



Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary Park

TransParcNet Meeting 28 June – 1 July 2022

**PARKS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Ways to a closer involvement and to a better identification  
of people with their parks.**

**Final Report**

Event organised with the contribution of  
Cariplo Foundation

## 1. Introduction

The Trans Parc Net Meeting 2022 was held in “Binntal Veglia Devero Trasboundary Park” from June 28<sup>th</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup>. It was hosted by the Binntal Landschaftspark (CH) along with Ente di gestione delle Aree Protette dell’Ossola (IT) and was the first Trans Parc Net Meeting ever since the COVID pandemic had appeared at the beginning of year 2020. The “Binntal Veglia Devero Trasboundary Park” is a certified Transboundary Protected Area since 2019. Nonetheless, the cooperation between the bordering areas dates back since the early years of the 21th century.



Picture 1: Transboundary Parks map (in the red circle the Binntal veglia Devero Transboundary Park)

Over 30 representatives of Transboundary Parks gathered to discuss on the theme “Parks and Cultural Heritage” and to share experiences, ideas and future projects among the Protected Areas of the Transboundary Parks Programme.



Picture 2: information toolkit for participants. Photo: Daniele Piazza, Aree Protette dell’Ossola

This report shortly describes the programme, discussion and findings of the meeting.

## 2. Territory

Binntal Veglia Devero Nature Parks consists of the Alpe Veglia and Alpe Devero Natural Park in Italy and the Landschaftspark Binntal in Switzerland, both located in the Lepontine Alps. This natural environment is dominated by rocks, glaciers and mountains reaching some 3.500 meters a.s.l., alpine lands, pastures, peat bogs and mowing meadows. A first official agreement on transboundary cooperation between the two parks dates back from 2013, but contacts and exchange of people from both sides of the alpine range across the Arbola/Albrun pass goes back to more than 3000 years ago.

The Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary Nature Park embraces the following Protected Areas:

- Parco Naturale Veglia Devero / Protected Areas of Ossola, Region of Piedmont, Italy
- Landschaftspark Binntal, Canton of Valais, Switzerland.

### *Natural heritage*

The region Binntal-Alpe Devero is known for its richness and diversity of minerals. So far, over 270 different minerals have been identified in the area, of which more than two dozen are typical only of this restricted area. Some have been named from the region such as Binnite or Cervandonite.

Plants of amazing and unprecedented variety grow everywhere: in alpine and valley meadows, in grasslands and bogs, in exploited and fallow lands. The reason for this variety relies on the different exposures and forms of agriculture as well as on the geological substrate.

In the area we find the most emblematic mammal species of the Alps: ibex and chamois, which regularly cross the high mountain range. A recent monitoring activity shows that even red deers migrate through the Albrun/Arbola pass (2408 meters a.s.l.). The species lists of birds, butterflies and other animals are also very rich.

### *History of the Parks*

In 1978 the Italian “Alpe Veglia Nature Park” was designated by regional law. It was the first nature park in the region of Piedmont. In 1995 the park was enlarged, involving also the Alpe Devero area. The two areas are since then known as Veglia Devero Natural Park: some 8600 hectares of breathtaking landscapes and delicate balances between nature and human activities. The Veglia Devero Natural Park is also recognized as Natura 2000 site and is, therefore, part of the vast and widespread European ecological network known as Natura 2000 Network. Since 2009, the Ossola Protected Areas Management Body runs the Veglia Devero Natural Park as well as the Antron Valley Natural Park, a recently born protected area in the Ossola territory. The Veglia Devero Natural Parks is involved in various projects, ranging from sustainable tourism to nature conservation, from social innovation in mountain areas to natural resources management and planning.

The Landschaftspark Binntal (18200 ha) was recognised by the Swiss Government as “Nature Park of national importance” in 2011. The first treaty to protect nature and landscape dates back from 1964 and was accepted on a vote by the population.

Apart from the nearly untouched high mountain zone that covers half of the territory, the Binntal Nature Park has a valuable cultural landscape, which is still maintained with much effort and care also during the present days. The villages and hamlets with their sun-tanned houses are so well preserved that they are classified as sites of national and regional importance.

