BRIDGING THE DIVIDE
Memory and the Healing Powers of Landscape

Peter Taylor
Ethos Consultancy; Institute of Life-based Architecture &
Wildland Research Institute, University of Leeds, UK.

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In all contemporary cultures, there are shadowlands to the collective psyche, places within the mind where people prefer not to go; likewise with the landscape there are places of reluctant memories and emotional pain. The border region of Czech Republic with Germany is a landscape that prompts such memory. Here there are few recent settlements and the ghostly remains of former villages that were evacuated and raized to the ground in the vengeful aftermath of the Second World War.

Following these forced evacuations, the resultant Cold War left a borderland of under-used or abandoned land – ironically, rich in wilder species of birds and mammals, but poorer in its human cultural heritage. Recently, there have been calls to create a European 'green corridor' along the old route of the Iron Curtain – a project that would require a lot more cooperation between German and Czech forestry than is currently the case. And in many other areas of Europe, where population changes are now forced by economics and migration of young people, regions that are 'borderline' for economic land-use are experiencing a return of wildlife and drawing the attention of 'rewilding' conservationists (1).

In this paper, I draw from a few examples to show that new forms of settlement may be possible that both enhance the wildlife 'come-back' and provide for a revitalisation of communal life – and further, may help to heal ancient wounds that stretch back in time to indigenous European culture and its separation from the land. I will argue that the physical separation driven by the industrial revolution and both capitalist and collectivist social policies, is accompanied by a separation of the psyche itself from its roots – leading to a culture of insecurity, alienation and a longing for a deeper relation to Nature; and further, that cooperative cross-border landscape projects have the power to heal these deep divisions within the European psyche.

However, the opportunities presented by demographic change in wilder and remote regions are threatened by 'green' developments such as wind turbines, biofuel crops and hydro-power schemes which target marginal land, particular in mountain regions. A utilitarian electro-technical landscape is emerging that competes with prospects for co-existence with wild nature in new forms of economy.

Ghost Villages

These issues are not restricted to borderlands and previous histories of invasion and expulsion. The Czech part of the border region shares many characteristics with other abandoned land and 'ghost

villages' created not necessarily by former conflict, but by modern economics. There is a tendency throughout the European Union for young people to migrate to cities in search of an economically sustainable lifestyle, leaving the more distant periphery depleted of its youth, with further abandonment of traditional farming practices. Ghost villages proliferate, with a few elderly inhabitants remaining, but then begin to take on another ghostly form, whereby the more economically successful city-dwellers purchase properties for renovation as weekend homes or summer holiday residences. A market for the best such properties then discriminates against economically disadvantaged local people who are priced out of that market, and a vicious spiral concludes with similar mid-week and winter 'ghost villages' with little in the way of cultural activity.

This growing disconnection between people and the land is the culmination of a long process of separation of people from the land in Western culture, a cutting of the roots of community. This process generates a pervasive insecurity at the most basic level. In a modern market economy, large numbers of people fear for their jobs, payment of rents or mortgages and in the poorest sections of society can no longer afford either food or fuel.

This collective insecurity erodes the natural protective feelings society has toward nature and beauty – and thus, despite an avowed love of nature, animals, countryside and wilderness, sacrifices of all these values are made in the name of economic security.

Fear of climate change also drives the massive intrusion into wild lands of industrial scale renewable energy production in an effort to reduce emissions and mitigate what is often expressed in apocalyptic terms.

Despite these pervasive societal fears and the policies they generate, there is a more holistic potential for these borderline regions, that could offer new forms of settlements, new relationships to the land and the safeguarding of beauty amid a regenerating natural environment. Building on wide-ranging observation of cultural shifts, we propose a new model for development where ecologically sustainable community is fostered in borderline regions, primary through the purchase of old properties and appropriate new-build, then rented at low rates to migrants from the city – particularly people who do not have to pursue land-based activities as a primary livelihood.

We present some examples specific to the border region of Czech Republic and Germany; and also extend the conceptual framework to other border regions, some of which may have similarly problematic emotional histories.

Abandoned land and the rewilding movement

All regions remote from centres of population are, by virtue of modern economic forces, likely to suffer from lack of employment for young people, lack of investment by government, 'ghost village' dynamics and abandonment of traditional farming. The resultant weaker communities are likely to offer less resistance to forms of outside development that 'extract' resources – whether recreational, or in recent times particularly, energy from wind and rivers.

Mountain zones often characterise border regions, and they are particularly targeted for wind turbines, biofuel developments and new hydro-schemes; additionally, tourist development brings ski-lifts and winter tourists, but little in the way of a positive contribution to cultural life. These latter infrastructure developments also compromise the natural integrity of the landscape and its returning species, especially large herbivores and their predators such as lynx, bear and wolf.

