CULTURAL LANDSCAPES IN NATURA 2000 SITES

TOWARDS A NEW POLICY FOR THE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

THE ROLE THAT SMALL TOWNS CAN PLAY IN THESE POLICY DEBATES

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INTRODUCTION

This presentation will cover

- An introduction to ECOVAST
  - Who we are and what we do
- It will discuss:
- Natural landscapes
- Built Landscapes
  - buildings, customs and traditions
- It will use examples of ECOVAST work on:
  - architecture / traditional rural buildings
  - small towns – their distinctiveness, heritage and opportunities to encourage activities such as tourism which could contribute to improved local economies

ECOVAST

- ECOVAST is an International Non Government Organisation
- A membership organisation - 10 national sections
  - Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and the United Kingdom and members from Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal
- It was set up to further the well-being of rural communities throughout Europe and safeguard rural heritage – through 2 formal aims:
  - to foster the economic, social and cultural vitality and administrative identity of rural communities
  - to safeguard and promote the sensitive and imaginative renewal of the built and natural environments of such communities throughout Europe

NATURAL LANDSCAPES

- The best iconic natural landscapes have been designated as National Parks
- Other areas with common characteristics have been designated as Regional Parks which are usually promoted as places for recreation
- Many other varied local landscapes are much valued locally
- Many of these quality landscapes are farmed or forested and need careful management practices to maintain them
- All these landscapes include rural settlements – hamlets, villages and small towns

BUILT LANDSCAPES

- The dense pattern of roofs, towers, domes and chimneys, small in scale are embedded in a wide variety of natural landscapes
- There is a huge variety of building styles across Europe all reflecting their history
- ECOVAST has concentrated on rural buildings
  - new uses for old country buildings in Croatia
  - renewable energy in old buildings in Germany
  - monastery towns in Russia
  - historic villages in Hungary and the potential conflict between a 'living village' and preservation
- AND on small towns
  - the rest of this presentation is concentrating on small towns

WHY FOCUS ON SMALL TOWNS

- Small towns are distinctive and vividly demonstrate history and heritage in their buildings which are embedded in a variety of landscapes and retain traditions customs
- Small towns are the backbone of the rural areas that surround them providing jobs, shops and services for their rural hinterlands of villages and hamlets and farmsteads
- There are thousands of small towns across Europe
  - 4,580 small towns with populations between 10,000 - 30,000
  - with 78 million people living in them
- AND very many very small towns of less than 10,000 population

WHAT IS A SMALL TOWN & CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

- There is no formal agreement of what is a 'small town' – it varies from state to state
- A town is about function as well as size
- Small towns have faced many challenges
  - centralisation of services
  - out migration of young people
  - major economic recession
- BUT It is not all doom and gloom
- There are many opportunities for small towns to use their considerable assets and resources to improve their economic situation
  - They have a diverse heritage of history & architecture & customs & traditions – illustrated in the next few slides
  - These ideas could be replicated by other towns

Different Landscape Settings

Provide unique and distinctive settings for small towns:

- **Ports – Honfleur France;**
- **Riverside- Ponte de Lima, Portugal;**
- **Lakeside – Bled, Slovenia;**
- **Islands – Mykonos, Greece**

- Spectacular hilltop towns – Arcos de la Frontera, Spain

Distinctiveness

- Small towns have significant historic and architectural assets
- Some of this heritage is recognised by UNESCO
- Huge variety across Europe

Banska Stiavnica, Slovakia

Williamstad, Netherlands

Mirepoix, France

Roros, Norway

Iconic Architecture

- Castle town of Vianden, Luxembourg
- Walled town of St Ursanne, Switzerland
- Bridge Cahors, France

Variety of local building materials

- Local examples in South East England's 165 small towns

Celebrating Local Industries

- Former mining towns are trying to exploit their past as centres for mining gold, silver, copper, iron ore, slate, or mercury of semi precious stones
  - they maintain distinctive industrial landscapes
  - Blanau Ffestiniog in Wales
  - Idar Oberstein in Germany

Tourist Trails

- The Romantic Road – Germany

- Council of Europe Cultural Trails – Way of St James across Spain
- Cultural Tourism trail in Romania – Byzantine heritage north of the Danube

Celebrating Famous Local People

- Famous authors, composers, even politicians are celebrated in the town of their birth or the place where they lived for a long time
  - special events can be held on their birth date (or 100 year anniversary)
- Famous religious people such as St Francis and St Clare bring in millions of pilgrims into their home town of Assisi in Italy

Towns Associated with Food and Drink

- Borchiv, Ukraine - the home of Borsch Soup
- Raabs, Austria - Pumpkin Festivals in Styria and Lower Austria
- Edam, Netherlands - famous Cheese Market
- Suzdal, Russia - Cucumber

- Coastal small towns all around Europe celebrate fishing and stage fish festivals – such as in Castellammare in Sicily
- Europe's Wine Festivals are famous across the world
  - Bernkastel in Germany
  - Tokaj in Hungary

Festivals, Carnivals & Pageants celebrating Local Culture and Customs

- Battle re-enactments
- Seasonal celebrations

Can be aimed at local, regional, national or even international audiences: Staging events can be on a regular annual basis or just for very special events

Folklore festivals: singing, dancing, costumes

- There is a wide variety of folk traditions being kept alive by small towns
- Local costumes are highly prized by local communities

International Festivals of Music, Film, Literature & Poetry

- Trumpet Festival in Serbia: Organ Festival in Slovakia
- Film Festival in Finland: Poetry Festival in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia