



T H E T R I P L E I N R O M

**A trans-boundary multicultural
and environmental viability
initiative in the RUS-PL-LT
Vistynets Lake / Rominten
Forest area**



THE TRIPLE IN ROM

Some

keywords:

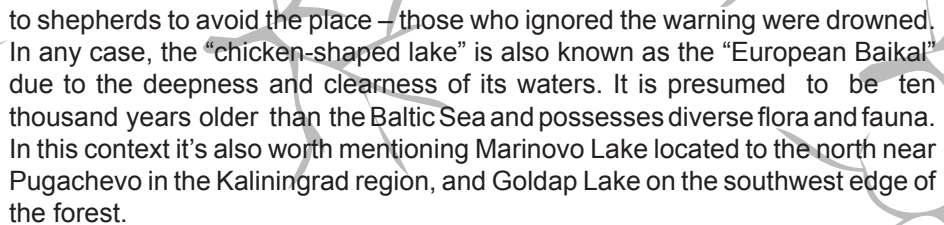
Closing the gap between natural and cultural; ecological and slow art that creates resilient and innovative practices capable of adapting to complex transformations on a variety of scales; integration of social and economic life with the environment in ways that enhance ecosystems rather than degrade or destroy them; nodes of meaningful and enduring lifestyles, life-supporting systems and process.

B a c k g r o u n d :

Straddling the borders of Russia, Poland and Lithuania in the southeastern Baltic region lies an old and historically significant area of woodland known as the Rominten/Romincka Forest (Polish Puszcza Romincka, Russian Красный лес/Krasnolesye, "Red Forest"). The Rominter Heide as it is known in German historically fell within the Nadruvian landscape of Baltic Prussia. Rominten derives from the Old Prussian syllable rom, meaning "calm" or "holy," and is associated with pagan worship. The area was used as a hunting paradise by the Prussian and German aristocracy from the sixteenth century onwards. After World War II the Potsdam Agreement divided East Prussia and thus the Rominten forest area between Poland and the Soviet Union.

Now, since January 2012, the central zone of the Russian part of the forest enjoys special protection status as the Vistynets natural park, which has limited access due to its location in the border region. The Polish section of the forest is preserved as a landscape park - Puszcza Romincka (Park Krajobrazowy Puszczy Rominckiej), and in Lithuania falls within the Vištytis Regional Park, established to preserve the coast of Lake Vistynets/Vištytis.

Lake Vistynets (Russian Виштынецкое озеро, Lithuanian Vištyčio ežeras) forms the landscape of the national parks on both its Russian and Lithuanian shores, with the border between these countries dividing the lake into Russian and Lithuanian waters. Višta is "chicken" in Lithuanian – and indeed when viewed on the map the lake looks almost chicken-shaped. Višta can also mean "bird" more broadly, and an old legend of the origin of the lake's Lithuanian name has it that birds flew over the fields where the lake was soon to be, screaming a warning



to shepherds to avoid the place – those who ignored the warning were drowned. In any case, the “chicken-shaped lake” is also known as the “European Baikal” due to the deepness and clearness of its waters. It is presumed to be ten thousand years older than the Baltic Sea and possesses diverse flora and fauna. In this context it’s also worth mentioning Marinovo Lake located to the north near Pugachevo in the Kaliningrad region, and Goldap Lake on the southwest edge of the forest.

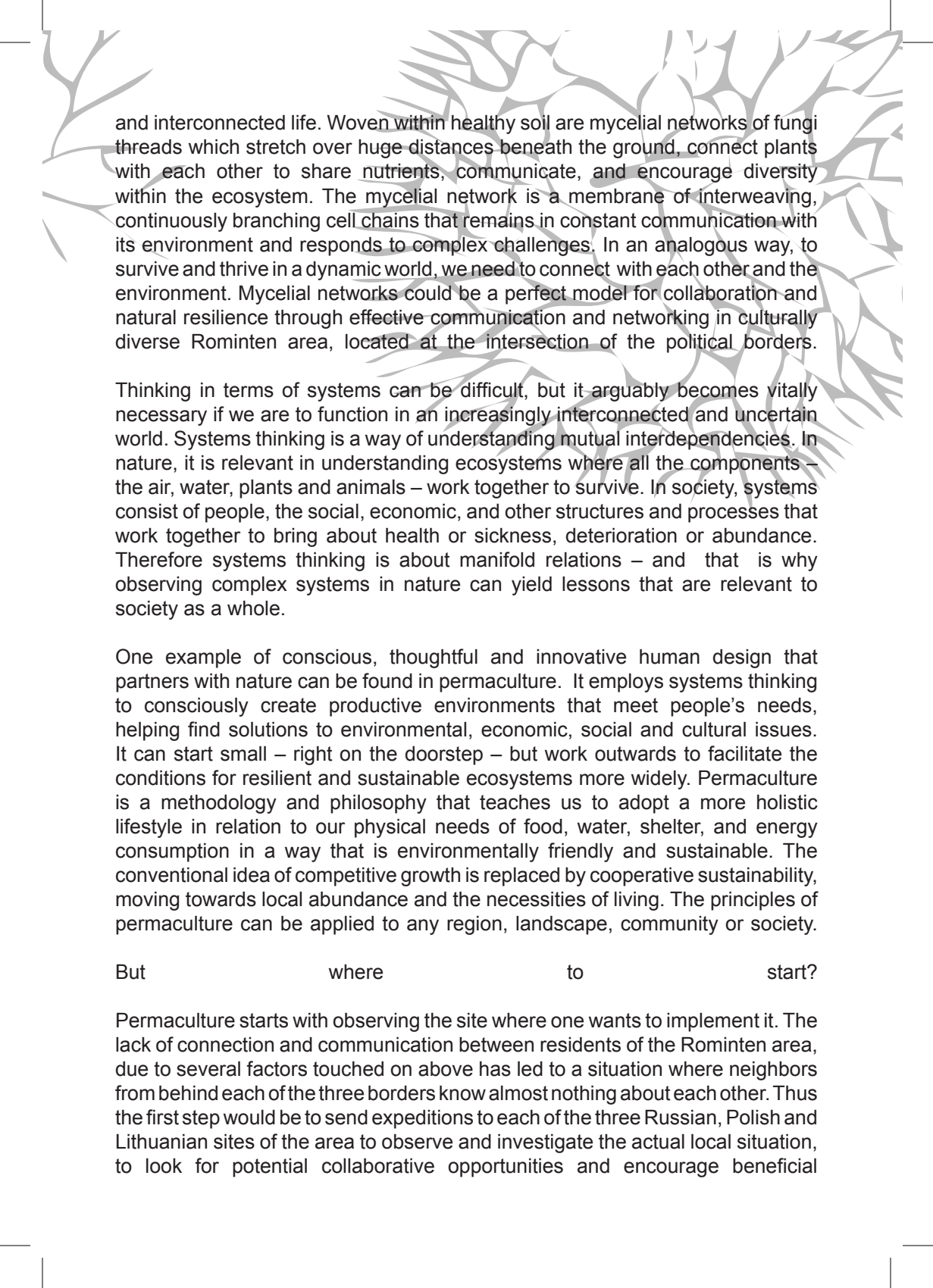
Despite the convergence of borders in the Rominten area, it is an ecologically unified expanse of natural and historical complexity, with many rare species of plants, animals and humans for whom political boundaries are irrelevant in their ongoing lives. Furthermore, it is a transitional area between the central European deciduous forests and the conifer forests of northeastern Europe. This rare climatic constellation, geographical features that formed during the ice age and very diverse soil conditions, encourage a strong tendency towards migration and mixture of species.

However, the tendency towards social, educational exchange and cultural mixture between the neighboring territories of the Rominten area is weak. A vision of “wholeness” from within and outside the area is missing with respect to institutions on all three sides of the borders, as well as local residents, and communities. Indeed there are many challenging issues to be considered: visas, limited access in the border region, non-transparency of administrative processes, and other sometimes illogical regulations disconnected with nature and needs of rural residents. All this leads to imbalances in the people and ecosystems of the area, and hindering social and economic development. These factors constitute the real challenge for this project. To face this challenge, our aims are to spark a transition from the current artificial state of disunity towards cooperative and productive relations between 1) individuals in each of the three political territories intersecting Rominten, and 2) between people and nature regardless of “territory,” to encourage the wholeness through the elaboration of natural models and principles.

