

*Teaching Local Anthropology on Climate: An Example of Field Schools in the LTSER Region Neusiedler See-Seewinkel*

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This lecture highlights the creation of field schools in the National Park Neusiedler See-Seewinkel by incorporating ethnographic research into the emerging Long-Term Socio-Ecological Research (LTSER) platform, together with Gertraud Seiser from the University of Vienna. The Northern Burgenland region in Eastern Austria, which includes the cross-border National Park, is renowned for its unique landscape and biodiversity as a UNESCO World Heritage and Ramsar site. The park's distinctive features comprise a vast steppe lake with shallow water depths, wetlands, salt pans, and meadows that offer diverse habitats for flora and fauna. Despite this, the region has had a drainage policy in place for over 150 years and underwent a significant landscape transformation by the Esterházy, a powerful noble family that played a significant role in Burgenland and other parts of Europe, from salt steppe and lowland moorland to heathland for cattle breeding, industrial agriculture, and small-scale viticulture. The province was the top emigration area of Austria due to numerous waves of emigration in the 19th and 20th centuries caused by economic upheaval, political instability, poverty, or religious persecution, with a considerable portion of the population currently commuting to Vienna to find work. As a result of the possible drying up of the lake and salt lakes and the increasing challenges due to the impact of climate change on this water-sensitive region, the Seewinkel, a border region between East and West, is a focal point for perceiving multiple crises of our current time, with numerous uncertainties regarding democratic-political dynamics, socio-ecological issues, and right-wing populist developments.

The aim of the field schools is to introduce students to different forms of qualitative and ethnographic research and to train them practically in these methods. The course focuses on the perception of the environment in and around the Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park and involves collaboration with different stakeholders, including the administration and management of the National Park, tourism stakeholders, ornithologists, biologists, breeders of "old breeds," conventional and organic farmers and farms, natural scientists, border controls, "normal" users, tourists, and locals. The presentation also discusses the importance of identifying anthropological research questions relevant to both the LTSER platform and the region. The article argues that a transdisciplinary approach that takes seriously the exchange between science, policy, and residents cannot do without ethnography to make visible and discuss the conflicts between the different interests of numerous actors. Implementing transdisciplinarity poses challenges, particularly with respect to positions of power and interests. It is important to acknowledge these challenges and develop appropriate strategies to overcome them. Ethnography can play an important role in developing a deeper comprehension of the region. Transdisciplinarity is not only used as a method and starting point to ensure that scientific findings are heard in society and translated into sustainable decisions. It is also crucial to involve non-academic stakeholders in developing the research questions and formulating the perceived problems on an equal footing with scientists from different disciplines.