

Bernhard Siquans

Learnscape

Green Delta

Strengthening a peripheral region
in the Romanian Danube Delta



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Bernhard Siquans
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Introduction

On the basis of the essential report (cf. Danner et al. 2014), which was written after a phase of research and the excursion to C.A. Rosetti in September 2014, a few things have to be underlined in order to understand this project's approach. In the Danube Delta, excluding Constantia and Tulcea, live about 15.000 people with twelve different ethnic backgrounds. Due to a lack of possibilities for employment and higher education the region experiences a drastic decrease of population. In C.A. Rosetti, the municipality we worked on, there is furthermore a lack of basic infrastructure like running water or a sewage system. As a result, some human settlements within the municipality already died out (Cardon) or are on the verge of doing so (Sfiștofca).

External interventions like the industrialization of fishing as well as the establishment of a Biosphere Reserve influenced the life of local people tremendously. Many restrictions were established in favor for the environment (Biosphere Reserve) as well as in favor for private enterprises (fishing). The consequences are that people lost their jobs as fishermen, they do not have the same access to natural resources like fish or reed, and further have restrictions on how to build or renovate houses. Some of these restrictions definitely make sense in order to preserve natural and cultural habitats but still people feel left out in decision-making processes concerning their personal lives.

The richness of biodiversity and nature in the municipality is an unique treasure which has to be preserved but in a matter of way that people are able to live with the nature and not just side by side threatening each other. The task is to take advantage of this situation while not harming it.

In recent years the region saw schools closing down, as happened in Sfiștofca. Schools possess a key role in the development of peripheral regions and especially in C.A. Rosetti. On behalf of children's education, and therefore the future settlement of new families, the school, which provides classes from 1st to 8th grade, is essential. Due to the migration there is a domination of elderly people. It is strongly believed that the existing school has to be strengthened in order to assure a future for the municipality. By working with the children it is possible to reach out to the future decision-makers as well as the current ones, the children's parents.

From the economic point of view the municipality is definitely not rich. But looking at the cultural and natural resources, C.A. Rosetti is a very wealthy region. The project Learnscope Green Delta does exactly work with this rich resources of culture and nature to create an adding value in the region in terms of generating knowledge.

The crucial element for success of a project like this are competent and reliable partners with a profound knowledge about the region and/or the related (environmental/educational) topics. This paper underlines that approach by starting with an introduction of potential partners for the project before it continues with the vision and further remarks on the Learnscope Green Delta.

This paper does not claim completeness in terms of naming all potential partners or providing the one and only recipe for the development of C.A. Rosetti. The reader may rather regard this paper as a vision, eager to stimulate interested minds to take some of the thoughts a step further.



◀ Bathroom in Sfiștofca

Potential **partners**

The most important component of a successful project are (local) reliable and competent partners. In the following there are some potential and important partners listed to realize a venture like the »Green Delta« project. There is no claim of completeness and there are definitely more potential partners which will just arise by digging deeper into the project's implementation. It has to be mentioned that the **local school**, the **municipality** of C.A. Rosetti and **local culture clubs** are obviously very important partners for the project because these are the people which are on-site all the time, but here further partners are explained in detail.

As mentioned in the essential report and earlier in this paper, the biodiversity of the Danube Delta is tremendously rich and most probably the biggest asset of the region. Due to this fact, Romania – as the first neighbouring country of the Delta – officially nominated its part of the Danube Delta as a Biosphere Reserve in 1990. Three years later the UNESCO placed the Danube Delta on the list of world natural heritages and Romania nominated it as a protected natural area. The Danube Delta is the biggest wetland in Europe and hosts more than 1.500 species of plants and 3.500 species of animals. Furthermore the Delta has the biggest connected reed area in the World and as such is home for over 330 different kinds of birds (cf. Resch 2009: 25).

The main three functions of a biosphere reserve are protection (of landscape, ecosystems and biodiversity), (sustainable and economic) regional development, environmental research and education by promoting showcase projects, monitoring and so on (cf. Unesco [a], online). The difference between a strict natural protected area and a biosphere reserve, or the »Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)« like the UNESCO calls it, is that not the unconditional conservation is the main focus but the (hu)man and his life with the nature is the key aspect (cf. Unesco [b], online).

The biosphere reserve of the Romanian Danube Delta is administrated by the **Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (DDBRA)** which is led by a scientific council including representatives from DDBRA, local authorities, ministries, health services, research institutions, Romanian academy of science, economic companies etc. (cf. DDBRA [a], online).

The DDBRA was established in 1993 and has probably the most important role in case of environmental education in the Danube Delta. It has taken different actions in environmental education and awareness especially since the year 2000. Within this scope they developed the first Public Awareness strategy, practical guides for environmental education for schools and kindergardens including DDBRA's specialists visiting schools, a variety of educational brochures, organizing events like »Environment Day«, »The International day of Wetlands« etc. Most of the physical material was only published in Romanian language because of the specific target group (Romanian pupils) and no need for further translations (cf. DDBRA [b], online; DDBRA 07.11.2014). The DDBRA also takes part in international collaborations in terms of environmental education programmes like the »NAVINATUR Project – Education for sustainable development by linking nature experiences with digital media«. This was a project including a school exchange¹ with the Center for Environmental Education SCHUBZ in Germany (cf. Centre for Environmental Education Schubz, online). This gathered experience and competence of the DDBRA makes it a very important partner for all actions related to environmental education in the Danube Delta region.

¹ The school exchange included the Lyceum Joseph Haltrich Sighisoara (RO), Marion-Dönhoff-Gymnasium Mölln (GER), Haupt- und Realschule Salzhausen (GER), IGS Salzhausen (GER) and the Secondary School Sf. Gheorghe (RO).

Plimbare în Microcosmos

Există o altă lume care trăiește sub picioarele tale. O poți vedea cu ușurință, atâta timp cât te vei culca pe pământ. Întinde un metru de sfoară pe plajă sau pe mal/țârm și așează-te sau culcă-te lângă ea. Foarte încet, urmărește sfoara și observă tot ceea ce este interesant pe lângă ea. Este mai bine să te uiți de la o distanță mică, nu mai mult de 30 de centimetri și având o lupă cu tine.

