

## A SWAMP AND A WETLAND – TWO FACES OF WILDERNESS

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents a case study on the relationship between inhabitants of a South Moravian village and the local swamp/wetland. Two different approaches were identified for this particular locality; one was called “everyday” approach and the second “environmental” approach. The disparity of these approaches is documented in the way the individual participants construct, by means of various symbols and meanings, a symbolic system relating to this locality. Environmental experts speak about the “wetland”, whose dominant purpose is life, and they undertake measures for its protection. On the other hand, from the point of view of the everyday approach, the “swamp” is perceived as wilderness, represented by the myth that death is playing its key role. This approach, based on traditional concepts of mythology, is far removed from the environmental approach, which is based on the sign system of science. This disparity then presents a source of misunderstanding and possible conflicts between the individual parties.

**Key words:** swamp, wetland, perception of landscape, wilderness, environmentalism, mythology

### INTRODUCTION

Wetlands belong to the most vulnerable and also the most valuable habitats in the world at present. They represent a great range of habitats with a significantly moist environment, such as spring areas, rivers, pools, and peatlands. Places called “swamps”, “bogs” or “marshes” in everyday language appear to be a special sort of these habitats. In the past, their elimination was intentional, systematic, thorough and independent of any cultural background of time or place. Since they are now endangered, they have become an object of world-wide preservation (the Ramsar Convention) and of environmental protection. Government subsidies are available to preserve them – in the Czech Republic, these include the Ministry of the Environment (ME) Programme for Recovery of River Systems and the ME Landscape Programme.

Since the 1980s the theme of “an environmental problem” has been adopted in the public debate on current social problems in the Czech Republic (Musil 1999). Sociological research indicates that a healthy environment is of important personal value of respondents and that its preservation has to be at the centre of our attention (Keller, Gál, Frič 1996). Nevertheless, there are significant discrepancies between the attitudes of nature conservationists and attitudes we meet with in everyday life.

Being a conservationist struggling for the preservation of one wetland, I was soon overtaken by the lack of understanding and by derision aimed at my activities. Taking into

consideration that “the face of a landscape always relates to lifestyle, and so it is very difficult to preserve it without any help and will of people living there” (Šůlová 2000), doubts gradually came to me whether such preservation activities are sensible. Consequently, the question arose: *What does this locality actually mean to its local inhabitants?*

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted through a qualitative case study, which was conducted during the restoration of a wetland.<sup>1</sup> I had an opportunity to directly observe the reactions of local people to our efforts related to the restoration. From these reactions I am trying to interpret what this locality means in the life of local people.

I chose the strategy of participant observation as the main technique for data collection (Jorgensen 1989). The fact that I was one of the main participants of the restoration made the choice to a large extent possible. In this way the everyday social interaction was the source of most of my knowledge. Other participants of the restoration did not know my identity as a researcher. I played the role of an environmentalist (and so accepted the specific *environmental ideology* [Fine 1998]) and the role of a researcher, too. However, I think this did not prevent me from understanding other people's, activities whose views on the locality (and so accepted *environmental ideology*) were different.

During the research, the analysis of documents was another important source of information. I used written documents related to the restoration, photos from family albums, written sources related to the municipality, local register, etc. A method of a waste analysis – so called *garbage archaeology* – was also marginally applied (Rathje 1974).

## RESULTS

### Interest in a locality as a “swamp” and a “wetland”

The locality being studied is in southern Moravia, approximately one kilometre from the village of Drnovice near Vyškov. The area includes several pools surrounded by trees and dense scrub vegetation in the middle of an intensively cultivated field. When trying to re-establish the ecological functions of the wetland I was confronted with two opposite attitudes towards this locality. I call the relationship motivated by efforts of the wetland protection as “the environmental attitude”. “The everyday attitude” is then for me the traditional one settled through years, following well-known norms, rules and values of the everyday world of local people, fixed in their everyday awareness and expressed in the vernacular language. The restoration project represented a radical challenge to the “everyday attitude”. The difference in the attitudes towards the locality is clear even on the verbal level (in denotation).

### “Swamp”

Local people will not call the revitalised place in words other than “The Cesspools”. The name itself is revealing about the character of the images and practices connected with it. “A cesspool”, as it is generally known, means an object of an off-putting appearance and smell that serves for collecting faeces<sup>2</sup>, in other words, a septic tank. Local people mostly associate “filthiness”, “dirt”, “pigsty”, “slop”, “dump”, “a smelly whole with mess”, “stinky crater”, “faecal cart”, “muddy pool of liquid manure” with the word “cesspool”. When

speaking about the locality in any way other than “The Cesspools”, it is mostly called “a swamp” and rarely “a bog”, “marsh”, “pools” or “small ponds”:

“It is a swamp; I wouldn’t cross it.”

“It is The Cesspools, a swamp and that’s that!”

“Drnovice swamp – The Cesspools in Kopaniny” (this name refers to the title of a painting by a local amateur artist).

The following images are common in the childhood memories of local people: “It babbled there, we used to throw stones in it, a swamp, black mess” or “You would always spit in it and it took two days for it to go down.”

The area, sometimes called “a swamp” and more often called “The Cesspools”, represents a generally known and important place for village inhabitants (at least for the generation of my age and older). In the terminology of mental maps, according to Lynch (1960:48), we would refer to a space-dominating landmark. A frequent association of ideas with this locality is fear and death, which contribute to its *genius loci* (Norberg-Schulz 1979).

### **“Wetland”**

While local people talk about “The Cesspools” and “a swamp”, the place was always called “a wetland” in relation to environmental activities. In the files of the “significant landscape components” (SLC) register the place was recorded as “SLC n. 266 – *a wetland*”, which served as the name for the revitalising activity – “restoration of *a wetland*” – and was used by all environmental experts who we came into contact with.

The environmental moniker “wetland” was practically unknown to all the local people. The usual reaction to it was surprise: “A wetland? What wetland?” Later the term was used by local people in an ironic way: “Well, it is actually a wetland now!” or it continued to meet with lack of understanding: “How do you dare to call the Cesspools a wetland?”

The fact that the place is a significant landscape component was unknown to all, even to the village representatives, members of the Commission on Environment included. The term “significant landscape component” as well as “wetland” made an exotic impression in communication.

Before starting work on the restoration there were two information boards posted with the following text: “AWARENESS – Drnovice wetland (“The Cesspools”) and surrounding vegetation is because of its ecological importance registered as a so-called significant landscape component which is being protected according to the law n. 114/1992 Coll., on protection of nature and landscape. Any damage, pollution as well as water drainage is strictly forbidden. District Authorities Drnovice.”

The signs describing the importance of the place aroused amusement and surprise in passersby: “I must say I couldn’t prevent myself from laughing when I had read it for the first time,” or “While I was reading it I saw it for the first time – a wetland? It is The Cesspools, a swamp for me and that’s that! I didn’t see it was called a wetland.”

### **A “swamp” and a “wetland” – death and life**

Different ways of integrating a swamp/wetland into symbolical worlds – the everyday and the environmental – agree with different denotations on the verbal level. I will try to

demonstrate this through different meanings that particular participants associate with the place, and through which they construct different symbolical orders related to the place.

### A “swamp” as a symbol of death

In the everyday understanding, a “swamp” is a symbol of death. Death appeared in conversations in various ways. The first association of ideas for both old and young people was perhaps the most famous tale “About a drowned lime burner” (Klvač 2006:57-64) that every respondent associated in relation to the place.

Lime burners used to sell unslaked lime, which since the Middle Ages was used for building and whitening houses. They transported it on carts from lime works in the Moravian karst into surrounding communities. The tale says that a lime burner was overcome with alcoholic spirits at a local distillery after a successful deal and forgot to give his tired horse water before setting off. Going back home, he fell asleep and his thirsty horse ran with the cart into one of the pools where the swamp swallowed both of them. There are several versions of this tragic event told among Drnovice inhabitants by word of mouth up to the present day. Although they differ in details the theme is similar – the tragic death by drowning of a “lime burner” (“carter”, “coachman”, “farmer”) in the swamp.