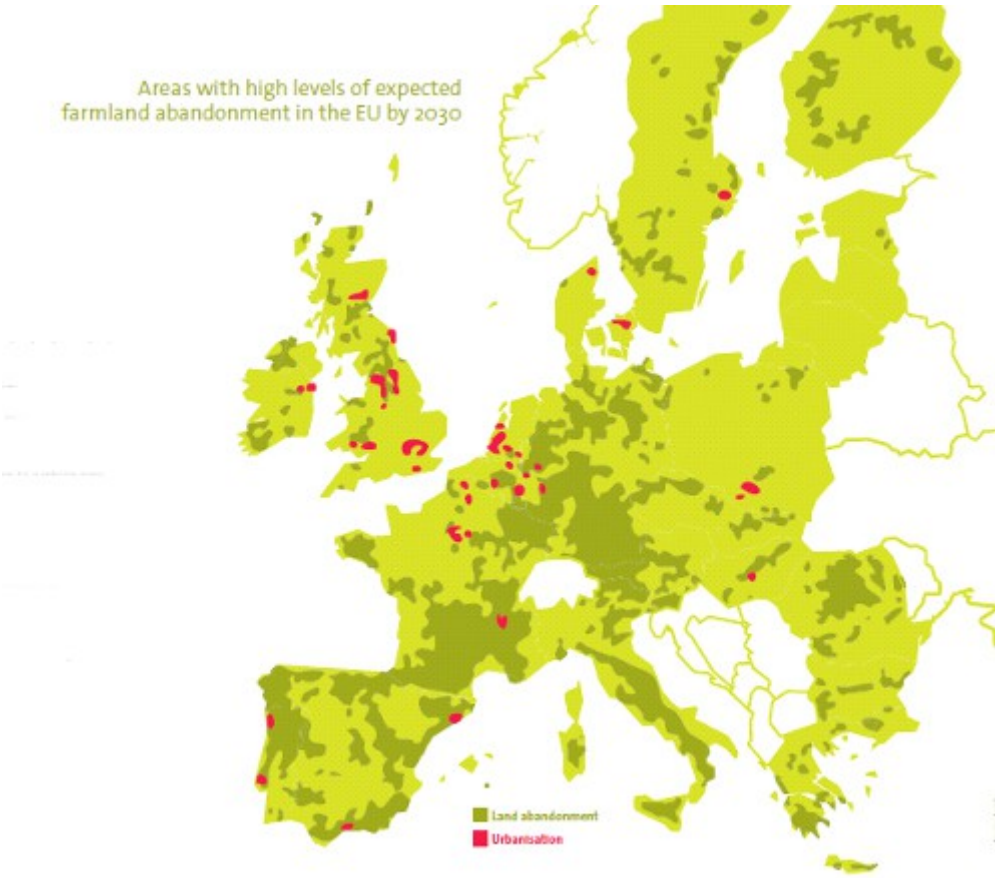

Fig. 1 Areas with high levels of expected farmland abandonment according to research for Rewilding Europe, 2012.

Whether the high levels of 'abandoned' land do manifest depends very much upon definitions of abandonment and the range of other pressures for development and land-use. However, there are large numbers of people, both young and old, who would gladly return to the land and community, and live more closely to nature, without the need to engage in those traditional practices, such as extensive grazing, that have limited the regeneration of natural forest cover and the recovery of wildlife. Many of these people would be economically viable in crafts, arts and home-based work, if property costs and required capital investments were not a barrier. The question arises as to how a reverse migration might be enabled, but also, what barriers might also exist to integration of young people into older and perhaps still traditional communities. Much experience must already exist throughout Europe – and we would like to see this material collected and evaluated.

In whatever future unfolds, decisions about landscape impact, the economy and cultural integrity reflect competing political interests- and in the modern era, econometric values clash with the less easily measured qualities of landscape and wildlife. Further, the historical path of economic development has militated against community, with modern values embedded instead in individual livelihood and economic survival or prosperity. This background leaves fertile territory for those advocating sacrifice of wildness, beauty and community in the name of climate change and survival of the economic system, if not human-kind itself.

The soul of the land

In this world of competing interests and ideologies, there is an aspect of landscape that seldom has a voice – that is the *love* that develops between people and place. It is borne of familiarity but also of perceptions of beauty – something always in the eye of the beholder and not amenable to measurement. It is that aspect of human nature that enfolds the land, that cherishes, cares and protects that which is loved but which holds an awareness that love and the landscape is a two-way process. Land nurtures the human psyche.

Nature is acknowledged the world-over as a healing power. We speak of the soul of the land. Buildings can have soul. Old trees and rivers that run wild and free, exude qualities we associate with soul. Yet, we seldom acknowledge a need to *feed* our soul, to nurture that aspect of our heart that needs its homeland and those places it can come to know and love.

In this respect, marginal communities when faced with a choice of economic survival or loss, more readily acquiesce to the loss of soul in their landscape – whether it is turbines, new dams, biofuels, roads, pylons and telecom towers.

In order to counter this negative trend, it is essential that we rejuvenate human community and connection to and love for the land. New forms of community have the potential to welcome the return of wilder nature as well as to embrace a more ecologically sound agriculture. New villages offer opportunities for off-grid technologies of energy and communications in conjunction with appropriate modern low-energy architecture.

With respect to a returning wilder nature, I have argued within conservation circles, that to fully appreciate the qualities of nature, especially wild places where human domination is not absolute, we need to *rewild* the human (REF). Only a wild heart can truly appreciate a Nature that is free to be wild. But Nature is not all sweetness and light, not all plenty and pleasures – it has a dark side of cycles, death, decay, parasites, predators and their prey; when not controlled, it can be chaotic and unpredictable. The history of human agriculture, forestry, water catchment management, and energy supply, is fundamentally about *control* of natural tendencies in order to provide security for human settlements. Of course is necessary for any form of agriculture, forestry or water management, even also for wildlife management, but t can also become excessive, even obsessive.

It would be trite to say that excessive control is a consequence of patriarchal modes of education, but nevertheless there is some truth related to the growth of science, logic, economic assessment and risk-benefit analysis, and the demise of feminine qualities of love, beauty, acceptance and a deeper wisdom related to death and disease. In this respect, some elements of apparent scientific progress have proven illusory: from acid rain devastating forests; invasive species; crop diseases; water pollution; financial instability; climate change and ultimately, the insecurities of modern warfare and its formidable existential threat to community. A more balanced appreciation of life can only emerge from embracing more internal values of community and creativity, even they bring less in terms of material security. But this imbalance should not be under-estimated, as it is so pervasive and resistant to change. At the top of the economic pyramid, decision-makes are well aware that basic insecurities forged from a disconnection to the land and existential concerns about economics, lead to a more malleable workforce and an apparently more competitive economy.

This dynamic of fear is also clearly present in concerns over climate change, where the occurrence of natural cycles of warming and cooling is down-played in favour of alarming projections of future

increases in global temperature. In the face of this apocalypse, communities are cajoled into embracing massive technical intrusions into the landscape.

It is curious that aspects of the science of climate change and the responses in terms of technological solutions and mitigation show psychological components that affect both the direction of research, the presentation of the threat and the apparent solutions (REF). There is a culturally ingrained gender imbalance evident in the science that also runs through all aspects of landscape value and assessment of future development options. It is worthwhile to explore this imbalance as a preface to seeking landscape-based solutions.

Imbalances in mental and physical hemispheres

Neuroscientists have differentiated the left and right side of the human brain according to the kind of processing that takes place: the left hemsipehere is associated with logical construction, a 'masculine' mode; and the right with intuitive modes characterised as 'feminine'. Of course, every person has both modes available regardless of their sex, but Western institutional education favours the masculine development and has done so over many centuries of patriarchal culture - with serious implications for a healthy and balanced psychology.

The following set of dichotomies illustrates the territory of imbalance:

STRUCTURAL	GENERATIVE
Mind (thought)	Body (feeling)
Logical	Intuitive
Linear	Cyclic
Fixed	Evolutionary
Repeating	Spiralling
Constant	Changing & Irregular
Ordering	Chaotic
Protective	Embracing
Light	Dark
Imaging	Dreaming
Building	Birthing

Curiously, the current highly charged debate around climate modelling and its projections, centres upon the modellers failure to incorporate natural cycles into their simulations. Such cycles have irregular periods and chaotic elements that do not lend themselves to mathematical modelling. Some fundamental natural shifts in climate are poorly understood, with some mechanisms unknown and some thought to be generated by changes in solar output. Where once the Sun was seen as a constant source of light, it is now seen as beset by invisible magnetic moods that vary with its energy output. Controversy surrounds the effects of these dark and changing magnetic fields compared to the more constant visible light and linear projections of change are being abandoned as the effects of cycles and natural variability become apparent.

Thus, a dominant physics of light with poorly understood cycles of darker magnetic realities struggles to cope with irregular periods and chaotic elements. The same mentality then generates engineering *solutions* to the perceived threat. In this, the psychological alternatives of acceptance and communal responses of adaptation become marginalised.

These solutions are presented largely in technological terms of replacement energy supplies rather than an acceptance of limitation. Community and landscape values which are largely internal and intuitive are over-ridden by logical and linear thought, measurement and calculation of risk, the construction of defences, and of course, the generation of new business, tax structures and global bureaucracy.
Thus, the unbalanced, overly masculinised mind perceives a structural threat, developed from linear models and constructs technological solutions – which then benefit globalised industries and the banking and brokering community, rather than real community on the land. Outside of the EU, such policies accelerate the movement of people from rural areas to cities and pose serious threats to indigenous peoples and biodiversity hotspots (from dams, biofuels and winds turbine).

There is a need for a new model of development, not only for remoter rural regions of Europe, but also in the developing world where an uncritical embrace of these masculinised values threatens widespread ecological and communal damage to indigenous peoples.

Reversing the trend and healing the wounds of the past

As landscape ecologists we have a responsibility to offer solutions that are sustainable and take reasonable account of future risks. The term 'resilience' is now used to describe programmes which create robustness to change, whether of political, economic or physical climates. Here we look at some features of programmes aimed at developing a better relationship with nature, the economy and the healing of past divisions.

The border region of Czech Republic and Germany, and also with Austria and Poland, is characterised by natural beauty and sparse habitations. The original populations of German-speaking people were forcefully evacuated – regardless of how much they had integrated into Czech life. Such policy has left deep scars, particularly for older people. They now live in villages marred by decaying but once grand houses, slowly subject to purchase by wealthy people seeking a second home. Here we explore the potential to reverse that trend – to bring young people into these villages, people with broader attitudes and less scarring from the past, and with no pressing need to work the land in ways that conflict with nature.

Sumava as the Wild Heart of Europe.

The *Sumava National Park* in Czech Republic is part of a trans-border forest – on the German side of the border, it is *National Park Bayerische Wald* (Bavarian Forest). Most of the forest is on high ground up to 1260 metres (about 4000 feet) and consists of native spruce *Picea abies.* The area of the Sumava Park itself is 68,000 ha, with a buffer zone of protected landscape of 100,000 ha. The National Park is 80% forest, with 10% meadow land and numerous small glacial lakes and peat bogs. It is the largest piece of contiguous forest in Central Europe. It receives about 2 million visitors each year, and the non-forest land is under rapid development for its tourist accommodation, second homes and recreational activities such as biking and skiing. The Czech forest is protected as a UNESCO biosphere reserve.

On the German side, 24,000 ha of similar forest forms the National Park, of which 55% is zoned as already ‘non-intervention’ and 22% in development of forest stands *toward* non-intervention, with the rest zoned as recreational use – essentially, the forest is being returned to as near-natural as feasible with minimal intervention. Altogether, this contiguous trans-boundary forest is the largest protected forest stand between the Atlantic and the Urals.

On the Czech side, management is now rather problematic – with a long history of state commercial forest operations and these state forests now being sold into the private sector. On the German side, the original state forests were given to the National Park (a state-entity) and thus remain in public ownership under management for non-extractive uses. Friends of the Earth, Czech Republic (*Hnuti DUHA)* has mobilised to prevent logging in the Czech forest, but in recent times, it is policy surrounding bark-beetle damage that has engaged them most.

At the higher altitudes in Sumava there were vast areas of dead trees. It was not a question of 'damage', but total wipe-out of the forest for miles in all directions. It was a salutary experience to stand among millions of tall leafless spruce, ashen grey in colour, in a silent landscape. Once dead, the trees are easily snapped by storms and I was reminded of those pictures of a World War 1 battle ground. The Czech government has decided that the dead timber should be cut and harvested over accessible areas, or cut and left to rot.

On a visit in the summer of 2014 with a group from *Hnuti DUHA*, we were met by the chief forester on the German side. He showed us their non-intervention policy with regard to bark beetle – some of which stretched back to the first outbreaks in the 1990s – so almost twenty years ago. The difference was truly remarkable – but had to be *heard* to be appreciated. The birdsong was deafening in its intensity – mostly warblers, finches and pipits.

My Czech partner, Monika Michaelova, who is active teaching modern women the old ways of healing with medicinal plants, bid everyone to close their eyes and *feel* the difference also! It was tangible – a vibrant almost radiant energy of the life-force itself, where only a few hundred metres away in the Czech landscape, there was silence and the feel of a deathly stillness.

Fig. 2 Dead timber is cut for removal in the Czech National Park

Fig.3 Once cut logs are removed, grazing deer prevent regeneration. Wooden cages protect a planting programme using nursery grown broad-leaves such as Mountain Ash.

Fig. 4 On the left, Czech Republic; on the right, Germany: showing the difference in approach to dead trees

Fig. 5 Dead stands when left to fall naturally, showing tangled undergrowth, preventing grazing by deer and fostering rapid regeneration.

Fig 6 Advanced regeneration in the German non-intervention zone.

The German forest manager was asked about the level of cooperation and exchange of knowledge and ideas…and he sighed. His side was willing, but the Czech side was closed to dialogue.

There were key ecological factors at work – where the dead trees had been allowed to stand and fall with the winds, the tangle of trunks and dead-branches was avoided by deer, and protected by both remaining standing trees and fallen branches, the micro-climate supported a luxuriant undergrowth of ferns, mosses and flowering plants. Protected from deer, there was a surge of seedling trees, mostly mountain ash and regenerating spruce. In contrast, where the dead trees had been felled and removed, deer had ready access and the ground flora was mostly grass with little in the way of regrowth. One international charity had a plaque advertising its financial support for the planting and protecting of seedlings! We saw paid workers carrying pots with nursery-grown mountain ash. In contrast, on the German territory, the mountain ash were 15-20 feet high without any human intervention.

I asked the head forester about wolves. There were already lynx in the forest – subject of a re-introduction project of twenty years ago, and now numbering 70-100 animals, but wolves only occasionally passed through. He admitted to being relieved that they did not stop to raise young, explaining that when the wolves were there, red deer stayed much lower down and were a problem for farmers outside the Park. Bears would be even more problematic, since the only bear to appear in Germany since medieval times – wandering over from a failing re-introduction project in Austria, had been shot under license because of the damage it caused.

As we left the German side, crossed the high ridge of forest, back into the Czech zone of forest and meadow lands, we were shown an ‘abandoned’ village (the leader of our group was interested in land-abandonment/rewilding projects). Only this was not an ‘abandoned ‘village – it had been German-speaking (as was most of this borderland) before the Second World War, and after the liberation, the Germans were expelled. A decade later, the Czech military bombed the old village church and wrecked the graveyard. Following the fall of the Communist regime that graveyard had now been lovingly restored by the descendants of the villagers – despite that there was now no habitation within miles. A strange ‘Ghost Village’ of a kind I had not hitherto imagined.

I reflected later that day on the clearly felt desire on the part of the German forester for reconciliation and cooperation *for the sake of nature.* The forest could be a symbol of a new relationship. Perhaps there was also a desire for forgiveness.

However, the collective Czech heart remains unforgiving (as it also does toward Russia). It is understandable because, of course, there *was* immense suffering, but this is a great pity, because Czech people have a lightness of being, a real magic that when fully expressed is truly a jewel at the heart of Europe.

I would make a plea that this lightness that should not be shaded out by old resentment. This jewel does shine within *Hnuti DUHA*– and together with a small number of National Park officials, media professionals, politicians and academics, they are keen to cooperate with the Germans. There is a Wild Heart of Europe campaign to unite the forest management and extol the values of wilderness and non-intervention. In this project, we can see a prospect for cooperation in nature conservation work as a focus for healing. The wild forest becomes a symbolic heart within which past grievances can be reconciled.

Tunechodski Mlyn, Stribro, Czech Republic.

Fig.7 The Water Mill at Tunechody, near Stribro, Czech Republic.

The Old Mill at Tunechody, near Stribro, was renovated 15 years ago by Dutch entrepreneurs who created a spiritual centre for yoga, dance and shamanic courses. It is now for sale. It was originally built by a German family in 1896 as the first electric-turbine powered flour-mill. The family were forced to evacuate after the Second World War and the confiscated property was eventually sold on, first to a Czech family and then following the liberation from Communist ideology and control, it was bought for extensive renovation by the Dutch couple.

Monika Michaelova and I lived and worked there alone for a year, experiencing the closeness to nature, the ancient memories of the site, and all the difficulties of modern living, finance and community in a remote location. Issues of transport and heating costs are paramount. We ran courses in our own shamanic work as well as hosting other workshop leaders. We also developed good relations with the local state forest manager who was initially very suspicious of 'ecologists'!

The property is again on the market, but a Czech buyer who would have completed the renovation, improved access and maintained the traditions of a teaching and healing centre was turned down in favour of a potential better price on the Dutch market.

This property illustrates some key problems. The design of the buildings is not energy efficient and costs are high. Access is poor (via a forest track) and expensive to improve. The elderly owners had no interest themselves in developing a small community - for example, with chalets, yurts or eco-dwellings, with permaculture activities on land owned and adjacent to the main building.

In such situations, old properties can be either a liability or a great asset with regard to generating incomes and acting as an educational resource. All depends upon the availability of capital and funds for renovation.

The eco-village concept and living closer to nature in Portugal.

This project (which we have not yet visited) in the borderlands of Portugal with Spain, was begun by a small group of young British people connected to the International Rainbow festivals. They have bought land, renovated properties and are now seeking to create an international community centred around permaculture, shamanic teachings and experience of wild nature. A number of ruins on the land have been put up for private sale.

Fig. 8 Vale das Lobas: Upland area with sparse forest land and abandoned meadows.

What is remarkable about this project is that it has drawn the approval and involvement of the Portuguese authorities, who are keen to see the borderlands resettled and the communities revitalised.

Much of these mountain lands have been ecologically degraded – forest have been cut, exotics species planted, and soil lost as a result of over-grazing. When new communities are formed which do not need to make a living from livestock grazing, the forests can return (with added benefits of soil retention and water conservation) and with them large herbivores and predators.

How far sustainable community can be recreated is a question of further research – and there are many such eco-communities with a variety of ownership models that would repay analysis such that lessons-learned best practices can be derived.

Fig. 9 Property for purchase and renovation within the Vale das Lobas Project.

It is our intention to visit this Portuguese community and look at the lessons for other initiatives in western Europe – for example in Spain and France. We would also like to explore the potential for a Foundation to purchase and renovate property, as well as form a network for sharing cultural experience.

The project describes the setting up of future *Biodiversity and Nature Conservation zones:*

'Ecological regeneration hinges on improving biodiversity, and we are establishing the area comprising Vale das Lobas as a Biodiversity Zone. This newly coined concept gives priority to land management activities that serve to enhance ecological well-being. Reforestation is a key component to land regeneration in general, and the Vale das Lobas Biodiversity Zone will have a strong focus on agro-forestry and forest gardening. We will harvest rainwater in large lake areas, to maintain the water levels and provide security against summer fires. The focus is on improving soil quality. The monitoring of flora and fauna within the biodiversity zone can involve a whole community, particularly young people. School children and college students will monitor and record plants, insects, and animals species.

'The creation of the Biodiversity Zone does not only make ecological good sense, but it will also produce economic rewards for the region and its inhabitants. Once facilities for visitors have been established, Vale das Lobas will become a site of special interest to a wide range of visitors, and will help to establish a niche position for Fornos de Algodres in the tourism market.

The community advertises a Shaman's Retreat: which will be opening in 2016 and 'offers a unique opportunity to truly reconnect with nature in a magical forest setting. The centre is about 10km from the Seminario (the heart of the Vale das Lobas project) and is hidden away in a remote part of the valley known as Alagoas. Despite it's seemingly secluded location it is easily accessible by road, rail or bus via the nearby town of Fornos de Algodres.'

The chief instigator, describes his 'vast experience of life "on the wild side" having spent many years amongst tribal people in remote regions of India and the Himalayas. He learned 'the art of weaving magic from nature's beauty' at Rainbow gatherings all over Europe and helped to create the legendary tipi chai shop "Pachamamas", a 'sacred oasis of calm' loved by festival folk in the UK and Eire. While the main woman involved describes a 'journey (that) has been more of an internal one, exploring various healing arts and therapeutic teachings. A respected yoga teacher for many years, 'her passion is to support folk as they release limiting beliefs and destructive patterns and rediscover their joy'. She was closely involved with the Santosa Yoga Camps before moving to Vale das Lobas and lives by the 'profoundly simple' values learned there.

In addition to these ecological and spiritual dimensions, of equal interest in such developments are issues of ownership, capital for development, members rights in the community, incomes and individual and shared resources, modes of decision making, leadership and authority. All of which have the potential to undermine dreams of a spiritual idyl.

People and property in National Parks – Wales.

In the 1990s, I lived remotely in a cottage in North Wales, surrounded by woodland and scattered farms that pastured sheep and cattle. Despite the remoteness of the location, this region of Welsh hills known as the Rhinogs, is popular for the purchase of second-homes or retirement properties. Houses in open country command high prices and local people on small incomes cannot compete.

Fig. 10 The Rhinog Hills in Snowdonia National Park, North Wales.

The loss of community is a key social issue, made more prescient by the need to preserve the Welsh language and its connection to the landscape. Despite its apparent cultural role, sheep farming is a relatively modern development, as are extensive conifer plantations. Both have become uneconomic and an ageing farming community, propped up by government subsidy, is not being replaced.

The prospects for community development are limited by planning laws, poor communications, high cost of property and general conservatism with regard to incomers and prospects for change.

However, this region has a number of large land-owners – in particular, the National Trust as well as private and State forestry organisations, which have an interest in nature conservation, retaining community life and appropriate economic development. A landscape-scale initiative could be developed by cooperative organisation. A portfolio of properties could be sourced for eventual rental to Welsh-speaking families who do not have to make a living from the land (writers, artists, craft-people etc.) but who have an abiding interest in nature and community. Some farms could be purchased where the buildings were used for eco-tourist or educational resources, and the land reverted to woodland to create connections with other forested land. A gradual process of rewilding forest lands with native herbivores (currently absent), native species and wildlife-friendly forest economies could offer a unique experiment in new forms of settlement.

Lessons from Case Studies

The above examples serve to illustrate the issues and offer a direction for much work that could be done on the economic and cultural shifts taking place in more remote areas, and with more intensive examination of pilot projects. But one thing appears to be clear – there is a very large reservoir of young people who would leap at the chance of a new life in the countryside, and moreover, people with skills suitable for a land-independent economic livelihood, such as artists, musicians, and

writers; as well as small-scale institutions for education and health, spiritual retreat, and even as 'senior' houses for retired people. These people constitute a large and vital sector of the population that is known to struggle with the high cost of life in the city. However, because of the factors of age (and lack of inheritance), as well as low income professions, such people do not have the necessary capital to purchase and renovate property – and especially not in competition with high-income groups.

Thus, some form of land and property purchase would be necessary, as well as a programme of advice and help in the transitional period to establish community life. Purchased houses in villages could be offered at low rental to professionals with a proven track record of economic stability and most importantly, an interest in new forms of community. Additionally, farmland could be purchased for the express purpose of small-scale permaculture and local provisioning – with first options given to local people. A mix of local, national and even international young people could be sought, with a balance of suitable skills. Small schools operating outside of the more rigid State system could be grant-aided to support the growing population.

Within this cultural shift, the natural landscape acts as an inspiration and container for the emotional healing that city people need – a healing that is more usually expressed in isolation, either by taking holidays or purchasing weekend and summer retreats in natural landscapes. The current trends of purchase will not cease, but a well-funded complement could compete for properties and rebalance the village culture that is damaged by individually isolated purchases.

An organisation that purchased property and land – both farmland and forest, that renovated houses using local skills and local materials, and which sourced as much food locally and organically, could favourably alter the modern dynamic, and bring a sense of healing and even prosperity to these areas at the periphery of the economy.

Strategic assessment and Geographical Information Systems

As a member of the Wildland Research Institute at the University of Leeds, I have been involved in strategic thinking with regard to community and wildlife conservation strategies. GIS projects at the Institute, led by Steve Carver, the director, have mapped several indices for wildland, such as remoteness from roads and settlements and natural vegetation cover. Such mapping is now at an advanced stage in the EU and provides a visual guide to the landscape and displacement of people.

