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Cultural Diversity Issues in Biodiversity Monitoring—Cases of Lithuania, Poland and Denmark

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Abstract: Public participation is a key element in nature conservation in Europe and a necessity for collecting broad scale data on biodiversity and its dynamics. However, vast societal differences exist between eastern and western European countries, resulting in problems for public participation in post-communist states as compared to western countries. Here, we compare diversity in monitoring practices and public participation in countries with different political histories. Drawing on in-depth ethnographic studies conducted in Lithuania and Poland, as well as a rapid assessment in Denmark, we have focused on the historical, cultural and social determinants of the volunteers' participation in biodiversity monitoring. Our results indicate the reasons why volunteer involvement—as an expression of a participatory approach—has a lower incidence in the post-communist countries, compared to voluntarism common in occidental democracies. We discuss our results in the context of the main social factors considered to be a legacy of the Soviet regime.

Keywords: amateurs; biodiversity monitoring; communist legacy; human dimension; cultural diversity; public participatory; volunteers

1. Introduction

Humans have continuous contact with and impact upon the landscape, plants, and animal species and at the same time the environment has reciprocal impacts on humans [1]. The unquestionable interrelation between nature and human society is widely discussed in various aspects: man-nature relationship, perception of environment, human adaptation to natural environment, nature conservation and environmental problems, explanation of causality of the arising problems, human factor and strategies for solving environmental problems [2-7]. Another important aspect of man-nature bounded relation is the concept of culture and cultural diversity. Human action with respect to the environment, including management itself, is a social act and an expression of culture. Therefore, cultural diversity determines the different ways of human interaction with the natural environment. Anthropologically culture is understood in plural, as specific ways of thinking, life styles, human beliefs, customs, and socially acquired behavior. In other words, when dealing with the concept of culture and describing cultural differences, one should analyze the core culture elements expressed through shared values, norms, mental models, symbolic structures observed in a particular society [8,9]. In respect to the human-nature relation, these cultural elements are recognizable as a positive/indifferent value orientation towards nature or nature-respecting/environmental attitudes and awareness, which lead to a certain forms of behavior, *i.e.*, active or passive public participation in nature conservation programs, voluntary actions. Cultural context is also one of the most influential factors that explains how culture affects behavior in organizational settings [10] or helps to explain an inner organizational culture [11], *e.g.*, of an environmental non-governmental organization (NGO).

While global changes in environmental discourse and conservation policy offer more public participatory models that might help to solve problems related to nature conservation and biodiversity loss, we may observe the differences in implementing these models at a local level. Thus, besides international nature conservation programs (*e.g.*, Natura 2000) and formal implementation of new forms and practices of nature conservation, the cultural pattern of the target societies must be taken into account by these global initiatives to be successful. In other words, the global knowledge (biodiversity monitoring practice, participatory models, *etc.*) needs to be “localized”, *i.e.*, adapted to local cultural and sociopolitical conditions [12]. Therefore, the success and errors of global initiatives and the capacity to develop or sustain voluntary sector and public participatory models depend on a wide range of local factors, social and individual interactions imbedded in the particular socio-cultural and historical context.

Central and Eastern European countries play an important role in biodiversity conservation, as a high number of endangered or indigenous habitats and species exist within their borders [13]. However, biodiversity can be maintained only if nature is treated as having some value in the society [14,15]. Although nature conservation has a long and rich history in Eastern and Central Europe, former communist states face many obstacles while implementing the Natura 2000 structures [16]. One of the

obstacles is the low level of public participation in monitoring activities [7,17-19], *i.e.*, in Lithuania, 89% (n = 28) of monitoring schemes were run by professionals only, whereas this proportion was 63.7% (n = 101) in Poland, 33.3% (n = 30) in Hungary, 28.3% (n = 93) in France, and 23.7% (n = 38) in Germany [20]. This situation possibly results from the late implementation of public involvement in the natural resources management programs after the communist system collapsed in the 1990s [21]. However, the most crucial reason might be the legacy of the Soviet Union [22].

Public involvement in decision-making processes or public problem solving, as a form of participatory approach, is a new reality for the post-communist societies. During the communist era, any spontaneous civil actions were practically non-existent, as dissents were punished by totalitarian governments [23]. Almost half a century of forced collectivism and imposed top-down “voluntarism”, controlled systematically by the ideology of the party, resulted in skepticism concerning this form of participatory democracy, leading to a lack of respect for common values such as nature and biodiversity [24,25]. Nevertheless, public activity was notable during the first years after the re-establishment of independence. The collapse of communism followed by the subsequent rise of democracy, however, resulted in significant changes in voluntary activities in the countries of the former Soviet Block [22]. Most notably, the popularity of the non-governmental sector rose during this period, including environment conservation movements. At the same time, there was increasing international concern over nature protection issues including adapting the rules of natural resource management in Europe so that they encouraged more public participation. As an economic consequence, a variety of potential funding possibilities appeared to be available for NGOs working in biodiversity conservation [26,27].

However, political and economic changes of the transition process resulted in tremendous financial and human resource problems of NGOs [28]. Having experienced the ambivalence of the law, NGOs rapidly learned to rely more on international than national structures. This behavior likely influenced the public perception, so that the different NGOs were perceived as separate institutions operating outside of state structures, rather than mediators between society and government. However, such independence from the national funding often brought them into confrontation with the government in many fields, nature protection included [13,26,28-30].

When analyzing the reasons for low level of civic participation in post soviet countries, many surveys tend to link it with a lack of social trust in the society as well as in the organizational sector [26,31,32]. According to the *success and wellbeing theory* [33], trust at the individual level can be dependent on the social status, life satisfaction, incomes as well as the personal experience: “Those who have been treated kindly and generously by life are more likely to trust than those who suffered from poverty, unemployment, discrimination, exploitation and social exclusion” [33]. Another *voluntary organizations theory* [33] relates the high level of social trust with the traditions of volunteering and participation when members of society learn to participate by participating in a large and varied range of voluntary associations and organizations, which also leads to maintaining the importance of cooperation for the common good. Unlike the Soviet era, where organizations and group activities were controlled by the state, Hovard [33] indicates the mistrust of communist organizations as one of the three common factors weakening the level of civic participation and volunteer recruitment in post-communist countries. *The persistence of friendship networks* is named as a second factor influencing the voluntary sector. In western societies, people participated in a wide range of

voluntary and single interest organizations in order to fulfill their hobbies or to extend their friendship circles. In post-communist societies, where the public sphere was highly politicized, vibrant private networks have developed. Therefore, many people still tend to act in their own private circles and feel no need to participate in civil society organizations [33]. This factor might be linked to the willingness to compete rather than collaborate at all levels of functioning within the independent organization sector: among the organizations, within the organization, *etc.* [26,34]. Finally, in the years since the end of the communist era, when people shared a sense of hope and idealism, disappointment or even outright disillusionment has “increased the demobilization and withdrawal from public activities” [33]. In this context, also inner organizational factors are often indicated as having an influence on the process of recruiting interested individuals and keeping them in the organization. Among such factors include the lack of good leaders, having management skills and knowing how to create a friendly atmosphere among members of the organization and sustaining their motivation [26].

The main concern of our article is to provide insights into the situation of the third sector (the role of NGOs in a state) in post-communist as compared to the western countries, and to draft solutions supporting NGOs in order to achieve a broader public participation. The latter seems to be particularly crucial, since halting biodiversity loss cannot be achieved without active societal involvement into nature inventories and protection [19,20,35-39]. Acknowledging that culture determines how people interact with nature, three different cases from Lithuania, Poland and Denmark will be presented here. In this context, post-communist countries appear to form a coherent group in terms of low levels of social capital, organization membership and relatively low civic engagement [40], which is significantly different from the situation in Western Europe. Each experience will contribute to an emerging understanding of a different eastern and western approach to nature conservation. We will show the diversity of practices and problems of public participation in nature conservation and compare the differences in post-communist (examples from Lithuania and Poland) and western political systems (Denmark). More precisely, we will ask: how is a volunteer’s motivation, value orientation and attitude towards nature influenced by historical factors? What practices does an NGO use for civil engagement? Which of these practices do or do not work? How could they be improved? The answers to these questions will be summarized in recommendations for successful volunteer recruitment.

2. Methods

Our study comprised two stages: a quantitative stage, aimed at gathering information on individual environmental organizations, their structure, and type of employees (professionals, volunteers), and a qualitative approach, a comparable ethnographic stage that focused on the analysis of the working system of NGOs, which conducted biodiversity monitoring and engaged volunteers for that purpose. Here, we will address the issue of qualitative data.

After completion of the quantitative research, four ornithological organizations were selected for the qualitative study. An ethnographic survey was conducted amongst members, volunteers and organizers of the Lithuanian (*Lithuanian Ornithological Society—LOD*), Polish (*Little Poland Ornithological Society—MTO* and *Carpatica Operation—AC*) and Danish (*Danish Ornithological Society—DOF*) NGOs monitoring biodiversity (Table 1). Some of the present or former members of these NGO’s also

represent/are employees of the *Institute of Ecology*, Vilnius University (Lithuania), School for younger ornithologists (Lithuania), the *Department of Biodiversity* of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the *Danish Outdoor Council*. These four ornithological organizations from three different countries were selected as the exemplifying cases to demonstrate the diversity in public participatory practices in biodiversity monitoring when assuming that local cultural patterns may strengthen or weaken international initiatives for global nature conservation, which can provide us with the information for a cross-cultural analysis [41]. The cases of Lithuania and Poland are perceived as forming a coherent group representing post-communist or so-called countries-in-transition. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that there are differences in the historical, socio-political experiences of states formerly under a communist regime. Therefore, on the one hand we are able to map similarities related with the soviet legacy, on the other hand these two cases enable us to show the variation between countries in terms of how they manage the organizational and societal processes. The case of Denmark was selected as presenting the western situation, also because of the unsuccessful international collaboration of the LOD and the DOF during the transition period, where DOF was providing mentorship in building up the new NGO structure, introducing methods for public recruitment. That case leads us to a context-dependent knowledge on the process of how post-soviet countries try to adopt and adjust a western-style model of organizational culture and participatory nature conservation.

Table 1. Short descriptions of the studied NGOs.

LITHUANIA	POLAND		DENMARK
Lithuanian Ornithological Society (LOD)	Little Poland Ornithological Society (MTO)	Carpatica Operation (AC)	Danish Ornithological Society (DOF)
The largest environmental organization in Lithuania was founded in 1984. LOD seeks to conserve all bird species in Lithuania by protecting their habitats and, through this, to work for the world's biological diversity and the sustainability of human use of natural resources. It congregates above 200 members with a small ratio of volunteers.	Operating as an independent research university unit, it is a typical birds' monitoring organization relying on work of 500 volunteers. It was founded in 1982 and officially registered 10 years later.	A unique private initiative established by deeply devoted ornithologists that has been actively operating since 1986. Although its' work became a standardized professional monitoring procedure in 1998, up until now the operation has not been registered as an official organization. It is based on a group of 300 volunteers.	An organization with a 100 years tradition, promoting knowledge of birds and support for nature protection; protecting birds and improving their habitats nationally and internationally. DOF gathers more than 13 000 member, out of which 1500 are active volunteers involved in monitoring activities on a regular basis.

The qualitative study consisted of participant observations, focus groups and semi-structured individual interviews [42,43]. The participant observations were based on various methods of carrying out additional informal interviews and life-stories, direct observations (e.g., bird watching, bird ringing), participation in group events (e.g., annual meetings, bird race, autumn watch, *etc.*), and

analyses of personal documents produced within the NGO (e.g., websites and magazines). The focus groups included five to seven participants, to ensure the full spectrum of social, societal, and economic diversity (e.g., professionals–amateurs, leaders–random members, youth–elders, *etc.*), in order to achieve a more heterogeneous view on the discussed issues. The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted in a fairly open framework and focused on preliminary identified topics, such as professionals' and volunteers' identities, their motivation for working within NGOs, involvement into biodiversity monitoring, relationships between professionals and amateurs, volunteers' contributions in general, monitoring programs and Natura 2000 in a particular country. In total, 60 in-depth individual discussions, three focus groups and nine participant observations were completed by our organization. The semi-structured interviews and focus groups recorded were fully transcribed and faithfully translated. Interviews, which were not conducted in English, were summarized with a full translation of the relevant sections. The translation was kept as close as possible to the original content of the interviews, though for making quotes more coherent, comments of the interviewer were placed in square brackets.

3. Results and Discussion

Our ethnographic research showed that the level of public participation in biodiversity monitoring within the three investigated countries was very diverse. The main difference was observed between eastern (Lithuania, Poland) and western countries (Denmark), which possess different historical traditions and practices of civic participation. At a country level, there were differences regarding the level of volunteer involvement in biodiversity monitoring, the volunteer recruitment and retaining practices, and in public attitudes toward volunteering as an unpaid activity as well as one of the forms of civic participation (decision-making process). Public participation is much more successful in western countries [20], as represented by Denmark in our present analysis. Denmark and other western countries have a long tradition of political and social democracy. One member of the organization emphasizes that Denmark is a country of organizations, which is deeply rooted in a very long history: *"If there are two people with a common interest, they will basically form an independent organization. Almost every Danish child grows up with a tradition of general assembly; [everybody here knows what rules or statutes of various associations are]. And it is so deeply rooted."* The interviewee said that it is natural that most Danes are members of four or five different organizations—*"one for stamp collectors, another for people keen on sport, fishermen and so on"*. In contrast, the non-profit sector of the post-communist contemporary civic societies is experiencing a low level of public participation. These societies have a long history of compromises between social, ideological and political forces. The case from Poland showed that NGOs are still not well known and recognized, neither trusted, within the country. The leader of The Eagle Conservation Committee explains that *"to an average Pole a NGO is a kind of strange structure. Even the name "non-governmental" is not very accurate and may raise concerns: Can we trust them or not? In general, people are skeptical... Many organizations are twenty or dozen or so years old and are worth to trust them... But it never happens that views are changing in an instant."* Further, diverse histories in western and eastern countries framed different societal habits. This became obvious from comments of the project coordinator from LOD, who shared his personal observations in different countries and brings the example: *"when you*

speak with a member of the Royal Society [RSPB], he understands that the mission of membership is to help society. Even if he is not engaged into any activity of this organization, he pays the membership fee and feels that this particular custom helps. Such attitude—‘what could I give or how could I be useful to the organization?’ have not appeared in Lithuania so far. Most volunteers think the other way around—‘What can the organization give to me?’ Only a small percentage of the active volunteers would propose ‘I can do this and that, so please have a use of me.’ A volunteer from Carpatica Operation shared this opinion, stating that if volunteers from the western European countries were more involved in birds’ monitoring, people from eastern countries, for example, Poles, *“were just slowly learning this and it was not a matter of lack of professional [ornithological] background; it simply was rooted from a different commitment.”*

