



Snowchange Discussion Paper #8

Traditional Lamprey Fishermen of Carnicava, Latvia: August 2015

Snowchange Photo Essay

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1. Introduction

The Snowchange Cooperative represents the Puruvesi lake fishermen and the vendace¹ (European Cisco) fish domestically². In December 2013 the European Union gave the fish and the traditional fishery the Geographical Indicator status as a food item. Between 2014-2015 Snowchange has been in talks with other fisheries across Northern Europe with the same status.



Logo of the Geographical Indicator of Lamprey and the Festival 22.8.2015

One of the neighbouring Geographical Indicator species is the lamprey³ of Carnikava, Latvia. The fishery is located on the river Gauja, which is located some 30 kilometres east from the capital of Latvia, Riga. This discussion paper documents the cooperation steps in August 2015 to support the Geographical Indicator work between Finland and Latvia in the context of traditional fisheries, knowledge and a visit between parties.

¹ *Coregonus albula*

² <http://www.lumi.fi/puruveden-muikku/>

³ *Lampetra fluviatilis*

2. Region, nature and culture

The municipality of Carnikava is located close to the delta of the river *Gauja*⁴, one of the major rivers of Latvia. The watershed is significant both for ecology and culture, as it is undeveloped for the most part, without any hydro-electricity. The municipality also has 19 kilometres of Baltic Sea coast and EU-assigned Nature 2000 conservation areas.



The Baltic Sea coast is a prominent feature of the local ecology and nature.

⁴ Toponym refers to the birch tree.



Pine tree forests on sand dunes are a major feature of the Carnikava coast.



The municipality contains several culturally significant traditional houses, like this small farmhouse.



Gauja river fishery still uses traditional wooden boats.



Cultural Centre and a Museum devoted to the traditional fishing culture, constructed after a traditional Latvian house originating in 1860s, supports the maintaining of the local practices.



This small-scale model, constructed with care by fisherman Martins Krumins⁵ shows the salmon trap fishery (left) and the lamprey traps, which were in use from 1920s to 1950s.



Traditional lamprey fish trap at the museum

⁵ 1914 - 2001



An older model often made from juniper or willow, for lamprey.



A fish trap model, self-made, currently in use



Tools used to repair and build nets and fish traps in Carnikava fish base.



A detail from a painting documenting the life of Latvian fishermen, by Veijes.



River Gauja towards the sea delta



Trees along Gauja



Delta of the Gauja at sea



Fish traps in Gauja, catching Lamprey

3. Catching Lamprey: Early Morning, 22nd August 2015



Fishermen gather at the Carnikava fish base at 05.30 am, 22nd August 2015



Boats are prepared and launched from the river harbour



Everything is quiet early morning on the river





The fishermen travel the river in a flotilla of boats; all together 120 fish traps will be checked.



The small wooden boats detach from the 'mother ship' and move to the traps.



Two men check fish traps as second flotilla travels past the traps on the way to delta.



Fish traps are caught with a hook and then pulled to the small boats; the mouth of the trap faces downstream.



The trap requires two men to operate.



Between five and eight traps are positioned in one given spot.



As the last trap is checked, they are ready for another 24 hours of catch.



Different teams return to the main ship for off-loading of lamprey.



This crab, caught as a by-catch, is according to the fishermen introduced originally from China.



Rest of the boats return to the mother ship.



Catch is divided and organized.





At 7 am the sun is well above Gauja River when boats return to base.



A part of the catch is cooked traditionally in an oven.





'Lamprey' burger



The traditional local knowledge of the fishermen of Gauja is unique and priceless while navigating the river filled with currents and ever-shifting sands.

4. Lamprey Festival, August 2015

22nd August 2015 marked the start of the 14th annual Lamprey Festival of Carnikava, Latvia. Altogether over 10,000 people came and took part in the event, well outside the boundaries of the municipality.



The Festival attracted many vendors to the Carnikava centre.



Music bands of different sized played at the festival.



The Festival featured the 'largest Lamprey in the world' during the parade.



Traditional fish traps were honoured during the parade.



The highlight of the event was the over 500 litres of lamprey soup, which was served to hundreds of people during the day.



5. Cooperation Meetings



Snowchange Cooperative and Carnikava municipality agreed to cooperate to support Geographical Indicator work and the traditions of the fishermen and signed agreements on cooperation.



Snowchange President Tero Mustonen (right) met with the Minister of Agriculture of Latvia, Honourable Jānis Dūklavs (middle) together with the Estonian delegate (left).

Snowchange thanks all organisers and hosts for making this unique event possible and looks forwards to the next steps of cooperation!