A cross on the bank of the swamp stands as a memorial of his death (according to the word of mouth) to this day. It gives the place a character of its own, expressed for example by the statement “It makes such an unpleasant feeling to have the cross over there.” The symbol of a cross represented the locality on maps as early as the year 1740. It may be due to the cross that the tale is still alive in the village. The cross represents tragedy in the eyes of local people. At the same time it is one of a few tales told in Drnovice and it is by no means the most famous one. It is usually the first idea in connection with the place, no matter if old people or children speak about it:

“I have The Cesspools connected with the tale, how the carter was drowned there, in my life, in my whole life, I wouldn’t go there.”

“Since I was young, I have always remembered that the farmer with the horses was drowned there.”

“That lime burner was drowned there – he slept, his horses knew where to go and that they had to stop at the pub. Highlanders used to go through Kopaniny, it was a shorter way. They would sing: lime, lime, little lime and people came with sacks.”

“A lime burner fell in there at night, it was dark, my grandma used to say it.”

We met with different kinds of references to the unhappy lime burner constantly during the restoration. A remark of the sort: “So you are going to dig out that lime burner” was popular before digging pools started. Over time, the questions changed: “Have you found the lime burner?” “Well, have you found at least a bit of the cart?” (smile) after the pools were deepened.

Except for the well-known tale old people keep other stories how ammunition found in the surrounding fields was thrown into the pools of the swamp after World War II: “You can’t dig in there, there are bombs from the war, they haven’t gone off”. “People went round and threw all they had in their fields into The Cesspools” (referring to ammunition).

“Anything was rolled into it after the war.” In this context a local historian writes in his book about village history:

“In The Cesspools there is ammunition, which was cleared from the fields after World War II, thrown in. Death still lurks there although it is dozing now.” (Čermák 1997: 96)<sup>3</sup>

Fear and death creep around the place from many sides. One can find data about deaths by drowning in the pools of the swamp in the local register:

“Pregnant with her own cousin, she was, and therefore choked and drowned in a pool at the Cross at Končiny (The Ends) or Kněží háj (Priest’s Grove)”. (Report from 1899)

The place plays an important role among other landmarks in the near village surroundings. *Genius loci* is present in answers of respondents recorded during observation. It is most clearly expressed by the following statement: “The place is a real exception; man even does not have to be particularly sensitive. You are overcome with a freezing feeling, something very holy.” Fear seems to be the most characteristic attribute of the *genius loci* of the “swamp”. Respondents expressed this sentiment with the following words:

“I was always scared as a child when we used to go there with my parents, they would say – Look, the lime burner was drowned there.”

“As a child I was scared.”

“Such fear comes from here, I was always frightened.”

“We were always scared when we used to rake grass over there when we were girls.”

The constitutive form creating the motive of fear is in relation to our “swamp” the motive of depth. The source of anxieties expressed by respondents is worry of “drowning”, “falling in”, “diving” – downwards, into the depths. The motive of depth is then the core of a broader swamp myth which is a specific language form constructed with the help of other meanings in the everyday language.

This motive of depth is represented for example by the following quotation: “The lime burner fell in there, so deep it used to be.” Visitors, who came during the restoration, described straightaway their ideas connected with this place: “It is 35m deep here”. “I was always frightened to tread here that I would fall in”. “Let’s see if it falls in?” Associations related to ammunition from World War II were represented also by the following statements: “A tank even fell in there. They found a piece of a caterpillar track and German helmets”. “In the back of The Cesspools there, under the pine tree, a tank is drowned.” Revealing secrets of this depth attracted several curious people who wanted to find out the truth: “Since you were a child you remembered that a farmer with his horses was drowned there so I walked around to find out how deep it actually is.”

## A “wetland” as a symbol of life

The place gains a completely opposite meaning in the environmental context. A wetland is a symbol of life because it is “an environment for reproduction of amphibians”, “an important place of refuge for many species”, and “a nesting opportunity for several bird species”.

The text of a cartographic research on the “ecological importance of a significant landscape component” – “The Drnovice wetland” by E. Balátová from 1987 shows the environmental perspective constructing completely different symbolic order related to the place:

Pools with companion wetland vegetation in the route “Kopaniny u lomu”. The area with surrounding vegetation is about 0.85 ha. Location: about 1 km northwest of Drnovice along the cart road leading from Drnovice to Ježkovice. Land register: Drnovice. This land component has developed on brown forest earth, geological basement is culm. Wetland plant associations are linked to the small open water area of pools and are composed among others by: cattail (*Typha latifolia*, *angustifolia*), sedge (*Carex gracilis*), marsh poa (*Poa palustris*), loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). In the higher part of the relief there dominate: thistle (*Cirsium canum*) and species of oat meadows / oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), meadow fescue (*Festuca pratensis*), marguerite (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) etc. /. The locality is surrounded by woody vegetation; from the trees and bushes found let me mention: rose, whitethorn, lilac, pecker, wild cherry, willows, maple (*Acer negundo*), aspen-tree, acacia and spruce. Its importance is mainly zoological /a stop for migrants, an environment for amphibians’ reproduction /. Possible threat: landfill, elimination of woody species. Protective measure: to be left in original condition.

The text was probably the only scientific article about the locality before the revitalisation started. I found it in the archive of the Department of the Environment of the District Council in Vyškov when collecting materials for the application for the government subsidy from the ME Landscape Programme. As stated above none of the local people were aware of the fact that the locality was registered as a so-called significant landscape component that, “being a valuable component of the landscape from the ecological, geomorphologic and aesthetic point of view creates the landscape character of its own or contributes to sustain the landscape stability”. I must admit that, to my great delight, this finding surprised even me.

## Frogs and fish

### Frogs

Saying that a “swamp” is a symbol of death and a “wetland” is a symbol of life, then in a certain sense the symbol of both is a frog.

Frogs belong to this kind of habitat (a “swamp”, a “bog”, a “fen”) even in the associations of ideas of the local people. These associations can be illustrated with the name of one part of the local woods that used to be called “At the Frog” because “it is wet there, a bog, I mean”. Taking the “swamp” into consideration, the second most frequent representation in minds of the observed (after the drowned lime burner) was the frog. In the appropriate annual season, the “swamp” used to identify itself through a loud display of frogs whose croaking reached even the village. One curious elderly gentleman who came to

see the place after the restoration remembered it with the following words: “In summer one could hear the frogs at Křivda<sup>4</sup> the whole evening; it used to be frog heaven here.” On another occasion when researching what used to live in “The Cesspools”, I was given a similar answer from another person: “Well, frogs only, we weren’t interested in it at that time. Frogs, how they used to croak, one could hear them even in the village. Well, there had to be enough of them.”

This very creature (a frog) and its larval stages (tadpoles) were the theme of many conversations related to the swamp/wetland during the restoration, so they have to be mentioned in this context. The difference in attitudes towards these amphibians is again similar to the two different ways of perceiving the place as a whole.

The immediate reaction of conversation partners to the fact that the reason for the revitalisation is amphibians can be described as surprise: “Because of frogs?” (often said with a smile). Sometimes commentary follows, such as: “After all we always used to go shooting [frogs], with an air rifle, you couldn’t make out whether it ricocheted or went through” was added with a laugh. “Frogs” were the traditional enterprise of the local youth. They would go “to throw stones” and “shoot them with a little catapult”. The confession of one former participant in these games is a nice example: “Well, only I threw a half of a truck of stones at frogs.” During the restoration there often occurred cases when my environmental interest in these creatures became the object of mockery<sup>5</sup> – “He goes to “The Cesspools” with a note book to count tadpoles, fool.” With respect to my activities I was called “Mr. Tadpole”, “a tadpole” and “a frog catcher”<sup>6</sup>. No wonder that an answer to my sigh over the extreme draught that spring, when the level of pools was dropping every day, was: “Frogs don’t have to live; we need something else to grow and not tadpoles”. When the pools completely dried up in June, the situation was commented on with the words: “And now you have no frogs, hah, it’s all over!” (said a visitor to the place, laughing).

However, this attitude is in sharp contrast to the environmental perspective in which frogs (called “amphibians” in most declarations by environmentalists) represent creatures of special care and protection. Almost all amphibians living in this country are considered to be “species of special protection”, to various degrees, including “very” and “critically” endangered, and are under the protection of law. The locality was registered as “a significant landscape component” mainly for its “zoological importance” – an environment for amphibian reproduction. This fact served as justification for the application to the government for a subsidy to support the revitalisation from The ME Landscape Programme. In describing the measures and justification on the application form, an expert in the field of ecological consultancy wrote for our association: “Its main importance is in the existence of the pools that are a place for reproduction of several species of amphibians”.

### ***Fish***

The opposite of everyday attitudes towards frogs is represented by fish. When talking about frogs conversations often turned to fish: “And will carp be in there?” A thought – or a piece of advice – in slightly different versions was expressed several times (from incidental visitors as well as from colleagues actively taking part in the revitalisation): “We could place some fish there, a few carp.” Other times stocking fish was expected together with deepening of the pools, as if it should go without saying: “You’ll stock fish in there, won’t you?”

Thoughts of stocking fish in the place were not anything new during the restoration. They regularly appeared in our conversations about “The Cesspools” and were our wish from the long past. Even today I remember very well how we, being boys, stocked the pools with a lot of small fishes (we knew from our parents’ stories that they once did the same) that we

took from splashes left after fishing out a pond in a neighbouring village. The fish typically lived to the next summer when all the water in the pools dried up.

In contrast, environmental experts (such as employees of the Agency for Protection of Nature and the Landscape) several times expressed caution against stocking pools with fish because it would be a disaster for amphibians, in their opinion. The risk was that at the early stages of their development, amphibians are easy and welcomed food for fish. However, their worries were fulfilled in the end. In the spring of the following year a local devoted fisherman told me proudly that he had stocked “The Cesspools” with fish. When I asked him about the motives for his deed, he gave the “logical” answer: “When there’s water, why not to put fish in there, right?” When I asked him about the number and species of fish, he said: “Only two Crucian carps, very little ones.” He reacted to my warning of impropriety of his deed and to my request not to do it again with a question: “Why should fish do any harm in there?!”

The typical positive evaluation of fish (as opposed to the negative evaluation of frogs) can be illustrated, in my opinion, with one verse of a poem written by a local poet who was also one of the most active people in the restoration. In January, when plans for the restoration were only being made, he expressed the beauty of the place with the following words:

In Kopaniny in the bosom of Nature,  
Two water pools are there,  
That a man will hardly ever see.  
Carps’re swimming in water crystal clear.

After six months of work and continual debates on the topic of amphibians, their endangerment and significance, the famous verse about carp appeared in an altered form in a new poem glorifying the native village. It was written for a meeting of village countrymen.

In Kopaniny in the bosom of nature,  
Tree frogs and sooths are swimming.  
Two pools are there where evening after evening  
a concert frogs are giving.

The aesthetic value represented by “crystal clear water” and “swimming carps” in the first poem was later (perhaps under the influence of change in attitudes towards frogs during the restoration) expressed by “swimming frogs” and “concert giving”.

### **Elimination and restoration**

The different ways of integrating a “swamp” and a “wetland” (through different meanings, e.g. symbols of death and life) into different symbolical orders – everyday and environmental ones – is connected with different practices in reality that are applied in relation to this place – its historical elimination and restoration.

#### ***Elimination***

In the long-term perspective the place was going to disappear. The impact of long-term sedimentation in the pools was lowering of the water level. In recent years, both pools were completely without water for most of the year. Apart from ecological factors that played an important role in the process (e.g. settling of rotting leaves and branches from surrounding



trees at the bottom of the pools), we can claim that local inhabitants significantly contributed to devastation of the place. I came to this conclusion based on respondents' remarks and from the analysis of garbage found when digging the pools. The garbage was a particularly valuable document – “a material proof of behaviour” – of the relation between local people and the “swamp”.<sup>7</sup>

It is obvious from statements made by local people that the “swamp” first of all served as a waste site for all kinds of waste (biological waste of farmers working on surrounding fields, ammunition from World War II, and waste from households):

“People went around and threw all they had found in their fields into The Cesspools” (after World War II).