We did not find a particular difference in the type of volunteers dedicated to a NGO. In general, we found that volunteers can be characterized by few general features, irrespective of their country of origin and political background: age and economic status as well as the level of trust as a trait of social relations (e.g., cooperation between professionals and amateurs depending on skills; recruitment of member belonging to an existing social network). Our survey showed that individual resources are the key factor influencing the willingness of people to volunteer or the duration of their engagement in volunteer activities. Our results let us characterize a volunteer as most usually a young to middle-aged person of higher than average wealth, thereby allowing him or her to invest more free time in personal interests [44]. That social group also showed the highest level of trust: *“The higher the standard of living, the higher interest of people into any kind of non-materialistic activities. The average member [of the nature oriented organization] is a high middle class individual; he/she has got a little bit more money than the average Danish, (...) usually owns his/her home and a piece of garden”* (staff, Department of Communications, DOF). And accordingly, if the lack of recourses is experienced in the society, people are not willing to volunteer. Both responses from Lithuania and Poland showed that economical factor plays a crucial role in people’s motivation to volunteer: *“When you have a quiet and gainful job, when you have leisure time, naturally, you want to use it meaningful; you can be a volunteer <...> And now, when you have to work at five workplaces, so the real rest is when you fall down somewhere by the lake, sleep of, then swim and grill... How can you think about voluntarism in this situation?”* a former member of the LOD said. A participant of Carpatica Operation stated: *“If the basic requirements are not fulfilled, people simply will not care about the environment. Consequently, with the raised economic level the situation changed. Finally, it would be the same as in Sweden or England. In England, there are at least ten times more people interested in birds, as well as there are more ornithologists in Sweden, Norway and Ireland.”*

Similarly across countries, the majority of the interviewees emphasized that the level of youth involvement is decreasing, due to changes in interest and stability of the younger generation. All three countries face difficulties to involve more young people in bird-watching activities. A former member of LOD remembered that when he was a child there were over 100 kids involved in bird-ringing and today he could think only of *“several kids, who ring birds across Lithuania”*. A bird-ringer from Carpatica Operation said that among teenagers, who prefer to “show off, express themselves in different ways”, there are some teenagers, *“who simply take a lorgnette and go for birds and these are people who usually start working for organizations. At this age, people have a great potential of energy and this is how NGOs arise”*. However, according to that informant nowadays *“not more than*

0.1% of the teenagers join NGOs. (...) This is a kind of youth rebellion". The reasons for this situation, observed in all three investigated countries, were named unanimously. They were best described by a member of the Youth board of DOF: *"There are so many things/activities that children and young people can do. They are probably doing sport and they are interested in horses, and they also like to go bird-watching. They don't have time for everything. They also need to have social lives, for example to go to the cinema. So, I think there are so many options now compared to former times. So I think we compete with Playstation and television, compete with more activities that young people and children can do now compared to 30 years ago."*

In summary, volunteer involvement appears to be both a matter of individual resources as well as cultural patterns, because culture [21] plays an important role in determining one's participation in voluntary activity. Our ethnographic data also showed that elements of culture such as values, attitudes and shared perceptions strongly relate to the historical, political and socioeconomic context of the particular society. Forms of volunteering showed a large diversity over Europe, with large differences between Eastern and Western European countries [45]. Our study added that even though citizens of post-communist countries used to believe in the power of groups that can act on their behalf, after having experienced compulsory social labor in communist times, the majority of them are not eager to work freely even for the common good.

3.1. Attitude toward Public Goods as Nature

The lack of interest in almost all kinds of environmental issues in the Communist ideology resulted in a deficiency of adequate environmental legal regulations in the Eastern Block. Consequently, the instrumental way most people used to treat nature was generally accepted [46]. Such a habit is very hard to change, given the fact that in the former communist countries, where "the obligatory voluntary work" existed, the impact of past memories of the voluntary element still has a rather detrimental effect on the willingness of people to get involved [22,47-49]. In addition, the natural environment in the Soviet Block has been declined gradually in some regions, so that by the end of the 1980s the Eastern and Central European countries were places characterized by very high pollution alongside undeveloped refuges of high biodiversity. This situation was accompanied by a very low environmental awareness of the societies and pressure on economical development [25,50].

