

# Communal cooperation as a strategy for rural agricultural landscapes



A case study from Lower Austria – by: Angela Meyer<sup>1)</sup>, Gregor Giersch<sup>1)</sup>, Claudia Sattler<sup>2)</sup>

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## The cp<sup>3</sup> project

The aim of the project is to analyse innovative collaborative approaches in agro-ecosystem governance as an alternative to hierarchical regulatory measures and market-based instruments. In three case studies in Germany (Biosphere reserve Spreewald), the Netherlands (municipality Berg-en-Dal) and Austria (Naturpark Jauerling-Wachau), we assess best practices in communal cooperation in terms of ecosystem management, biodiversity conservation and rural development, and ask about prospects and limitations of these approaches in dealing with ecological and related socio-economic challenges.

Methods used include: Qualitative stakeholder interviews, comparative analysis of collaborative governance practices and Net-map analysis.

## The case study in Austria: Naturpark Jauerling-Wachau

Naturpark Jauerling-Wachau, created in 1984, is a protected area (Natura 2000 FFH & birds Directives) along the Danube in Lower Austria, within the wider Wachau cultural landscape region. The lower areas close to the Danube are a popular tourist destination, the upper parts mainly live from dairy, cattle and cereal farming and Christmas tree production.

The park is administrated by the 'Naturpark Verein Jauerling-Wachau', an association co-founded by the seven municipalities. The association gathers the mayors of each municipality as well as actors from the fields of tourism and regional development. The Naturpark Verein is active in a variety of areas with the aim of conserving the cultural landscape and its rich biodiversity.

## What can municipal cooperation contribute to sustainable cultural landscape management?

### Transmunicipal Cooperation

The Naturpark Verein presents a unique governance level. The association is a platform helping to align positions, pool resources, jointly set priorities and launch common activities. This gives local administrative decisions and initiatives more impact and efficiently addresses common local challenges.



### Saftladen ("Juice store")

Raising the next generation's environmental awareness and appreciation, the Naturpark Verein has initiated a community-based project where pupils of local schools collect apples from old meadow orchards and produce their own juice. An annual children contest honours the best bottle label.

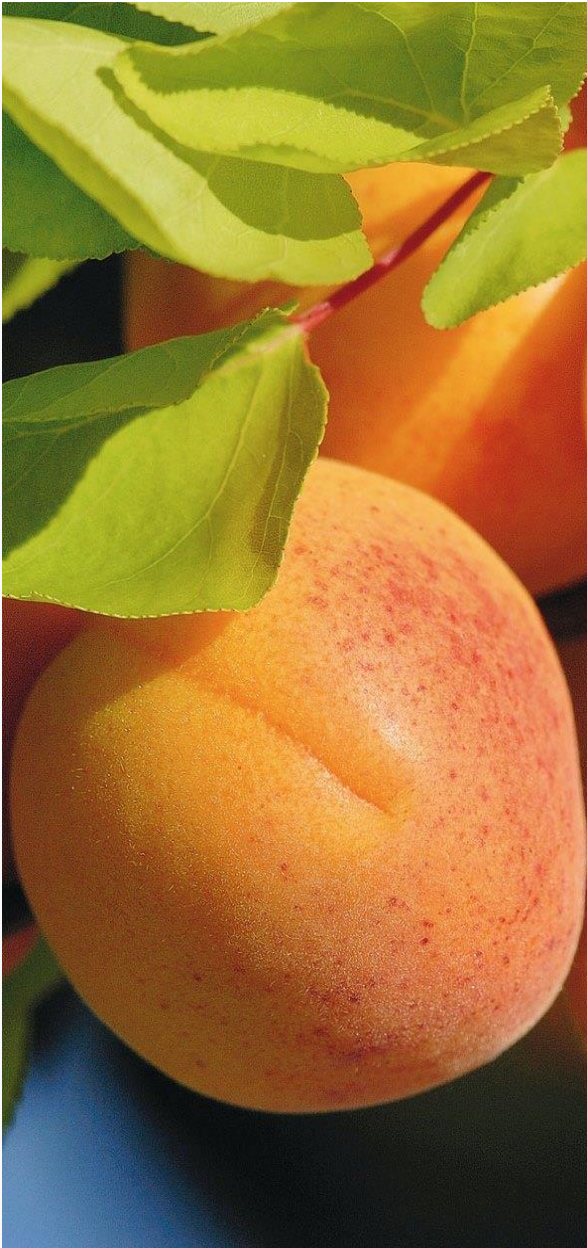
### Recreation & Tourism

The Naturpark Verein works in promoting sustainable tourism, especially in the upper parts of the park. It maintains hiking tracks and infrastructure such as benches, resting places for hikers and info booths for children. The Naturpark House restaurant at 915 m.a.s.l. offers a unique view on the Danube valley.



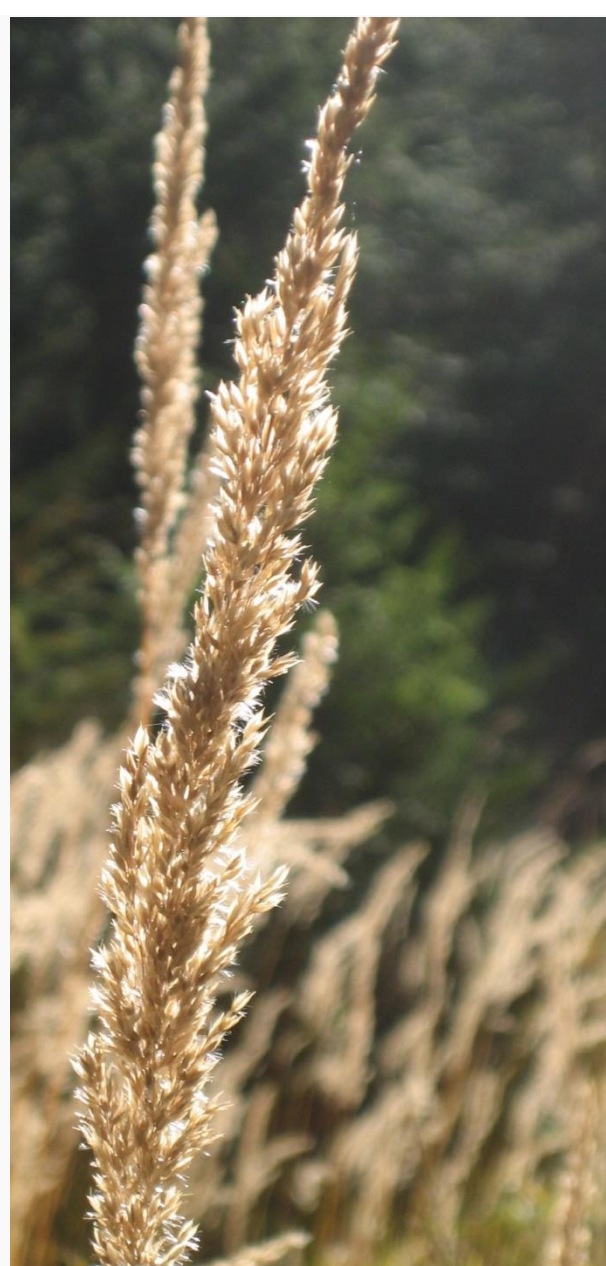
### Marketing of local products

The Naturpark Verein supports local farmers in marketing their products, such as home made bread, milk, cheese, meat, wine, fruit products (esp. apricots) and vegetables. Community-based initiatives include a weekly farmers' market, shops as well as the development of labels for local goods.



### Biodiversity conservation

There are a number of community-based initiatives to protect and conserve the Naturpark's rich biodiversity. In summer, volunteers from all over the world can take part in youth camps and contribute to the preservation of valuable natural areas and the conservation of natural landscapes.



### Local value chain

The Naturpark Verein is engaged in developing and promoting local value chains. This includes supporting farmers to supply local hotels and restaurants. The Naturpark House restaurant is committed to use local products.

Pictures: [www.cp3-project.eu](http://www.cp3-project.eu) / B. Habermann

## Challenges

- Demographic changes: young generation leaving the region (about 25% population decline during the last 40 years).
- Low milk prices force farmers to convert to Christmas tree production (monocultures / loss in biodiversity).
- Constant dwindling of small family farms.
- Rising European and global market pressures (international trade agreements, e.g. TTIP, CETA)

## Limitations of trans-municipal cooperation

- Depends upon strong personal engagement & commitment.
- Limited financial resources and genuinely different perspectives of those municipalities with significant income from tourism and those located further away from the Danube.
- Legal limitations: no influence on relevant policies and subsidies required for the survival of small structured agriculture.
- Can not uphold market pressures, demographic and structural change.

cp<sup>3</sup> partners:



cp<sup>3</sup> funding scheme:



cp<sup>3</sup> national funders:

