LIVING LAB OF GERMANY

Restoration for the future WETLANDS
www.alfawetlands.eu

Succow Stiftung — PARTNER IN THE — GREIFSWALD MIRE CENTRE

Co-creation and engagement practices in peatland restoration in Germany

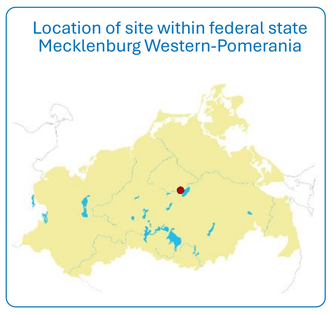


This Living Lab demonstrates a participatory, multi-stakeholder process in the Upper Peene Valley for transitioning drained peatlands to paludiculture, while addressing governance challenges such as funding and landowner consensus.

1 OUR LIVING LAB

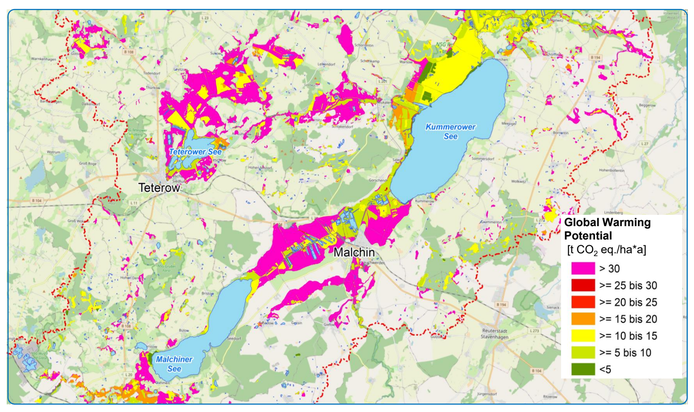
WHERE?





THE CHALLENGE

- ⅔ of peatland area of Living Lab (in total 15.000 ha fens) is agriculturally used, **large parts poldered by complex drainage system** with ditches and water control through weirs, dams and pump stations
- **Drainage-based use of peatlands is subsidized** (CAP basic payments) **despite immense climate damage** and subsidence of peatlands:
  - →GHG-emissions from peatland area: 330,000 t CO_2 eq./year
  - →Average climate impact: 21.7 t CO_2 eq./ha and year
  - →Peat subsidence: 1–2.5 cm/year



- Before any rewetting, it requires consensus between land-users and land-owners within hydrological units
- **Transition to wet use/paludiculture not well supported yet, governance and financing framework is insufficient**
  - → Current funding schemes do not fit the needs on the ground (complicated, highly bureaucratic adressing only single land-users)



WETLAND TYPES

- Peene Valley is known to be **one of the largest contiguous fen areas in central Europe**, a **valley mire** stretching partially up to 2 km width
- So-called **riparian peatlands** occur along the Peene Valley:
  - → Different types of shallow and deep fen types extending from the edge of the valley to the floodplain, e.g. calcareous spring mires, fluvial floodwater mires and terrestrialization mires

2 WHAT WE DID

ACTIONS

a) **Co-creative workshop series**: from joint system analysis through on-site exchange to concrete strategy development & possible future scenarios for wet peatland use

b) **Dialogue formats like „Landscape walks“**

c) **Engaging civil society during Living Lab Open Days in 2024, 2025 & 2026**

d) **Excursion & Discussion round between Political Decision Makers & Local Actors**



CO-CREATION

- Discussions **centered around opportunities for rewetting and wet use of peatlands** (paludiculture)

- **Key stakeholders and actor groups**: farmers & property owners, City of Malchin, associations & civil society, water management, science, politics & administration, nature conservation, tourism, education, entreprises
  - →**Embrace diversity** in knowledge, experiences, perspectives and interests
  - →Strong representation of farmers' interests (collaboration with local Farmers Union) in the workshop series to **address tensions between paludiculture and drainage-based agriculture**

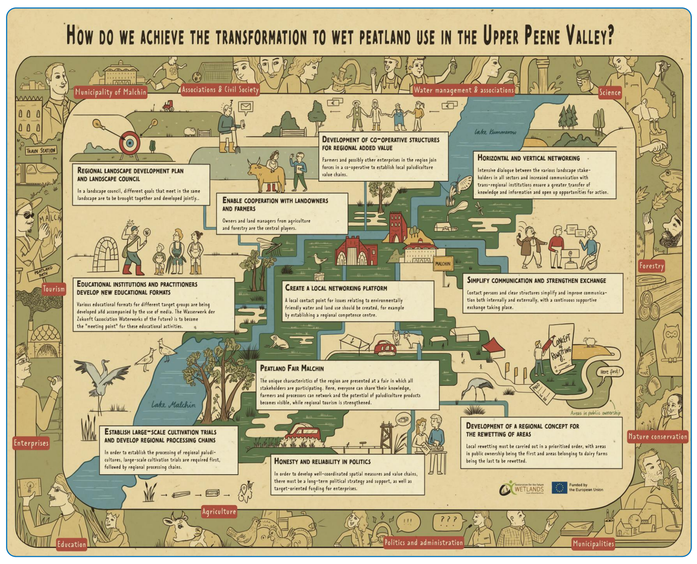
- Complexity of managing multifunctional landscapes was explored, **opportunities and strategies with specific interventions were mapped out** to guard against development of impractical solutions built on superficial consensus

- **Consolidation and continuation** of long-standing participatory collaboration in the Upper Peene Valley, which **will be carried on in a follow-up project**

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3 RESULTS & LEGACY

KEY FINDINGS



System map from Living Lab Upper Peene Valley illustrating strategies for transformation to wet peatland use (outcome of stakeholder workshop, Nov. 2023)

- ✓ Success of knowledge co-production depends on problem framing, actor selection and process design
- ✓ Invest in reflective practice to evaluate and improve knowledge co-production in Living Labs

BENEFITS & TRADE-OFFS



LESSONS LEARNED

- **Co-creation is not self-serving**; it must provide added value for everyone
- It takes **dedicated local partners**: Build a broad network and seek alliances
- Project-based work causes dilemmas: It needs **continuous work, stability & long-term contact persons** beyond project time frames
- Wording is important: **Learn and respect communication culture** & adapt to it
- **Walk together**: Creating informal spaces for conversations are crucial for building trust, relationships and cooperation

LEGACY AND NEXT STEPS

- Proposal for the follow-up project was written participatory with local partners (municipality Malchin, local company for biomass valorisation & association Wasserwerk der Zukunft e.V.)
  - → Project MOOReturn started 2025: paludiculture demonstration pilot project running for 10 years & aiming for rewetting of 300 ha

ONE KNOWLEDGE GAP

How to deal with the urgency of implementing peatland restoration in the context of climate change,
vs.
the need for successful participation to find well-accepted solutions that work for many?

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