Although the communistic era is over, many people still have problems in altering their way of thinking about the natural environment: *"people lack respect for nature, which is a gift for us"* (Leader of Carpatia Operation). The attitude towards nature within the Communist ideology was highly negative right down to the level of the collective's goods, for which nobody felt personally responsible [25,38]. While a director of DOF explained that even though *"some of our members only do bird watching because they think it's a nice activity to spend time in nature and to have nice experiences <...>, almost a third of our members are interested in more than just watching the birds and counting the birds, they are also interested in the long term conservation and to do some good for nature"*. Engagement in post soviet countries seems to be a serious problem, even among the public, in terms of biodiversity monitoring actions. Their lack of an appropriate attitude towards the environment may have negative consequences, as agreed by members of the Lithuanian and Polish NGOs. Sometimes, especially when monitoring rare species, potential volunteers from the general public

might rather have a will *“to have the rare bird at home as an exhibit hanging on the wall”* (ex-member of LOD). Also, in Poland, ornithologists discussed the availability of online data regarding the nesting sites of endangered birds and decided it should not be made available to the general public, but only to those, who have been “vetted” as being responsible for nature and trustworthy volunteers. Here, it needs to be mentioned that the lack of a positive attitude toward nature or the environment may follow simply from economic reasons, for example: *“when Danish ornithologists visited Lithuania, we showed them a black stork nest. They concluded that we should not show this to anyone from the locals <...> They already knew how people behave over here [in post-communist region]. Suffering from a constant lack of money, people simply rob nests. An equivalent of eggs from 5 nests is a considerably good car. That is one of the reasons why the rare species disappear over here”* (former member of LOD). In spite of that, members of Polish and Lithuanian NGOs agreed that even slight changes observed in the society may already have a very positive impact on the future, as a volunteer of Carpatica Operation argued *“It has a great importance, especially for children: to show them the world of ideas, which are not the matter of surviving <...> Even if just few percent start to be interested not necessarily in birds, but in science, it would mean a lot”*.

3.2. Competitive Approach among NGOs and Volunteers

Competition as a societal phenomenon occurred primarily in the countries where democratic transition had been abrupt and achieved by overthrowing the ruling regime. This became a rule also among NGOs and appeared at various levels, namely, among groups of participants within each particular NGO, among various organizations in the non-governmental sector as well as between NGOs and the public administration [26]. Fortunately, since 2004, a steady decrease in the competitive approach has been observed there, paralleled with a rise of public participation in various environmental activities, level of trust and a more environmentally friendly attitude among NGO-members [23,26]. Moreover, people actively working in various NGOs feel obliged to participate jointly in the decision-making processes concerning nature protection.

In Lithuania, a more negative impact of competition on NGO’s activity was observed. A general shortage of funds and inappropriate organizational management resulted in a strong rivalry among various organizations belonging to the same sphere of nature conservation. In some cases, NGOs treated each other not as “competitors” but as “enemies”, and this “fight” deterred “nature lovers” from joining NGO’s, as one member of LOD described: *“the atmosphere is bad; other organizations are treated as competitors or enemies, for example, during the LOD council meetings, people often commented ‘oh, those greens said something bad about us, so we need to fight against them.’”* In our opinion, Lithuanian NGOs, sometimes simply did not, and still do not, possess adequate skilled leaders and staff to recruit and motivate individuals to work with. Although the latest political and economic changes have considerably contributed to decreasing the level of enthusiasm among potential volunteers, compared to the early years of independency, such a low motivation might stem from the lack of appropriate leaders. Excellent leader skills, although still emerging as more NGOs gain a greater level of professionalism, are still in vast demand [34].

3.3. Attitude of Professionals toward Amateurs (Level of Trust)

Another problem observed in volunteer involvement was the relationship between professionals and amateurs in the everyday activities of east European countries. The involved volunteers are not always trusted and often characterized by a considerably high level of independence (“*they [volunteers] do what they want to and hate to be squeezed into a frame*” (ornithologist, member of LOD)) which made them to some extent unreliable, especially in the process of collecting research data. Although, scientists involved in the designation of Natura 2000 sites in Poland and Lithuania regarded volunteering help very highly, they considered working with professionals as much more effective and trustworthy, believing that “*the best people - professionals work in the protected areas, so they are the people we need <...> if someone is active and publishes regularly, he/she has got a good reputation. We all know each other more or less, so we are aware whom we may trust*” (ornithologist, member of LOD, Institute of Ecology); and “*as far as NGOs are concerned we do cooperate with them in all Natura 2000 tasks. This cooperation starts from choosing the experts from those NGOs*” (Polish Academy of Sciences’ employee). In the network theory of trust [42], this situation is common in most post-soviet countries, where social trust is limited to the close network or private circle of people, as Rose [51] described: ‘East Europeans know those whom they trust, and trust those whom they know’. Still, scientists definitely want to involve the NGO sector in the nature conservation activities, but only with adequate research guidance prior to starting a particular work: “*It would be the right way to implement [comprehensive] monitoring tasks. But it needs a scientific base, somebody [institution], who can compile the methods and rules and who coordinates*” (Polish Academy of Sciences employee). Even the leaders of the Lithuanian NGO are aware of the value of amateurs and cooperation between these two groups: “*It is very important to understand that teachers and students have to learn from each other*” (project coordinator in LOD). Only the Danish case demonstrated an organizational system, which made cooperation between professionals and amateurs quite successful: “*Our conservation department consists only of biologists and these biologists spend most of their time managing our monitoring activities. What they are basically doing is that they manage a system in which all the monitoring work is done by volunteers, but they are professional support for the voluntary monitoring work.*” (Director of DOF)

3.4. Leadership

Our study confirmed that the managerial attitude towards amateurs is one of the most crucial factors in setting up a successful long-term cooperation project. According to the majority of informants “*there are always enthusiastic people in any society (...)*” (Member of LOD), and this seemed to be a big chance for the leaders to acquire and retain volunteers within their organizations. The issue does not only embrace the possibility of expressing one’s opinion. Nowadays, it is more essential to establish an appropriate contact, maintain the relationships with volunteers and develop effective management of amateurs [52]. Such skills had little chance of being developed in the socialist type society [26]. The Lithuanian reality still lacks such capabilities.

Management as a tool of governance did not have many chances to develop in the former communist countries. As a consequence, a newly established independent state lacked professionals in

this sector. Many former governmental officials pretended to become professional leaders of various institutions. In the case of NGOs, the problem of management was two-fold. Firstly, this type of organization was absent during the communist times; secondly, there were no properly trained people to lead them. A social group, which pretended to head NGOs, included scientists, especially professors, whose prestige and economic situation were considerably lower in more democratic societies. They were not able to accept the modern way NGOs operate in their country and disliked their mass character, which left no place for scientists: *“everything is organized for amateurs: simple monitoring activities, camps, informal events; in other words the activities in the present NGOs have been developed with the purpose of attracting people”* (former member of LOD). However, the target audience had a different opinion, for example the leader of the School of Younger Ornithologist saw all those informal events, camps or “simple monitoring activities” as a very important and fruitful forms of collaboration between LOD and the school kids: *“if LOD has a project, we try to join it as well; we give some tasks to our kids according to the project or so and we can do a useful job for Lithuania. I think that this cooperation is very important in both ways: us as a base for potential ornithologists and them as intellectual support”*.

The management skills that NGO leaders and staff should possess seemed to be only a matter of intensive and adequate training. In Poland, some leaders have management skills and years of experience of working with volunteers, so they could teach others about the role of a leader: *“Such a coordinator should—in a sense—live for a particular project, but also should be exemplary, calm and disagreeable. These are the very important features of character, he/she should possess. Finally, he/she needs to delegate work to volunteers”* (Leader of Carpatica Operation).