The Rominten heath is a whole natural territory – so why not to learn from the woodland and nature itself? The invisible cycles of nature have sustained the balance of so many different living and non-living systems since the beginning of time – despite the presence of human borders, laws, and harmful interventions. If we can just recognise that we are part of nature and aim to follow its patterns through an ongoing process of learning, we are more likely to find inspiration for the transition from bureaucratic structures and hierarchies to webs and networks.

And what are the possible models, systems, methods and principles?

Take the soil in the forest as an example. It is alive with a network of diverse



and interconnected life. Woven within healthy soil are mycelial networks of fungi threads which stretch over huge distances beneath the ground, connect plants with each other to share nutrients, communicate, and encourage diversity within the ecosystem. The mycelial network is a membrane of interweaving, continuously branching cell chains that remains in constant communication with its environment and responds to complex challenges. In an analogous way, to survive and thrive in a dynamic world, we need to connect with each other and the environment. Mycelial networks could be a perfect model for collaboration and natural resilience through effective communication and networking in culturally diverse Rominten area, located at the intersection of the political borders.

Thinking in terms of systems can be difficult, but it arguably becomes vitally necessary if we are to function in an increasingly interconnected and uncertain world. Systems thinking is a way of understanding mutual interdependencies. In nature, it is relevant in understanding ecosystems where all the components – the air, water, plants and animals – work together to survive. In society, systems consist of people, the social, economic, and other structures and processes that work together to bring about health or sickness, deterioration or abundance. Therefore systems thinking is about manifold relations – and that is why observing complex systems in nature can yield lessons that are relevant to society as a whole.

One example of conscious, thoughtful and innovative human design that partners with nature can be found in permaculture. It employs systems thinking to consciously create productive environments that meet people's needs, helping find solutions to environmental, economic, social and cultural issues. It can start small – right on the doorstep – but work outwards to facilitate the conditions for resilient and sustainable ecosystems more widely. Permaculture is a methodology and philosophy that teaches us to adopt a more holistic lifestyle in relation to our physical needs of food, water, shelter, and energy consumption in a way that is environmentally friendly and sustainable. The conventional idea of competitive growth is replaced by cooperative sustainability, moving towards local abundance and the necessities of living. The principles of permaculture can be applied to any region, landscape, community or society.

But where to start?

Permaculture starts with observing the site where one wants to implement it. The lack of connection and communication between residents of the Rominten area, due to several factors touched on above has led to a situation where neighbors from behind each of the three borders know almost nothing about each other. Thus the first step would be to send expeditions to each of the three Russian, Polish and Lithuanian sites of the area to observe and investigate the actual local situation, to look for potential collaborative opportunities and encourage beneficial

relations. The information gathered can help to generate ideas and test them in action or to use this information in a multi-method case study to collect data that may complement or set in perspective data obtained by other means.

E x p e d i t i o n s :

In total, three expeditions/working groups are planned, with up to 10 participants each. The groups will consist of a mixture of internal and external cross-disciplinary researchers (in art, science, technology, sociology, architecture...), and motivated participants from all three sites, united by an interest in ecological approaches. They might be specialized in a particular topic of interest, but in close relation to the site. The local connections will be organized with the help of partner institutions that will aim to accommodate the interests of the expeditions.

The expeditions are ideal for both amateurs and experts who are interested in the symbiotic characteristics of natural and human systems and wish to pursue research in any one of the following locations: 1) Vistynets natural park, Village Krasnolesye, Kaliningrad Oblast/Russia, 2) Landscape Conservation Park Puszcza Romincka, Gołdap district/Poland, and 3) Vištytis Regional Park, Vištytis, including its neighborhood in Lithuania.

A i m s :

The main purpose of the expeditions will be to gain knowledge and the materials that can facilitate exchange and the growth of more creative ideas. To define common interests between the three sites and try to connect what can be connected for further joint activities. At the end of each expedition, participants are encouraged to contribute their documentation, evaluations and creative achievements to the online platform/web site.