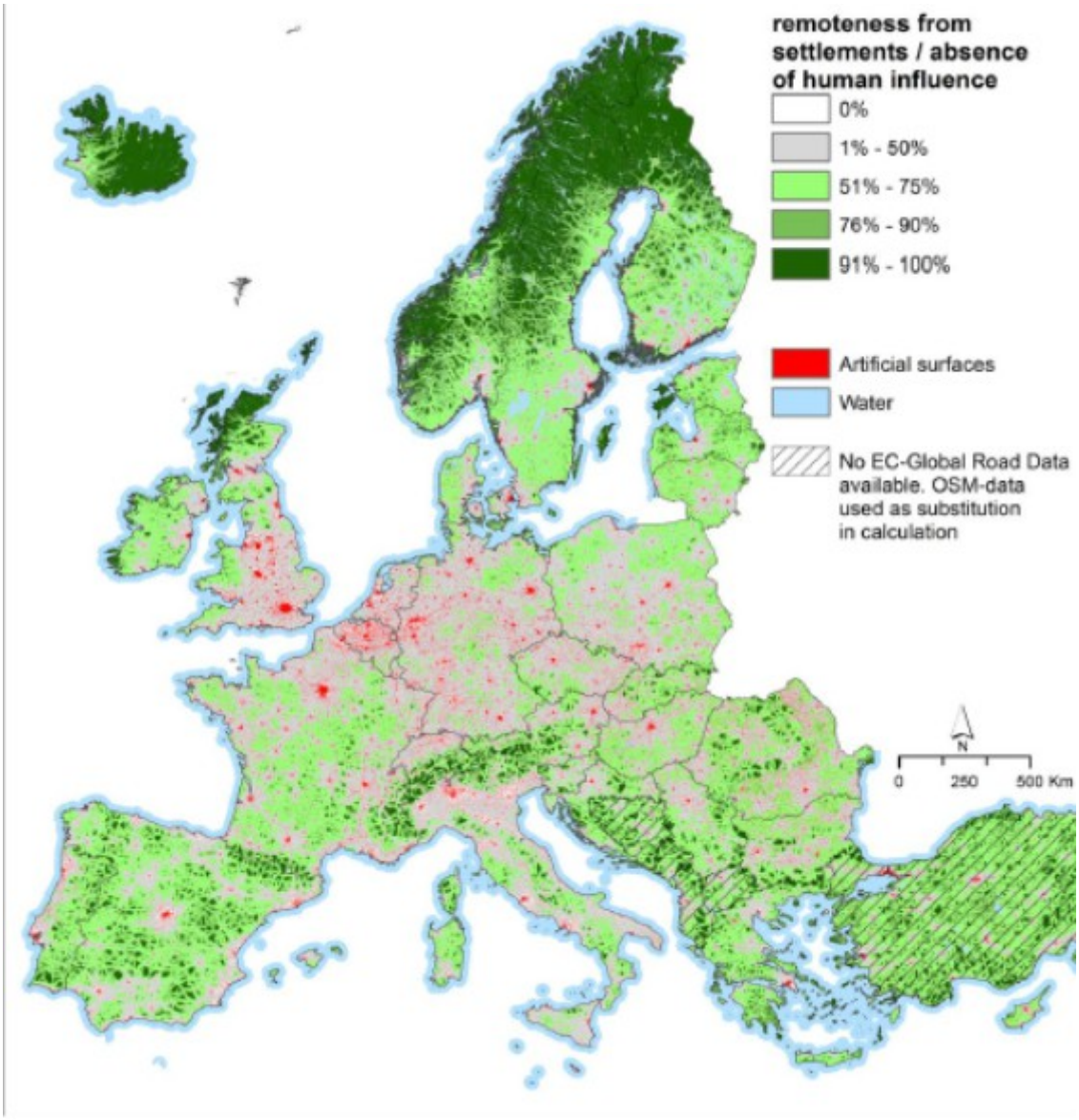

Fig.11 Wilderness register and indicator for Europe, from Kuiters et al. (2011) Wildland Research Institute.

These maps show clearly the connection between wilder nature and the problems of human settlement: remoteness tends to coincide with depleted settlement but also more natural land-cover. These are also the areas of maximum forest regeneration on abandoned pasture land and act as corridors for the migration of large herbivores and their predators.

Communication by visualisation

Such a major shift in settlement pattern and demography lends itself to new techniques of visualisation – such as computer simulation of landscape use, the presentation of eco-architecture and the web of knock-on effects. Such sustainable development paths can then be contrasted with those that are less sustainable and involve damaging the inherent landscape quality of the regions.

In this respect, Ethos has pioneered the integration of renewable energy, agricultural and forestry strategies as represented by computer graphics – and essentially, to act as a *tool* for decision-makers, rather than in the advocacy of any particular path (4). The cross-border cooperation of landscape design professionals could lay the foundation for specific regional studies, and this work could be extended into schools and Universities within the region as a way of cultivating responsibility for landscape decisions. For example, in Fig.12 below, rapid insensitive development that exports energy from the land is contrasted with (in Fig,13) slower, more sustainable development that takes account of scale, community, and the feeling of nature, whilst offering local-based solutions to the energy and climate problems.

Fig.12 Computer-generated future landscape with insensitive development of large turbines, forest-residue biomass power stations, short-rotation coppice and commercial forestry on the hills.

Fig. 13 Sensitive and sustainable development with smaller scale local resources, rewilding on the hills (native forest regeneration acting as carbon sinks), with a major focus upon biofuels and solar power for local use.

We would like to see this approach taken into rural communities throughout Europe and adapted to local circumstance. Computer graphics can be made site-specific and involve local educational institutions in the creation of a knowledge base to inform local decision making.

In Summary

Two keys to healing the past are offered here: the conservation of natural beauty as a healing power in itself; and the involvement of people in new communities that live closer to the land. It is feasible to evolve strategies that foster vital rural community that is currently suffering neglect at the margins of economic life, as well as to create natural sanctuaries for the return of wilder nature.

References and further reading

1. a) *Rewilding Europe* (2012) Brochure. Nijmegan, Netherlands.
   b) *Rewilding Europe*, Annual Review, 2013. www.rewildingeurope.com
2. See 'Rewilding the Human' in Taylor ed. *Rewilding: ECOS writings on wildland and conservation values.* Ethos. 2011
3. See Perspectives from Anthropology in Taylor, *Chill: a reassessment of global warming theory.* Clairview, 2009.
4. Visualising Renewable Energy in the Countryside of 2050. Ethos & Countryside Agency,UK.

See also:

Peter Taylor, (2009) *Beyond Conservation* Earthscan, London.

Blaha, J. et al (2011) Can Natura 2000 mapping be used to zone the Sumava National Park, European Journal of Environmental Sciences, Vol.3.No.1, 57-64.

And

www.ethos-uk.com for computer visualisations

www.valedaslobas.com website for the Portuguese project

www.banc.org.uk for writing on conservation issues

www.wildlandresearch.org is the research centre for mapping wildland (download here a copy of *A vision for a wilder Europe).*

www.hnutiduha.cz for forest policies