9

The **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** also established various projects concerning the Danube Delta and environmental education. The WWF Romania is constantly doing projects on protection and rebuilding wetlands and other ecosystems in the Delta and has also launched a green school programme with the aim of creating a network of active schools and teachers to develop formal and non-formal education models on the topics of sustainable development, active citizenship and environmental education (cf. WWF Romania, online). Another potential cooperation possibility for exchange programmes could be WWF Austria. They established a big environmental education programme for young people, children and teachers consisting of school programmes, action groups and so on (cf. WWF Austria, online).

Another important organisation for environmental awareness in the Danube Delta is the **Naturefriends International (NFI)**. Since 1989 the NFI nominates biannually a cross-border landscape of the year. The goal of this programme is to start or promote a sustainable development of the chosen region with a special focus on eco-tourism. From 2007-2009 this landscape of the year was the Danube Delta. The actions of the NFI in the Danube Delta were manifold: Eco-label workshops, certification workshops for hostel owners, sustainable use of reed workshops, environmental education activities, stakeholder workshops and so on (cf. Naturefriends International 2009). Over two years the NFI gathered a lot of knowledge about sustainable development in the Danube Delta and furthermore for a much longer time in different regions throughout Europe. This knowledge should definitely get used for any future activities in the field of raising environmental awareness.



►
Children in the
Danube Delta
during the project
»Landscape of the
year 2009«
© NFI

The **Slow Tourism Company (STC)** is a partnership between the Association of Eco-tourism in Romania and the Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23 Association. Together they created a social enterprise which uses tourism as a tool for local development and nature conservation. The idea is to experience the unique habitat and the rich cultural heritage of Europe's largest wetlands by the slow pace of paddling a traditional boat. They are situated in Crişan and offer paddling tours starting in their Rowmania (sic!) Ecotourism Center (cf. Slow-tourism, online). As a local initiative the STC could be an interesting partner for the project.



◀ Paddling in the Danube Delta
© Rowmania

Asociatia Letea in UNESCO is an NGO with the main goal to bring the use of reed in the region on the UNESCO list of immaterial cultural heritage. They started a project which is called »Stuful e beton!« (»Reed is cool!«) to raise awareness for the great characteristics of reed and to promote its use within the community and the public authorities. Another aim is to work on a local development strategy for Letea and to foster the community development by various events in Letea. Two of the founding members themselves are originally from Letea and by that a strong connection to the community is already provided (cf. Asociatia Leta in UNESCO, online). As a local NGO, which works on-site with the local community and in the context of environment-friendly handicraft, Asociatia Letea in UNESCO is a high potential partner for the Green Delta Gathering as well as for Green Delta Education and Green Delta Skills.

▶ House with traditional roof made out of reed



Get active for a living Danube!



DANUBE DAY 2014

JUNE 29

www.danubeday.org



The **International Danube Day** was founded in 2004 by **ICPDR** (International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River) and is taking place every year around the 29th of June. It provides a platform for the whole Danube region to raise awareness for the living environment and the eco systems of the river. On Danube Day there are various events like concerts, discussions, workshops, exhibitions, clean-ups etc. in each Danube country (cf. ICPDR, online). Danube Day and all the organisations which contribute to it could be co-operation partners for the Green Delta Gathering and the festival might even be integrated into the Danube Day activities.

The ICPDR also has a Public Participation Group which deals with activities concerning public information, outreach and awareness raising and environmental education. Therefore it could be an interesting cooperation partner for the Learnscape Green Delta.

The team of **River Jump** is a group of people with different ages and backgrounds. Every year they organise a border-crossing festival on environmental topics. It takes place at the border region of Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia and gathers about 60 people coming from these three countries. With their knowledge about organising environmental festivals on an international level and the cooperation with important funding partners, like the European Union, River Jump could be an important partner for the realisation of the Green Delta Gathering (cf. Hnuti Brontosaurus/SCI Österreich, online).



◀
Poster of the
Danube Day 2014
© ICPDR

▶
Participants of River
Jump Festival 2014
© River Jump

The Vision

Learnscape Green Delta

The Danube Delta with its richness of biodiversity and culture on the one hand and its simplicity of everyday life on the other, makes it the ideal breeding ground for people eager to experience nature in a very intact environment and further to develop ideas and projects which consider sustainability on all its dimensions.

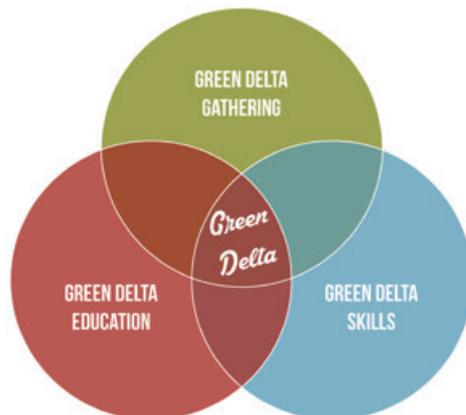
The municipality of C.A. Rosetti embodies a special case based on the named aspects. Letea forest is the most northern subtropical forest in Europe and the oldest natural protected area in Romania. Together with the huge wetlands, reed fields and other places it hosts an immense number of flora and fauna. Ukrainians, Lipovans and Romanians with their rich cultural lives enrich a fascinating »Delta culture« which they all belong to. At the same time the challenges (see Introduction), which the municipality faces, create a tense situation and brave strategies are needed to offer a perspective for the people. C.A. Rosetti embodies all this being a great experimental ground to represent a learnscape for environmental awareness.

This learnscape is based on three dimensions:

Green Delta Gathering – Festival for Environmental Awareness and Education

Green Delta Education – Environmental Education Programme for the local school(s)

Green Delta Skills – Environmental Skill Programme for locals



◀ The three dimensions of Learnscape Green Delta

▶ Run-down boat in Sfiștofca
© Gerold Ludwig





Dimension one

Festival for Environmental
Awareness and Education

Green Delta Gathering

Festival for Environmental Awareness and Education

The Green Delta Gathering is a festival which takes place once a year in summer time on different sites in the municipality of C.A. Rosetti. The festival participants are young Europeans from the age of 16-30 years old who can participate for a reasonable expense due to the youth programme funding of the European Union. The implementation of the new instrument ITI (Integrated Territorial Investment) of the European Union (cf. Danner et al. 2014: 41ff.) could also offer a further funding possibility for the Green Delta project as a whole and in specific the Green Delta Gathering as well.

Every year the participant group offers a creative pool of about 60 young interested and motivated people eager to spend time and ideas on hands-on experiences on environmental topics. The lack of infrastructure (no running water, no sewage system) is not seen as a disadvantage but as an issue which can be worked on during workshops etc. There is a camping site prepared where the participants can sleep in their tents or as bad-weather-option in the school building of C.A. Rosetti and the abandoned school of Sfiștofca.

Some residents of C.A. Rosetti are employed to prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner for the festival attendees. The products for the meals should be locally grown and produced and (mainly) vegetarian, so vegetarians are not discriminated during mealtime. In terms of making the experience in the Danube Delta as authentic as possible, the food should also represent the everyday-meal of people living in the Danube Delta as far as possible.

The festival language is English and there are people who are able to translate, if necessary, to communicate with local people.

Together with the project partners (see Potential partners) a diversified festival programme will be developed in order to offer a variety of possible approaches to the Danube Delta and its related (environmental) topics. The duration of one week is basically splitted into two parts. The first part of the week (»Explore!«) provides different offers of excursions, workshops and evening events in order to get to know the people (attendees and locals), the region and the environmental issues. In the second part of the week (»Hands on!«) the participants are encouraged to let their own ideas flow. They have more free time and the task to organise their own little projects on relevant topics which have been introduced to them in the first part of the week.

Dimension one: Green Delta Gathering

The week ends with the presentation of the participants' projects and the projects of the school children (see Green Delta Education). A big focus of all of the activities is on the exchange and reflection in order to get most out of the exceptional creative circumstances.

The Green Delta Gathering schedule consists of different elements:

Mutual breakfast/lunch/dinner

Every day all the participants eat together at about the same time. These »side events« three times a day are seen as an important part of getting to know each other, establishing friendships, exchanging and reflecting experiences and last but not least getting to know the local food and satisfy the personal hunger.

Excursions

On three half-days the participants have the possibility to attend a variety of excursions by foot, car/bus or canoe/boat (cooperation with the Slow Tourism Company, see Potential partners). The excursions show the participants different situations and thematic approaches within the municipality and are accompanied by local experts (as well as residents and local school children as support team) and thematic experts (Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority, Asociatia Letea in UNESCO WWF Romania, Naturefriends International, see Potential partners).

Examples for possible excursions and thematic approaches:

- **Letea Forest:** The participants explore the most northern subtropical forest in Europe, its protection and importance for the municipality.
- **Canal tour I:** The participants do a canoe tour on the western and northern edge of the municipality to explore flora and fauna on the water.
- **Canal tour II:** The participants do a canoe tour on the eastern and southern edge of the municipality to explore flora and fauna on the water
- **Salt lake and other water sites:** The salt lake between C.A. Rosetti and Letea might be an important resource for the municipality due to the supposed healing capabilities. This and other water sources (salt and fresh water) are visited during this trip.
- **Village tour I:** The participants start their tour in C.A. Rosetti and visit Letea and Periprava. Guided tours through the village by locals offer a deeper understanding of the community.



▶
Mutual mealtime in
Sfiștofca



▶
left: Letea forest

▶
right: Canal in Letea



▶
left: Salt lake in Letea

▶
right: Village tour in
Periprava



- **Village tour II:** The participants start their tour in C.A. Rosetti and visit Sfiștofca and Cardon. Guided tours through the village by locals offer a deeper understanding of the community.
- **DDBRA information center Sulina:** A visit in the information center of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve together with experts of DDBRA provides an insight into the structure of the Biosphere Reserve, the chances and the consequences for the environment and local people.

Workshops

The afternoon sessions of the exploration phase are workshops led by the thematic experts (see Excursions) in cooperation with local school children and residents (support team).

The workshops will take place on different sites suitable to the specific topics. The aim of the workshops is to provide a deeper insight into specific environmental issues which are relevant for the region and beyond. The didactic approaches are taken from experiential education and wilderness education (see Green Delta Education).

Examples for possible workshops:

- **Raft building:** The participants build a raft with natural materials. At the end they can do a little tour with their self-made boat – or even a small race. Possible cooperation partner: Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23 Association
- **Reed knitting:** Local experts show the participants the special characteristics of reed, how and where it grows in the region and how it can be turned into a roof. Possible cooperation partner: Asociatia Letea in UNESCO
- **Fishing:** Fish has always been an important resource for local people. The participants learn how the fishing restrictions nowadays are affecting local people, what kind of fish live in the Danube Delta and are taught traditional handicraft related to fishing like tying a fishing net.
- **Agriculture:** The natural circumstances in the region are not in favor for agriculture on a large scale. Still there is potential for self-sufficiency and small businesses (cf. Gugerell 2014; Schilling 2014). Locals present their small projects and the participants are invited to get active themselves.
- **Tourism:** Local people hope for more tourism in order to foster the region's development. However, tourism always has to be handled in a sensitive way, otherwise it can harm the region instead. The participants are invited to discuss their point of view on tourism for the region and to develop their own ideas.

Evening events

The first half of the week is accompanied by some side events to stimulate the process of getting to know each other and to foster the knowledge transfer between local people and the participants. The first night is spent together informally to get acquainted with the new situation for the participants. On the second night local experts are going to present some best-practice projects of the past, present and future to give the participants more ideas about the situation in the Danube Delta. The third evening is dedicated to the local culture and is organised by the local culture club(s) of C.A. Rosetti and its villages. On the fourth evening there is a film screening of a documentary about the Danube Delta and/or relevant topics for the festival. The following two evenings are free and can be used for further project work or just leisure time. The final evening starts early with a joint dinner and a party to end the festival in a pleasurable way.