The project aims to foster an environment of collaboration and encourage conditions for further development of the Rominten forest area in accordance with ecological and systems thinking principles. It seeks to open up alternative perspectives on isolated country areas as potential resources for ecological living, learning, creating and traveling. Some examples are eco-villages, eco-farming based on principals of permaculture, cultural residencies focused on the environment, eco-tourism as travels for knowledge, rural art-labs, living architecture, etc.

D u r a t i o n :

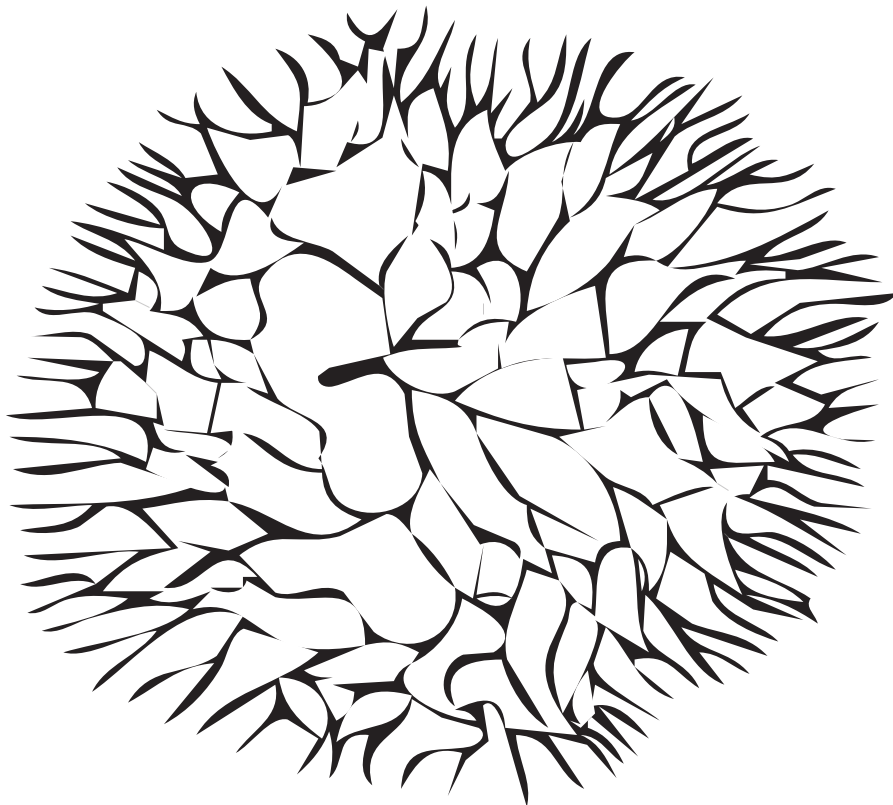
The timeframe of the project is expected to be from August 2013 to August 2014 – but it will hopefully become ongoing and “on-growing” for a much longer duration after the initial project is officially complete.

The expeditions will take place in the Fall of 2013 (the first one based in Krasnolesye on the Russian side), spring (Poland and/or Lithuania), and summer 2014 (Poland and/or Lithuania). More specific timeframes and focus of the expeditions will be worked out during the summer of 2013.

Co-operative

Partners:

Information Office of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Kaliningrad	(RUS)
Fundacja Puszczy Rominckiej/Romincka Forest Fund	(PL)
Vistytis Regional Park	(LT)
Ecomuseum Vistynetsky, Krasnolesye	(RUS)
Tangential e.V.	(D)



*Text & Design by Natalia Borissova / NGO Tangential
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The project “Development of transborder RUS-PL-LT natural area Vistynets (Vistyts) Lake / Rominten (Krasnolesye) Forest through regional interdisciplinary partnership” commenced in 2012 and will be developed within the framework of the SEBA initiative for Modernization of the South Eastern Baltic Area through regional cooperation, launched by the Council of the Baltic Sea States

SEBA

Modernization Partnership
for the South Eastern
Baltic Area



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