

## The Biomot Meeting in Lepena,

September 2014

In the fourth week of September 2014 BIOMOT researchers and work package leaders gathered in Lepena, which lies in Slovenia's largest protected area, Triglav National Park. It extends along the Italian border in the north-west of Slovenia, that is, in the south-eastern section of the Alps. The main goal of the meeting was to discuss our first overall results and analyses and to find the best way to translate these findings in an overarching theoretical framework or model.

The 'synthesis' work package team did the kick off, and presented an onset of a preliminary overarching theoretical framework, which was subsequently penetratingly discussed and modified. After that, other members of this work package presented their ideas to improve and enrich the analyses. Also, leaders of the other three work packages in BIOMOT presented their first results.

In the 'economic' work package it was presented that in policy making biodiversity is increasingly understood in terms of the 'ecosystem services' it provides, where these services can be assigned a monetary value so that their 'Total Economic Value' can be ascertained. In its first BIOMOT period a major weakness in this approach is identified. The approach fails to include the long-term value of



*Photo 2: The BIOMOT researchers and work package leaders in the Pristava Lepena.*

biodiversity for the sustainability and resilience of ecosystems. It also fails to capture the full range of values individuals have about biodiversity, and can indeed crowd out those values. The researchers in this work package have examined deliberative and narrative forms of valuation that are more closely aligned to the values that shape and motivate individuals. After that, a Q study is designed and implemented to better understand the different discourses that scientific, professional and civil society actors bring to the processes of the valuation of biodiversity. It

examines responses to monetary valuation and to alternative multi-criteria and deliberative forms of valuation. Currently an analysis is performed on 31 interviews, comprising economists

and non-economists from the whole arena of debate surrounding the issue of economic valuation, from universities, governmental organizations and NGOs from all 7 participating countries.

In the 'policy' work package the first key result that came out of the governance analysis is the importance of inclusive decision making for projects where non-economic motivations are key, while more centralized decision making is appropriate for economically oriented projects. This is a fact that is highlighted in single case study research in the literature but few large scale comparative analysis exists amongst projects of different nature. A second key result that came out of the governance analysis is the need of bottom-up processes that take into account the motivations of



*Photo 1: The Pristava Lepena in the Triglav national park.*

the societal actors and stakeholders that are supporting the initiatives. Indeed, the quantitative analysis shows a consistent gap in perceptions/motivations/ world-views of the top-down actors (policy and scientific experts) on the one hand and the users/beneficiaries and the leaders of the initiatives. Successful initiatives amongst the 35 analysed therefore only reached this success due to the existence of effective bridging organisations between these two groups which organised social learning and knowledge exchange. The in-depth case study analysis of the 35 cases is now focusing on the role of these bridging organisations for social learning.

The first results of the 'people' work package highlight that some particular features could characterize the first life period (0-15 years) like living in a rural environment and experiencing outdoor



*Photo 5: The Soča river.*

activities such as camping and hiking (not other sports or outdoor activities). The first life period seems crucial also in allowing nature experience with informal (not with formal) activities and together with older and more experienced significant others (either within or outside the family). Another distinctive feature of motivated persons is their experience of unique and intense specific interactions with the natural environment, in all three life periods (0-15, 15-25, 25- until now). From the first results, they seem to be not so much characterized by aesthetics or realization features, rather they seem to involve intellectual activities and feelings of awakening and connectedness with nature. Finally such persons are also those with a stronger motivation for searching and giving meaning to their life: the way to achieve this is via some 'ideological' references related to nature per se, but quite often actually via the relevance of nature and/or the environment for people and society.

Based on all the presentations and discussions, which took three days, we ended with very fruitful ideas to proceed towards.

The mornings and afternoons we devoted to work, the short time after lunches was used to visit some nearby natural attractions and cultural heritage. So we walked along the gorge of Lepenca river and attended the excerpt of the First World War in Fort Kluže. On the way from Ljubljana to Pristava Lepena we visited the world famous Postojna Cave and on the way back to Ljubljana we stopped in the highest road pass (Vršič pass) in Slovenia in the heart of the Triglav National Park.



*Photo 3: John O'Neill, the leader of the 'economic' work package.*



*Photo 6: Fort Kluže and excerpt of the First World War presented by local group 1313 Society.*