◀ left: Bonfire in Sfiștofca
© Gerold Ludwig

◀ right: Concert of the
local women chorus of
Sfiștofca
© Gerold Ludwig

Self-organised excursion

On the 5th day the participants are invited to do a self-organised excursion to a place they would like to see again or which they haven't seen yet in order to get more impressions and ideas for the upcoming project work. The participants can decide on their own if they want to do a solo-excursion to have a more intense self-experience or if they want to go in groups to foster the exchange and reflection of the experiences. After this self-organised excursion the attendees should have an idea of what issue they want to spend their time on for the remaining part of the week.

Project marketplace and project work time

On the fifth day there is a project marketplace where the participants can introduce their ideas or hook up with someone's idea to work on. Local and thematic experts support the participants to form project groups to work on different topics. These topics can range from hands-on activities, like organising a clean-up or building a bird watcher spot, to a more theoretic approach like interviewing tourists, locals and experts. There are no boundaries for the project ideas and (almost) everything is possible. The main aim is to increase the self-experience, group-experience and nature-experience of the participants (see Green Delta Education) and of course to have fun.

The following day (and the evenings) are self-organised time to work on the projects. The local and thematic experts can support the groups if they demand it.

left: Self-organised
appointment with the
mayor of C.A. Rosetti
© Meinhard Breiling



right:
Reed-construction of
students in Sfiștofca

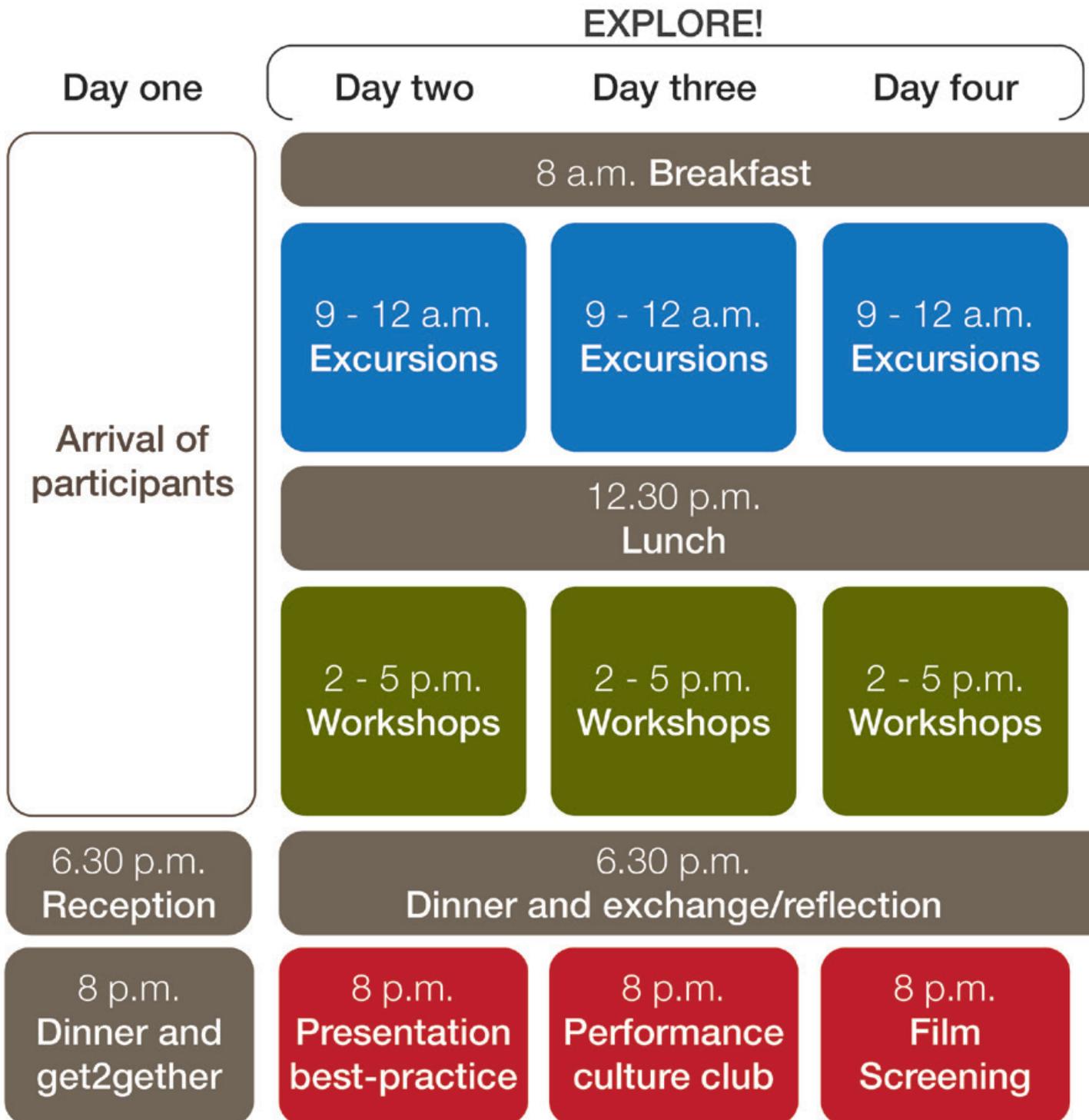


Presentation

The day before the (early) departure is dedicated to the presentations of the festival participants. Every group can talk about their project, lessons learned and experiences of the week. Again the exchange and reflection is the most important part of this session. This final presentation is not only for the festival participants but also for the school children who present the projects they were working on during the last school year (see Green Delta Education). The different approaches of the local children in comparison to the mainly foreign youth might bring interesting conclusions.

The presentation is open to the public. At the end of the presentations a party will close the festival (see Evening events).

Exemplary festival schedule



HANDS ON!

Day five

Day six

Day seven

Day eight

8 a.m. **Breakfast**

9 - 12 a.m.
Free excursions
(free time)

9 - 12 a.m.
Project time
(support by experts/locals)

9 - 12 a.m.
Presentation
of the projects

Departure of participants

12.30 p.m.
Lunch

2 - 5 p.m.
Project market place
+ project time

2 - 5 p.m.
Project time
(support by experts/locals)

2 - 4.30 p.m.
Presentation
of the projects

6.30 p.m.
Dinner and exchange

5 p.m.
Dinner and party

8 p.m.
Free evening
or project time

8 p.m.
Free evening
or project time

Dimension one: Green Delta Gathering

Positive examples for festivals fostering the development of the region are the Anonimvl – International Independent Film Festival in Sfântu Gheorghe and the Rowmania Fest in Tulcea. This year the Anonimvl experienced its 11th edition² and can be seen as a sustainable cultural enrichment of the Danube Delta which also boosts the touristic inflow for the region (cg. Anonimvl, online). In 2014 the Rowmania Fest experienced its fourth edition and explicitly tries to put a spotlight on the Danube Delta as a fascinating place offering natural and cultural richness to all its visitors. In the focus of the fest are paddling events accompanied by side events like concerts, debates and so on (cf. Rowmania [a], online).

2

In 2014 it was the first time that the festival did not take place in Sf. Gheorghe but in Bucharest. According to the organisation of the festival this was an exception (cf. Anonimvl, online).

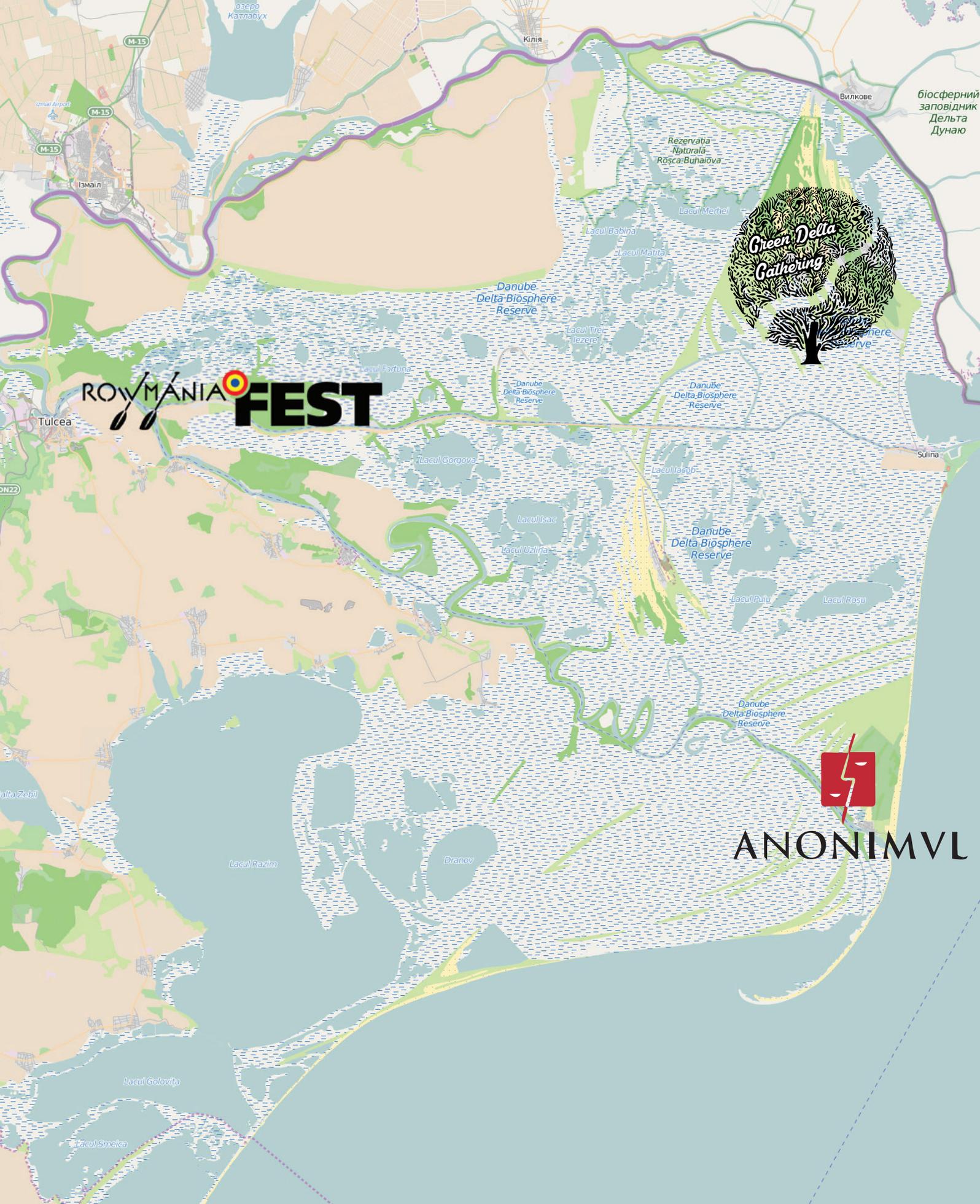


Boat race at
Rowmania Fest 2014
© Rowmania

The impacts of the festivals do not reach into the municipality of C.A. Rosetti or at least not with a sustainable impact for the people living there. The Green Delta Project could be another successful element of sustainable development for the region.



Festivals in the
Danube Delta
© OpenStreetMap
adapted by the author



M-15
Izmail Airport
Izmail

Кілія

Вилкове

биосферний заповідник Дельта Дунаю

Rezervatia Naturala Rosca-Buhaiova



ROMANIA  FEST

Tulcea

Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve

Lacul Babina

Lacul Merhei

Lacul Matia

Lacul Trei Iezere

Lacul Fortuna

Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve

Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve

Lacul Gorgova

Lacul Iasub

Sulina

Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve

Lacul Isac

Lacul Uzita

Lacul Putu

Lacul Rosu

Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve



ANONIMVL

Lacul Razim

Dranov

Lacul Colovita

Lacul Smetea



Dimension two

Environmental
Education Programme

Green Delta Education

Environmental Education Programme

Green Delta Education is an Environmental Education Programme for the local school in C.A. Rosetti. As mentioned in the introduction, the existing school in C.A. Rosetti is a very important institution for the whole municipality. If the school would close a downward spiral could not be detained. The smaller schools like the one in Sfiştofca already had to close and the children of the different ethnics are now in the same school in C.A. Rosetti. This has to be seen as a big potential and the school has to be strengthened.

The school in C.A. Rosetti allows children to enrol from the first grade until the eighth grade and by that fulfil the compulsory education within the municipality. In Scoala primara (primary school: 1st to 4th grade) the content of teaching is specified by the ministry of education by 80 per cent, 20 per cent can be organised by the school itself. In the Gimnaziu (secondary school: 5th to 8th grade) this ratio turns to 75 per cent predesigned by the ministry and 25 per cent self-organised content by the school (cf. Artzfeld & Chaudhuri 2001: 2841f.; European Commission [a], online). The workshops of Green Delta Education could be part of the content which is free to be organised by the schools. Another possibility could be the establishment of a nature club or similar.

Green Delta Education as the second dimension of the Green Delta Project wants to combine the potential of the children with the potential of the natural resources in the Danube Delta. By that Green Delta Education helps providing a fascinating learnscape for raising awareness for the region and its characteristics on the one hand, and using the natural resources for a self-reflected education and development of the children in C.A. Rosetti on the other. The didactic methods are based on experiential education and wilderness education.

An essential part of experiential education is the conversion of events and personal impressions into personal awareness by conscious perception of the experienced and by turning the experiences into knowledge. This happens through exchange and reflection in a group and with support of professionals (teachers, external experts). It is important that the experienced events are expressed within a group or a partner to start a reflection process (cf. Michl 2009: 9).



◀ The process from event to awareness (according to Michl 2009:11)

Experiential education is an activity-oriented method in which the children are faced with physical, mental and social challenges to foster their personal development and to motivate them to take responsibility for their environment (ibid.: 10). The children should have the possibility to explore their living environment and by that to explore themselves. The children should get encouraged to leave their comfort zone in order to maximise their learning experience.



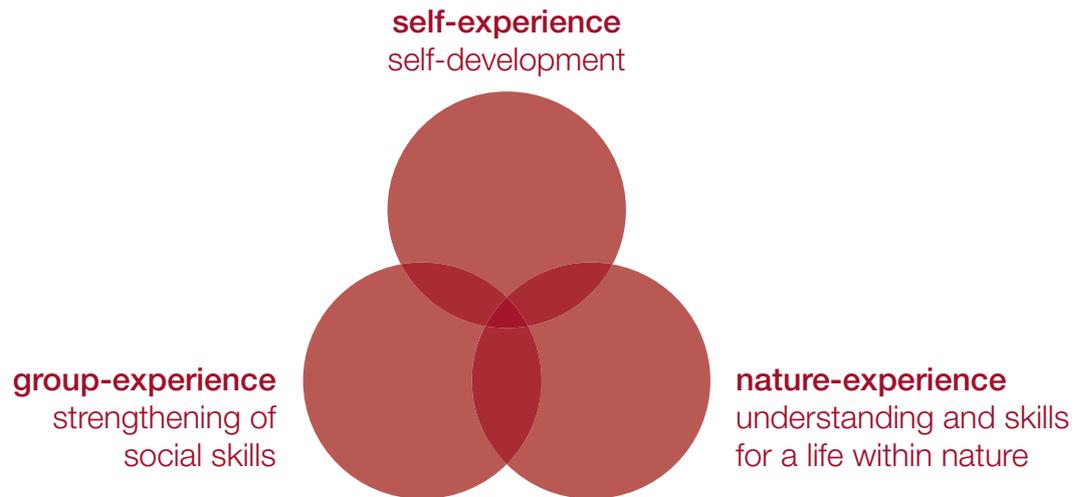
◀ Learning inbetween comfort and panic zone

The wilderness education puts its focus more on the living with the nature than the experiential education, which has the focus on the experience of the natural environment. Wilderness education tries to inspire young people for the nature and to be accordingly aware for the environment. The basis of wilderness education is the knowledge of natives to enable a living in and with the nature rather than living next or against the nature. The aim is to foster perception and attention to the environment and by that to strengthen personal abilities and talents. Similar to the experiential education the work focus is both on group experience as well as on individual experience and on reflection. Important methods of wilderness education are coyote teaching³, nature mentoring⁴, story-telling, and sharpening of perception (cf. Gärtner, online).

3 Coyote teaching tries to provoke the knowledge and potential of the student by not answering his/her questions but asking targeted questions which support the student answering his/her initial question him- or herself (cf. Gärtner, online).

4 This method is quite similar to the coyote teaching but it is adapted to work not only in one-to-one situations but also in groups by leaving space for the students exploring their environment themselves and only giving input from time to time to support their learning results (cf. Gärtner, online)

self experience,
group experience,
nature experience
(according to
Gärtner, online)



Green Delta Education offers workshops in the local school of C.A. Rosetti on a regular basis. The content of the workshops is developed together with the local school, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority, WWF Romania, Naturefriends International and other possible partners.

The workshop year is divided into two phases. In the first phase there are thematic workshops on different workshop sites within the municipality. At the end of every thematic workshop session the pupils work on a little project. They are motivated to choose their own topic and work in small groups together. The results of the workshops or the documentation of it is always shown at the local school for people of C.A. Rosetti and in the Environmental Visiting Centre Sulina for a broader audience.

Together with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (DDBRA) this workshop phase is cooperating with the Eco-Agent programme of the DDBRA. The pupils have the possibility to finish the programme within this phase and get qualified for the support team at the Green Delta Gathering (see Green Delta Gathering).

The thematic fields could be:

- **soil:** the children explore the different kinds of soil in their environment and understand the importance of it. This could also be a focus in the year 2015 due to the fact that UNO declared it as the »International year of soils«.

Possible hands-on activities: building clay bricks, painting with soil colours (in cooperation with the EU project soil art, cf. NÖ Agrarbezirksbehörde, online)

Dimension two: Green Delta Education

- **water:** in cooperation with the Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23 Association (cf. Rowmania [b], online) the children go by canoe on canals within the municipality and explore water as an essential element of the eco system. The drinking water situation in the municipality can be topic of workshops as well as the salt lake in Letea.
Possible hands-on activities: building a raft, comparing different water sources (salt water, fresh water etc.)
- **flora:** the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority has developed a lot of educational material about the flora in the Danube Delta. The children explore the diversity of flora within the municipality.
Possible hands-on activities: finding and collecting different kinds of flowers, flowers as source for medical help, flowers as source for food
- **fauna:** the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority also has developed a lot of educational material about the fauna in the Danube Delta. Again in cooperation with the Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23 Association the children go by boat to observe birds and fish or observe the huge population of wild horses and other animals on the land.
Possible hands-on activities: catching living fish and documenting it (and releasing it afterwards in order to respect the protection regulations), documenting other observed animals (drawings, photos, text etc.)
- **culture:** C.A. Rosetti and its villages consist of many cultural layers. Ukrainians, Romanians and Lipovans are living together a Danube Delta culture and still maintain individual rituals and habits. The children are encouraged to look deeper into this manifold cultural life in their villages. A cooperation with local culture clubs or the Sfiștofca Art Association could enrich the workshops.
Possible hands-on activities: interviews with neighbours, preparing a typical dance/ concert etc., finding of differences and commonalities in everyday-life, rediscovering traditional handicraft

Further or other workshop topics could arise in the development phase with the project partners.

The second phase of Green Delta Education concentrates on the final projects of the school children. They are encouraged to choose a (workshop) topic they want to work on and to organise little work groups to do that. Supported by the local and thematic experts of the project partners the pupils work for a specified duration on their projects. At the end they can present their results at the final day of the Green Delta Gathering.

After the festival the final projects will be shown at the Environmental Visiting Centre in Sulina and Tulcea to reach a broader audience. Another possibility to present the final projects could be the Rowmania Fest which also takes place in the summer (see Potential partners).



►
Cycle of Green
Delta Education

An optional expansion of the Green Delta Education could be a school exchange programme with a European school which is also situated in or near a Biosphere Reserve. A constant exchange (via Internet and/or written letters) about workshop results on similar topics could enrich the outcome and broaden the horizon of both the school children and the involved project partners. If there are funds possible a physical exchange by one school visiting the other would be highly appreciated.

A positive example for a school exchange project which took place in the region is the NaviNatur school exchange Germany – Romania. The Environmental Education Centre SCHUBZ in Germany set up a project for German and Romanian school children which encouraged them to explore their natural environment by doing GPS supported tours. The idea was to connect nature experiences with digital media. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority was a cooperation partner beside other Biosphere Reserve Authorities in Germany (cf. SCHUBZ n.d.).



Dimension three

Environmental
Skill Programme
for locals

Green Delta Skills

Environmental Skill Programme for locals

Green Delta Skills is a skill programme which addresses local adults. Similar to the Green Delta Education, there are also workshops being held by the cooperation partners like DDBRA, WWF Romania, NFI Romania, Asociata Letea in UNESCO and other experts as well as other NGOs which can present their projects as best-practice-examples. These workshops are not designed as an ongoing continuous curriculum like the Environmental Education programme in the local school but as punctual sessions on environmental issues and topics of everyday-life, corresponding actions and strategies about implementation.

Possible topics could be:

- **sustainable tourism:** the Naturefriends International have developed a lot of material and workshops during the time when the Danube Delta was declared as the »Landscape of the year« (cf. Naturefriends International 2009). Based on this the local people can receive information about the topic itself and its context in the Danube Delta as well as collectively develop ideas how sustainable tourism has to look like in C.A. Rosetti.
- **Financing own business ideas and funding possibilities:** money is always a topic when it comes to project ideas regardless of which dimension the project is. This session informs the local people about different forms of funding possibilities, how to make a business- and finance-plan, what is important to put attention on etc.
- **water supply:** the fact that there is a lack of running water in the municipality together with the salinisation of the wells is a problem at the latest when it comes to host tourists or to use a bigger amount of water for different kind of businesses. In this session actions related to water supply can be discussed.
- **Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve:** the Biosphere Reserve is a big chance for the region but it also brings along restrictions for the local people. In this session these restrictions and how to deal with them can be discussed.
- **Agricultural skill training:** the area of the municipality is not extensively cultivated for agriculture. However, there are possibilities in order to act self-sufficient and even to do small businesses. Gugerell (2014) and Schilling (2014) worked on project proposals which deal with the issue of small-scale agricultural activities in the region.

- **Construction workshops with local materials:** as mentioned before, there are restrictions on the construction of new buildings due to the declaration of the region as Biosphere Reserve. The excursion in the region and on-site interviews showed that construction with local materials is partly more expensive than the construction with materials like concrete due to the restriction of using local material. In addition the local materials do not always have good standing within the community and the knowledge about these materials is vanishing. The sessions try to again promote the advantages of these materials and to train skills how to work with them. See Schmidt (2014) who dealt with this topic in more detail.

This list is definitely not complete but just tries to give some examples of which topics could be the content of the Green Delta Skills programme.

In the whole programme there is a focus on qualifying local people to take responsibilities or even to establish small businesses during the Green Delta Gathering or to be part of the Green Delta Education programme.

Further remarks on the Learnscape Green Delta

All three dimensions – Green Delta Gathering, Green Delta Education and Green Delta Skills – are seen as strongly connected elements of a greater vision, the Learnscape Green Delta. The realisation of just one of these three dimensions could be a success by improving a specific situation. However, to foster a sustainable development for the whole municipality and by that affecting a bigger share of the people living there, it is necessary to think all of the three dimensions together. Nevertheless it is possible to just start with one dimension in order to kindle a spark which boosts the other dimensions to start.



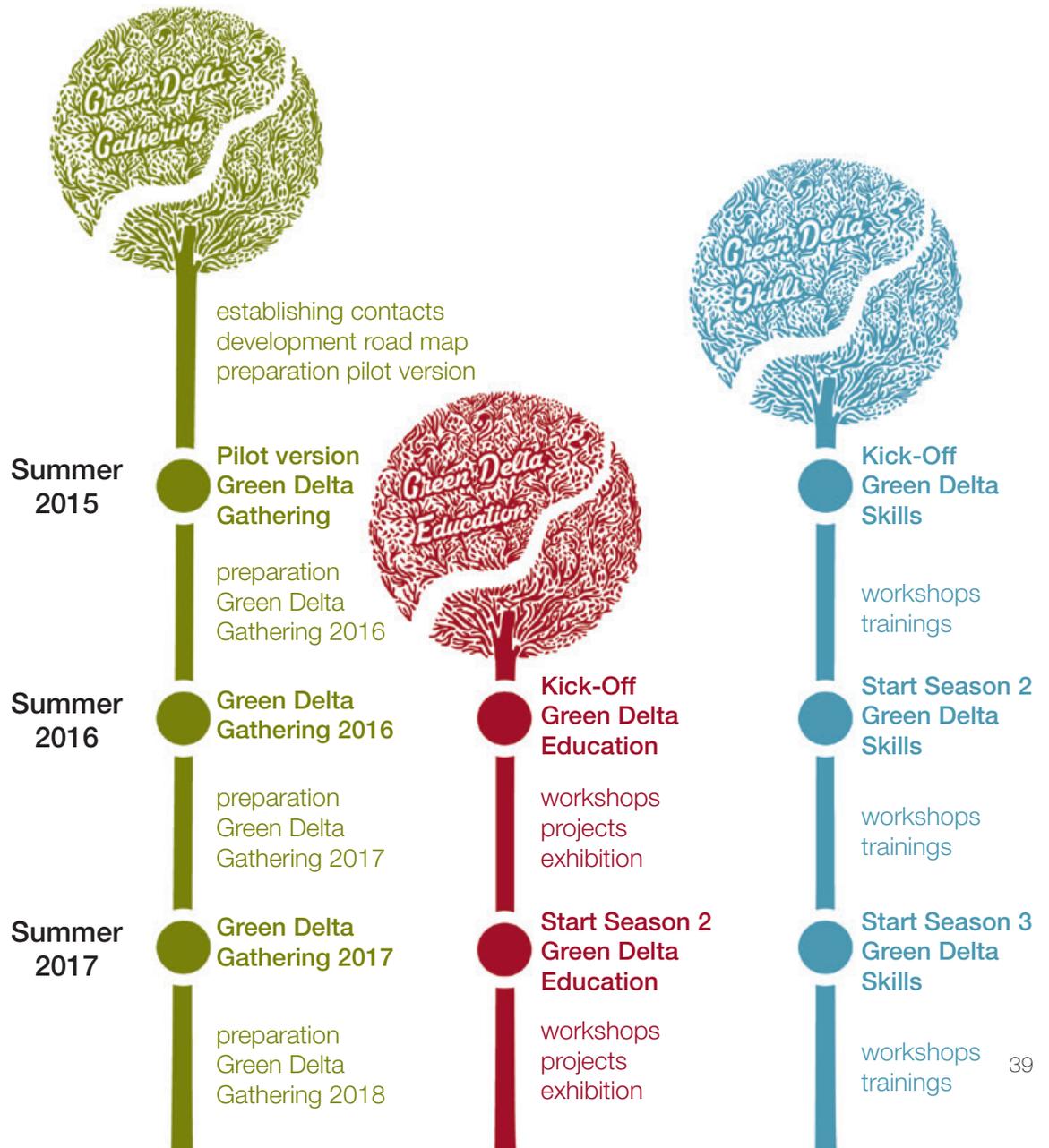
The implementation of the project

This project proposal was developed after an excursion to Romania. During this trip I only spent four days in the Danube Delta. Under these circumstances I want to make clear that this paper is supposed to be seen as a vision or an inspiration for an upcoming project. The most important step is to find local partners which are willing to develop (on the basis of the present paper) a project in order to design a realistic path towards this vision. Possible project partners were already mentioned earlier (see Potential partners) and more have to be found. I strongly believe that this kind of project has to be submitted from a Romanian partner in order to create a sustainable long running project.

The implementation of the Learnscape Green Delta could be done stepwise by starting one dimension which triggers the kick-off for the next dimension. The year 2015 can be used to get in touch with potential project partners and to develop together a detailed road map to Learnscape Green Delta. A first small-scale Green Delta Gathering could take place as a pilot-festival with less people. This first »test run« has to be realised in close cooperation with the community so they participate in the development of next year's festival. In preparation for the Green Delta Gathering 2016, first Green Delta Skills workshops can take place in order to qualify local people to take responsibilities during the festival. The Green Delta Gathering 2016 should also be the kick-off for the Green Delta Education programme which will have been developed until then. All three elements are starting as small-scale versions and grow by fostering each other mutually in order to create the Learnscape Green Delta.

At this point it does not make sense to create a detailed financial plan but some funding possibilities can already be mentioned. For the festival the most interesting funding option is the Erasmus plus programme of the European Union. For the next seven years this programme will have a budget of 14,7 billion Euros which is an increase of 40 per cent in comparison to the former period. The aim of this programme is to »support transnational partnerships among Education, Training, and Youth institutions and organisations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of Education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps we are facing in Europe« (European Commission [b], online), and therefore is perfectly suited for a project like the Green Delta Gathering.

Other funding possibilities could come up through the new instrument Integrated Territorial Investments of the European Union or other grants like the Iceland Liechtenstein Norway EEA grants which have been created to minimise economic and social disparities within the 16 EU member states of Middle and South Europe.



Nice idea – **but what's next?**

First talks with potential partners from the cultural sector as well as from the Environmental Education sector in Austria already took place. It appeared that they are especially interested in the Green Delta Gathering. This is obviously the only part of the concept which can also be prepared by people who are not in Romania all the time.

There also have been first contacts with NGOs in Romania who work in the field of education for sustainable development. These conversations have to be intensified and more potential partners have to be contacted to set up a project team as soon as possible. In the case of setting up this team it has to be handled in a sensitive way so no potential partner feels left out. The project team should be multidisciplinary. Even though there are strong supporting partners from Austria (or somewhere else), the lead partner should definitely be situated in Romania.

The next task (for the project team) is to develop a road map to the first pilot version of Green Delta Gathering and to do further conceptual work for Green Delta Education and Green Delta Skills as well as to set up financial plans.



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Bernadette, Corinna,
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