“Somebody threw a dead dog in there”.

“Anything was piled in there – a complete dump”.

“Also the dust carts used to empty there”.

“Everything was removed in there, all rubbish”.

Substantial impacts on the swamp/wetland included pollution with ecologically harmful waste coming from a local distillery that disposed of fruit fermentation, which was disposed of there by a faecal cart in the 1980s. Almost all participants remembered it. They said one could have smelt “an awful pong” of fumes of alcohol at a long distance. This devastation took place with the knowledge of many local people. Only an elderly countryman living a long time in Brno is said to have stopped it. When visiting his native village he also went to the swamp/wetland where, according to one eyewitness, “he became angry and shouted: How come you allow this mess to be brought in here? He went to the Local Authorities and they banned it afterwards.”

Irrigation and drainage of surrounding fields, also done in the 1980s, was not good for the water level because in periods of melting snow and heavy rains the underground water was drained from the surroundings of the swamp/wetland. A member of the association remembered it: “We are trying to fill a pot with a hollow” when we worked as volunteers there on another occasion.

It was discovered from conversations that an overall elimination of the place (its filling in and subsequent ploughing up) was said to have been planned: “They should have finished with it here. Arable land should have been here when Mr. Mačkal was the chairman of the local Standard Farming Cooperative.” This happened to a similar place within close proximity to the swamp/wetland. It was called “Bartošek’s ravines” and nowadays it exists only in older maps and photos.

### **Restoration**

The environmental perspective adds a new dimension to the relationship to the place. “A wetland” being a habitat is the object of experts' interest, study and endeavours to understand its position and functions in the law of ecological processes. Its “irreplaceable importance” (e.g. “a guarantee of great diversity of biological communities” and “stabilisation of water regime in the landscape”) is considered to be a necessary precondition for “a healthy environment” (Hudec et al. 1995). It represents “an ecologically valuable part of the landscape”. “Significant landscape components are protected against

damage and devastation” according to law n.114/1992 Coll. on protection of nature and landscape. “Protection of wetland habitats is becoming one of the most important activities connected with efforts to preserve nature” (Hudec et al. 1995). The restoration of our “wetland” is a concrete example of these efforts.

When digging the pools we eagerly waited for secrets hidden under the surface. To the great surprise of all involved there appeared to be a solid sandy bottom – without any doubt the original bottom – under several centimetres of thick sediments. In a few parts of the pools the depth reached about 180 cm. Due to a period of great draught we did not discover a drop of water. This fact surprised as well as disappointed many of us.

“Since I was a child I have thought how deep it is. Now we can see it.”

“All saying it will be deep as Hartlova or Libuša. A shoal it is. As a boy I thought about the lime burner who drowned there so it must have been deep.”

“It is only shallow water, not a swamp!”

“I thought it was deeper and it would be just enough for frogs.” (laughing)

“Well, it wasn’t very deep here, was it?”

The unexpected shallowness of the pools started to undermine the belief of some people that the said tale about the drowned lime burner was true: “Do you think somebody could have drowned in there?” “The carter?” “Well, it’s too shallow, isn’t it?” Frequent reactions were doubts whether the pools were excavated to their original depth. The typical statement was: “You aren’t at the bottom yet, it used to be much deeper.” However, even after clearing the area of both pools the place did not lose its genius loci: “We’ve been there with our child; it is still such an unpleasant feeling over there; the little cross is still there; we’ve walked all around.”

## CONCLUSION

“Environmental” and “everyday” attitudes towards a “wetland” or a “swamp” represent two completely different ways of *naturework* (Fine 1998). The difference of both approaches reveals itself in the ways that particular participants construct the symbolical world related to the place (Eder 1996). Environmentalists talk about a “wetland” with the dominant meaning being *life* and make an effort to protect it. In contrast, in the everyday interpretation a “swamp” is represented by a myth in which *death* plays the main role. This kind of perception originating in traditional mythical images is very different from the environmental perspective based on the sign system of science.

In the everyday perspective, the large extent of illegibility is characteristic of the symbolical world of a “swamp”. The place being un-safe, related to death (“death lurks there”), inaccessible (“I was always frightened to tread in there in case I would fall in”), untidy (“The Cesspools”, “mess”, “dump”), unlimited (“bottomless depth”), dark (“black pigsty”) represents a typical wilderness for local people.

The typical way in which one speaks about a “swamp” is a myth considered to be a specific literary form related to empirical facts (“death by drowning”, “disposed ammunition”), however, with a specific relation to reality (“35m deep”, “a drowned tank”),

carrying an important symbolic message (“about a dangerous swamp where one has to be careful”), deeply rooted (“You aren’t at the bottom yet.”), passed on from one generation to another (“my grandma used to say it”), which does not have an author, only a narrator (Justoň, Nakonečný 1996: 657-658). This myth fills a significant part of the semantic field of a “swamp” for local people.

Associations with images related to the ecological functions of the place are absent in the everyday communication when the place is called a “swamp”. The ecological importance of a “wetland” is missing in the everyday symbolic order of a “swamp”. Its ecological condition as a landscape component is then not understood as “an environmental problem”. The meanings of a “swamp” given through this cultural pattern then predetermine the relationship of local people to this place.

During the research on the restoration a discrepancy between the environmental common sense of those involved and the modern environmental knowledge of experts was observed (emerged). It revealed itself not only in the dilemma of the object of protection (no to a swamp” and “frogs”, but yes to a “wetland” and “amphibians”), but also in the means of protection. In connection with a swamp/wetland it was not only the matter of the contrasting relationships to fish and frogs. Different opinions on how much to deepen the pools or on whether to purposefully (and in essence illegally) replace frog eggs in the swamp/wetland (“to have more of them”) by a member of the association are other examples. The difference becomes a potential source of difficulties and misunderstandings between the particular sides involved – e.g. laymen and experts – because it is clear for local people that “experts” from some city “know nothing about it”.<sup>8</sup>

### **Commentary:**

1. The term “restoration” represents for me a complex of measures leading to re-establishing ecological functions of the place. The main activity of the restoration was elimination of sediments in the pools of the wetland, its deepening and widening to the original condition. Our civic association Drnka was granted a financial subsidy for the restoration work from The ME Landscape Program in 2000.
2. Faeces refer to the Underworld in the deep psychological interpretation. “Frogs of Aristophanes” describes a swamp of eternally flowing faeces (Hillman 1979). Swamps are considered to be the entrance to hell. In Belgium small dark fens with muddy water are called “Helleput” (Huünnerkopf 1927).
3. Digging the pools, we did find several pieces of active ammunition from World War II that were defused by a professional. There remains the question to what extent the myth of the “bottomless depth” (see below) related to death was the inspiration for “clearing” dangerous ammunition into the “swamp”.
4. “Křivda” is the local name for one part of the village of Drnovice.
5. A local inhabitant, taking it in good humour, offered to me that he would come to help us only if we established a “frog farm” in the place and “kept frog chickens” for meat “with legs as of a chicken”.
6. In Czech “a frog catcher” has the pejorative second meaning of a man whose conduct does not require approval in the eyes of others. A loser.
7. The analysis of the garbage found when digging in the pools can be considered a specific method for the study of documents about the relationship between local people and the place. The archaeology of garbage as a source for interpreting patterns of behaviour is usually presented as a rather exotic, marginal method in standard textbooks on sociological methodology (e.g. Disman 1993). Its practical

use is in the field of so-called *archaeology of the present – garbage archaeology* or *garbology* (see Rathje 1974; Matoušek, Sýkorová 1998; Matoušek 2000).

8. The author wish to acknowledge the editing assistance of Benjamin Vail.

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