As far as the management of groups of people and motivating them was concerned, two leadership styles were identified during our research. Firstly, the encouragement of people working for the organizations by a system of distinctions, even though this form of attracting people is based on a competitive approach, and may remind one of the symbols and language of the previous socialist epoch [27]. The second method, which does not reflect any kind of awards, is based on friendly contact and communication, and seems to be much more attractive and appreciated by the younger generation. Many youngsters claimed that they would prefer leaders with so-called “soft management skills” rather than a style based on any kind of “artificial” type of motivation. Such a style of communication and motivating volunteers was quite often used in Poland: *“Just to say: ‘I’m glad you came. You are welcome here in the future’ (...)”* (Participant of Carpatica Operation). Thus, it is understood that cooperation and relationships between professionals and amateurs are the main factors that could help to increase public motivation to collaborate. The importance of the ‘deep and enduring ties’, personal status within the group or professional roles, may be more important to participants than the data collection itself [32]. Furthermore, as the Danish case demonstrates a well-considered organizational structure and human capital management might help to gain a greater power and play a significant role on the decision making level: *“<...> if you take the total number of volunteers in these 3 projects and add other minor projects that we have, around 1500 of our members are involved in voluntary activities on a regular basis. So, it’s quite a lot of people, probably 12 % of our membership that are involved in voluntary monitoring activities. But it is also important to say that we can not live without either of those sides, volunteers on the one and professionals on the other side. The reason why we do all this monitoring is not only to activate our members, it’s to provide evidence*

to political decision makers that there are some problems with conservation in Denmark we would like them to focus on. So it's very strong when we go to political decision makers to say that we actually know the number of individuals of this bird and we can see that there is a danger to this bird or to species we would like you to take action. And it makes a big impression on them [decision makers] that we can actually document the state of nature in Denmark." (Director of DOF)

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The main issues on volunteer involvement rooted in post-communist culture seem to be a low interest in nature as a common good, a negative public attitude toward non-materialistic values reflected in the dependency on incomes and a discouraging working climate in the relationship between professionals and amateurs. The latter might be seen as a result of a low level of trust followed by competition instead of cooperation among NGOs and professionals and volunteers, and finally a lack of management and leadership skills within NGOs. As it was pointed out in the theory, a high level of social trust and active public participation is very much related to the traditions of volunteering and participation when members of a society learn to participate by participating. Therefore, building up new social habits in the post-communist societies requires a complex and continuous set of actions at both the macro/national and micro/organizational levels.

The success of volunteer recruitment in post-communistic countries is highly dependent on the success of the democratization process in general. A strengthening of civil consciousness through civic education is needed, which should help to replace the skepticism surrounding volunteering with a more positive attitude toward unpaid activities as a way to work for the common good. All the actions designed to improve the situation in the short term, rather than over a generation, must take into account the differences in the attitudes toward nature and volunteering traditions in post-communistic and non-communistic countries. Our research uncovered that the following sources of problems may sometimes occur at the local organizational level in post-communist countries:

- The erroneous policies adopted by some NGOs, namely: *"first become a member and then we will send you information on birdwatching"* ("semi-professional", LOD).
- The discouraging perception of public participation as forced labor rather than individuals, who *"hate to be stuffed into a frame"* (ornithologist, member of LOD) and *"need to be treated individually"* (Leader of Carpatica Operation).

In this regard, human resource management could be strengthened through better organizational structure and performance (like in DOF case), providing an environment where people with different levels of knowledge, skills and individual motives could be involved in NGOs activities. As long as the generally inadequate approach to nature and to volunteering exists in post-communistic societies, whilst implementing methods to increase public participation, create social bounds, strengthen feelings of belonging and solidarity within the NGO, we recommend three steps:

- Different ways of encouraging interest in nature starting from special games or quizzes using the internet, which is *"a magnet for simple citizens: "get sick for bird watching by playing"* ("semi-professional", LOD) and reaching out to enthusiasts, by making more information available concerning possibilities for participation in monitoring activities on different levels of difficulty.

- Developing and strengthening volunteers' involvement in NGOs based on informal relationships and "using from a particular person those skills and individual competences for the purpose of the organization" (Leader of Carpatica Organization).
- Using mentoring as a method for teaching volunteers—where the more experienced act as teachers or mentors to the less experienced—a practice which is highly developed in Denmark; namely: "a skilled person trains a less skilled person" (Care-taker project co-coordinator, DOF).

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