

Introduction

- Research focus was on:
 - the **process and content** of lake governance development in Latvia, being also NATURE 2000 area, and
 - on the investigation of **tourism situation/role** as of both a regional resource and as governance instrument.
- Case study research** was done in the area of the **Lake Lubana (82 km²)**:
 - being located in the south-east of Latvia and within the **largest wetland** in Latvia (NATURA 2000 territory), actually former lakes' waterbed during flooding period
 - Latvia's largest lake, and the only being fully dammed (biggest in Europe), but the damming has caused various issues for both lake and regional nature, local inhabitants and impacted local culture heritage too,
- Lake Lubana has a very **complicated governance system (if any)**, within the **interests of several governance sectors**
- The region is now lightly populated, but with well developed **agriculture and fisheries/angling, some tourism**
- Being quite popular for **recreation and tourism** in the region and beyond, but **very limited infrastructure**



Methodology

The lake region governance study was framed within **three governance dimensions**:

- governance **stakeholders** (segments) – **WHO**
- governance **content** (thematic sectors) – **WHAT**,
- governance **instruments** – **HOW**.

Case Study Research methodology using **complementary**:

- Document studies;
- Especially, **interviews** – **altogether 38 deep, semi-structured and 61 expresinterviews** with all main stakeholder groups
 - **local residents**,
 - **municipalities**,
 - **national governance institutions and their regional structures**
 - **mediators** – **media, NGOs, formal/nonformal education, local science/experts**
 - **entrepreneurs, esp. tourism**
 - **and in addition also thematic experts group.**
- Lake region **observation** – tourist points of interest and tourism, and recreational infrastructure
- Local **culture and customs** investigation - tourism potential and significance to local communities.



Research Results

Overall governance and nature protection-tourism information:

- The Lubana lake and wetland do **not have governance plans**, but the first is in development,
- Governance content is **mostly focused on nature conservation** - socio-economical sectors are largely overlooked.
- The region is governed by several sector organizations: The Madona and Rezekne municipalities, The Nature Conservation Agency, State Environmental services, and the Ministry of Agriculture with various structures.
- Most stakeholders, including local residents are **not involved in planning-governance** or related activity.
- Governance instruments**- basic legislation, some sector administration and control, regulating lake water levels. **All other instruments, communications instruments are underused and poorly developed.**
- Collaboration between agencies and stakeholder groups is limited, even conflicting interests.**

The Wetland Tourism Information Centre, located in Osupe, Madona municipality (one person):

- Has most information in the region regarding nature, the lake and wetland, as well as for tourism
- Serves as an intermediate between local inhabitants, tourists and municipal/national organizations.
- Is involved in regional planning, organizes recreational and nature conservation events, lectures in schools.
- Provides tourism and recreation related services – accomodation for visitors, rentable boats, angling areas, guided tours.
- Is next to one of the Lake Lubana dams/slucices.

Water tourism center «Lighthouse», located in Gaigalava, Rezekne municipality (one person):

- Is primarily a guest house, but has information regarding bird watching.
- Was formally operated by the Gaigalava municipality, now is rented by private company.
- Is close to the Lubana only beach, provides recreational options, but not as much as under municipal control.
- Is located in a converted water pumping station.

Culture and nature recreation:

Local recreation

- Local inhabitants relax in the region by: **angling; hunting; gathering mushrooms and berries** - also a source of income for the population.
- Nature walks, bird watching and boating** are also popular among residents.
- Most recreational options are limited during winters –

Local culture

- Local residents have **unique fish smoking and cooking traditions and recipes.**
- Local communities have evolved in dependancies of the lake and what it provides – most settlements were **fishing settlements (the only inside country, not at the sea coast !)**, local residents kept boats in case of floods, have a deep reverence for the lake and local nature.
- Homes were traditionally roofed with lake reeds, and (still) have windows not facing the lake for warmth in winters.
- Settlements close to the lake were **placed on hill- during unnuual floods, they were on islands.**
- Lubana region was one of **Latvias oldest ancient settled area**, and agriculture in the country begun.
- Lubana region was one of **Europes amber trading centers** – amber is still found in the area.

Tourism

- Poorly developed/tought over – **not all options such as culture and nature tourism/eco-tourism are being used.**
- Lacks all forms of infrastructure, developed points of interest.
- Lacks all type information regarding local nature, the lake, and Lubana region** is not as widely know as other popular regions.
- Largely developed by locals** - inhabitants, municipalities and entrepreneurs, less regional, no national activities sector.

Local economics

- Limited due to strict nature conservation restrictions.**
- Focused on agriculture, tourism and fishing/aquaculture.
- Lack sufficient national support, or inclusion in regional planning documents.
- The lack of a lake/wetland protection/governance plan** prevents extensive development.



Source: visitmadona.lv photo gallery. Available: <https://visitmadona.lv>



Avots: visitmadona.lv.



Avots:<https://baka.rezeknesnovads.lv/>



Avots: Lubanaspuse.lv



Avots: Celjotajs.lv

Conclusions

- Most governance sectors are neglected in favor of nature conservation. Most instrument groups are limited and underused, not complementary.**
- Esp. required nature communications instruments in the region are very limited, and rarely related directly to the lake or wetland., and are underused in governance.**
- Current governance system (if any) is limited and not effective, most stakeholders are not involved,main governors of the region do not really collaborate for governance, have conflicts of interest – governance is fractured in all meanings and by all instruments !**
- Tourism, in addition to nature conservation are to be seen as the primary local/regional sector in the region. The tourism sector contains both nature and culture tourism potential, but the sector is lacking in all forms of infrastructure and management.**
- For lake region management - very effective is the municipal Wetland TIC, as really works as informal territorial administratore, also represents all 4 forms of communications instruments – information, education, participation and pro-nature behaviour.**
- Effective governance of the region requires a regional governance planing, to be based on all socio-economical system sectors, governance stakeholders are included and all innstrument groups planned/usedto be effective.**
- Nature and culture tourism planning-development and governance is to be seen as local/regional imperative – tourism instruments not only as/for tourism but as mandatory nature protection instruments and regional development ones too.**

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