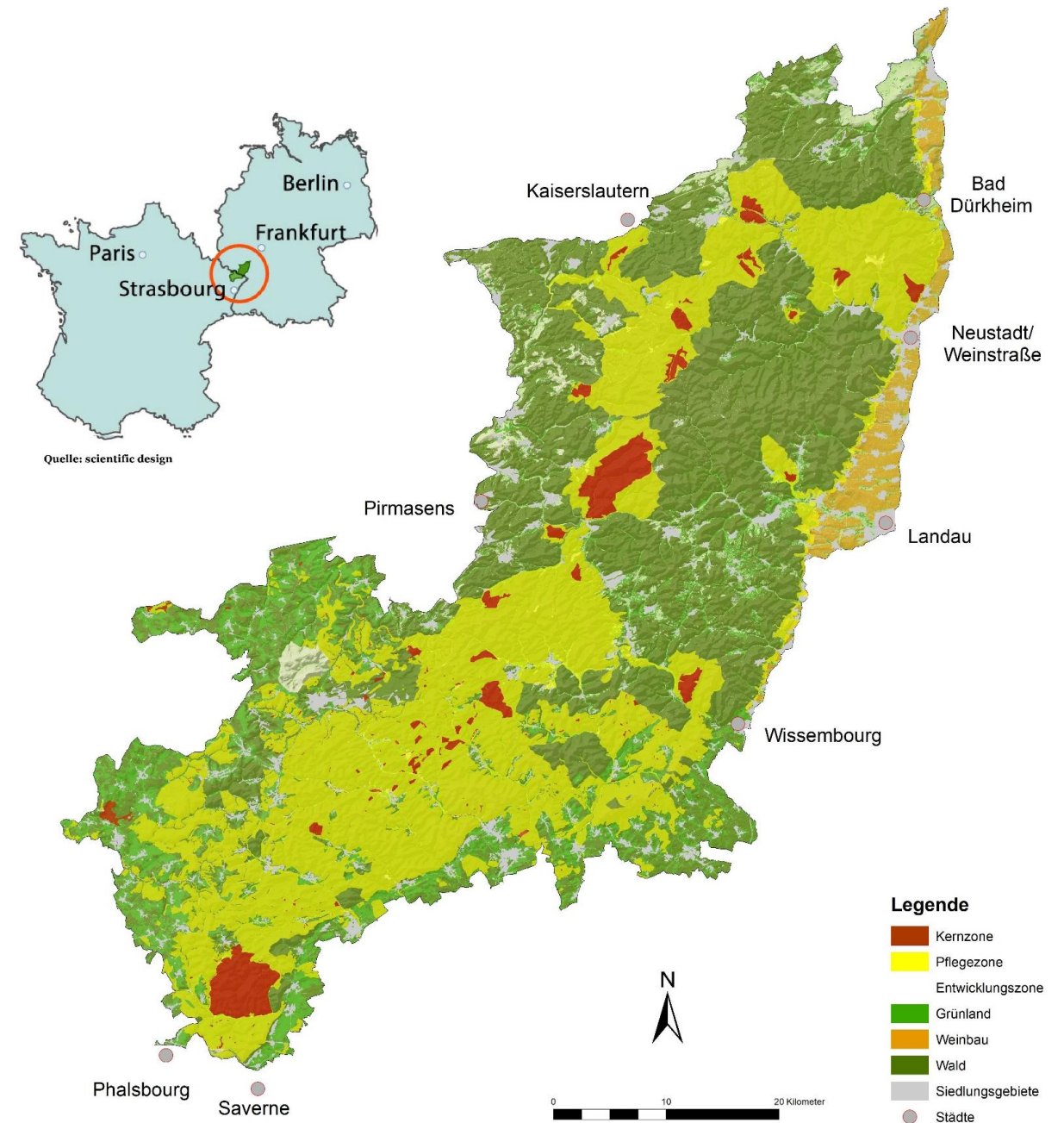
Our Biosphere Reserve

- since 1992: UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Pfälzerwald
- since 1998: Transboundary UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, partnered with the Northern Vosges Regional Nature Park and Biosphere Reserve in France
- supporting organisation:
 - in Germany: Bezirksverband Pfalz (higher municipal organisation) with the Bezirkstag Pfalz (political body with elected members / „parliament“)
 - in France: SYCOPARC (Syndicat de coopération pour le Parc) with the Comité du Parc (constituted of elected members representing different political bodies, as well as associated partners)
- Staff: 17 on the German side, about 50 on the French side
- Places of effective management: Lambrecht (Germany) and La Petite Pierre (France)



Area, People, and Nature

- ca. 230.000 inhabitants on the German side, ca. 85.000 on the French side
- 129 communities in Germany, 111 in France
- size: 179.000 ha in Germany, 128.000 ha in France
- Pfälzerwald / Vosges du Nord:
 - core area: 3 % / 3.4 %
 - buffer zone: 26,8 % / 50.3 %
 - transition area: 70,2 % / 46.3 %
- 75 % forest cover in Germany, ca. 65 % in France
- Largest contiguous forest area in Germany, together with the Northern Vosges the largest contiguous forest area in Western Europe



Structures for Transboundary Cooperation

- Agreement for German-French cooperation: framework for the cooperation
- Twice a year: meetings for the German-French steering committee, consisting of members of Sycoparc and the Bezirksverband Pfalz
- Regular meetings of the two directors as well as project related staff meetings, aiming at the intensification of the cooperation and the implementation of German-French projects



Excerpt from the Mission Statement of the Pfälzerwald Biosphere Reserve

Our mission

As part of the worldwide network of biosphere reserves, we (...) have taken on the task of laying the foundations for sustainable use and conservation of the natural resources of the biosphere across the German-French border and to develop model implementations for this. In doing so, we act in the spirit of the UNESCO program "Man and the Biosphere" (MAB). (...)



Tasks in the Biosphere Reserve



sustainable
economic
activity



natural
environment and
landscape
conservation



biodiversity



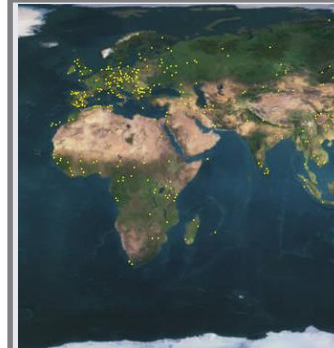
research and
monitoring



education for
sustainable
development



public relations
and
communication



integration into
the worldwide
network of
biosphere reserves

- Aims and projects are defined for the German side in the 10 year action plan („Handlungsprogramm“, currently 2019-2028), and
- for the Northern Vosges in the Charte du Parc (current term until 2025)

Joint Projects

- EU project LIFE Biocorridors
- „Gärten für die Artenvielfalt – Jardiner pour la biodiversité“ project
- „Espèces en danger – Arten in Gefahr“
- German-French Biosphere Farmers' Markets
- The „Wasgau talks“

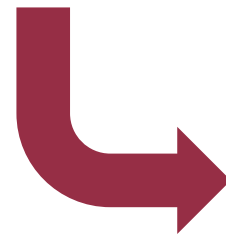
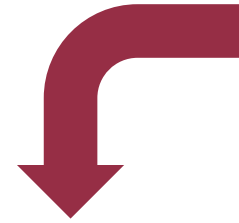


photos:
BR/Ralf Ziegler
BR/Klaus Venus
BR

EU Project „LIFE Biocorridors“

www.lifebiocorridors-vosgesnord-pfaelzerwald.eu

- Total volume: 3.6 million euros via LIFE
- Pfälzerwald: approx. 1.2 million euros
- Term: 2016-2020 (extended until 2021)
- Objective: Creation or restoration of the cross-border biotope network in three habitats
 - Forest: old-growth islands, hardwoods
 - Open land: promotion of orchards, maintenance of open spaces, maintenance of meadows (e.g. meagre/wet meadows)
 - Water: increase of permeability (e.g. removal of obstacles)



INTERREG Project „Gardening for Biodiversity“

www.pfaelzerwald.de/gaerten

- Franco-German project for the promotion and preservation of biodiversity
- Funding mainly through INTERREG V A Grande Région / Großregion
- Term: 2017-2021 (a new project focusing on public green spaces is intended from 2022-2025)
- Objective: to raise awareness among the population for the preservation of biodiversity in undeveloped areas (gardens)
- Three program pillars
 - Competition (focus on biodiversity)
 - Program of events
 - Program for school classes



Biodiversity-friendly gardens in France and Germany (photos: Sycoparc)

INTERREG Project „Species in Danger“

www.pfaelzerwald.de/projekte/interreg-projekt-gefaehrdete-tierarten

- Urgently needed conservation measures for three endangered species (stone crayfish, dusky large blue (butterfly), greater mouse-eared bat)
- Funding mainly through INTERREG V A Oberrhein / Rhin Supérieur
- Term: 2020-2023
- Objectives:
 - Joining forces to share knowledge, resources and monitoring methods in order to develop concrete conservation measures
 - Raising awareness on the topic of biodiversity and species loss through measures in the field of education for sustainable development and public relations



photos: SYCOPARC / Adobe Stock / Guido Pfalzer

German-French Biosphere Farmers' Markets

www.pfaelzerwald.de/bauernmaerkte

- 6 or 7 Franco-German markets per year in varying German and French communities
- Funding through the action plan (Pfälzerwald) and the Charte (Vosges du Nord)
- About 40 German-French producers offer regional and environmentally friendly products:
 - Ham, sausage, meat
 - Cheese, goat cheese,
 - Juice, organic wine and sparkling wine,
 - Jam and honey
 - Mushrooms etc.



German-French Biosphere Farmers' market in Neustadt an der Weinstraße (photos: BR/Klaus Venus)

The „Wasgau Talks“

- German-French meeting on changing topics, a platform for Franco-German exchange and cross-border cooperation for professionals and interested laymen
- Every two years
- Objective: discussion with each other, the furthering of education or the exchange of ideas for own projects in the transboundary biosphere reserve



Challenges and Opportunities in German-French Biosphere Cooperation

Challenges

- Language
- Physical Distance and Administrative Necessities
- Differing Mentalities
- Time and patience
- Administration and legal issues
- Responsibilities (Mainz – Paris)
- Finances and funding
- Project approaches, e.g.:
 - Regional products (focus sustainability vs. regionality)
 - Nature conservation
- Identification as a biosphere reserve or a nature park? (Northern Vosges)
- border closures during the Corona pandemic



Opportunities

- Learning together and from each other
- Different approaches to projects, e.g. in nature conservation
- Further development across the borders in friendship and common understanding
- Financing of common projects through the EU (Interreg, LIFE...)
- Further development of a worldwide system of protected areas (UNESCO)
- Reduction of barriers and obstacles through trust
- Getting to know and understand our neighbours in France better

Stakeholder Involvement in Transboundary Cooperation - Conclusions

Lessons learnt:

- Cooperation and stakeholder involvement successful at the project level
- Topical importance and heightened identification lead to better cooperation
→ Overlapping topics with high degree of identification as basis for exchange:
e.g. shared passion for gardening → garden project; regional products and culinary heritage as common economic and cultural interests → biosphere markets
- Promotion of stakeholder involvement via both institutional and informal avenues
- Stakeholder involvement is reinforced through the active support of the biosphere team (contact persons)
- A prime example: „Lynx Parliament“ → cross-sectoral, cross-border stakeholder involvement towards the acceptance of lynx reintroduction in the biosphere reserve



Stakeholder Involvement in Transboundary Cooperation - Conclusions

Objectives for the Future

- Renewal of the cooperation agreement and its adaptation to more current needs
→ in terms of content-related orientation, as well as towards the expansion of cooperation and stakeholder involvement beyond the joint project level
- Cultivation of a common organic identity through intensification of cross-border cooperation
→ The development of a transboundary identity should not be regarded as an additional task, but as a pervasive part of the biosphere mission
- Promotion of cross-border cooperation amongst members of the same sector (such as forestry, nature conservation associations, local politics, nature guides etc.)
- Development of projects from a shared fundamental root
→ basis for better acceptance and common understanding of objectives and proceedings
- Ensure and improve stable staffing for transboundary cooperation and stakeholder involvement



*Thank you for your
attention.*



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