The park's main aims are to preserve the beauty of the area, promote the local economy, educate the public and raise awareness about the park. The local councils and the local new offerings such as soft tourism, cultural tourism, and local agricultural products help encourage inhabitants to remain in the area.



Picture 3: Parco Naturale Alpe Veglia e Alpe Devero (IT). Photo Mauro Conti



Pciture 4: Binntal Landschaftspark (CH). Photo Andreas Weissen

### 3. Participants

Organisation	Surname	Name
Bavarian Forest National Park Administration	Bečka	Pavel
Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS)	Luna	Soledad
Dutch/German Cross border nature park Maas-Swalm-Nette	Claassen	André
Ente di gestione delle aree protette dell'Ossola	Piazza	Daniele
Ente di gestione delle aree protette dell'Ossola	Molinari	Bruna
EUROPARC (Co-chair Task Force Transboundary Parks)	Reyrink	Leo
EUROPARC (Council Representative)	Santi	Stefano
EUROPARC (Policy Officer)	Petrosillo	Stefania
Julian Prealps natural Park	Benzoni	Alessandro
Julians Prealps natural Park	Di Lenardo	Annalisa
Karkonoski Park Narodowy	Wierzchucka	Justyna
Karkonoski Park Narodowy	Szwałek	Anna
Karkonoski Park Narodowy	Wojnarowicz	Dorota
Landschaftspark Binnental	Weissen	Andreas Markus
Landschaftspark Binnental	Imhasly	Doris
Landschaftspark Binnental	Clausen	Moritz
Nationalpark Neusiedler See - Seewinkel	Haider	Jochen
Nationalpark Sächsische Schweiz	Zimmermann	Ulf
Parc Naturel Européen des Plaines de Scarpe Escaut	Bardot	Lisa
Parc Naturel Régional Scarpe Escaut	Zingraff	Raymond
Podyjí NP Administration	Mačát	Zdeněk
Podyjí NP Administration	Reiterová	Lenka
Sächsische Landesstiftung Natur und Umwelt	Kotteck	Daniela
Šumava National Park administration	Starý	Martin
Šumava National Park administration	Červenka	Jaroslav
The Krkonose Mts. NP	Kaspar	Jakub
The Krkonose Mts. NP	Böhnisch	Robin
Triglavski narodni park	Potočnik	Tit
Triglavski narodni park	Smolej	Mojca
Triglavski narodni park	Komac	Tina

#### **4. Welcome message from hosts and introduction to the meeting topic (parks and cultural heritage)**

*Dear participants,*

*Welcome to the long awaited Trans Parc Net Meeting 2022. It is with pleasure and honour that we take active part in the Transboundary Parks experience, having received the certification from Europarc in 2019.*

*Binntal and Veglia Devero Parks share not only boundaries and mountains, but also cultures, tradings, migrations and heritages.*

*On both sides of the border, our territories are shaped by a common need which comes from the past and remains alive nowadays: living in the mountains, finding a sound balance between man and natural resources.*

*These are the driving force that have been designing and painting our transboundary landscapes through the centuries.*

*Identification of people with the parks, inevitably relies on the ability of reading, understanding and sharing such values.*

*Shaping the future comes from living the present and knowing the past.*

*We wish you a pleasant and fruitful stay in our parks.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*The Boards and Staffs of the Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary Park*

## 5. Programme of the event – summary and report by day

### 5.1 Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June in Binn, Switzerland : Arrivals and accommodation

- 16:00 – 19:00 arrival/check at Hotel “Ofenhorn” or at Pension “Albrun”
- 19:00 – 20:00 TransParcNet Task Force Meeting
- 20:00 dinner at Restaurant “Albrun”

The day was dedicated to travels and gathering of the participants.

After the arrival of the participants, a social and networking dinner was held at the restaurant of the “Albrun” Hotel in Binn.

Accommodation and logistics was organised by Binntal Landschaftspark, either by private or public transport.

### 29<sup>th</sup> June in Binn, Switzerland: Working sessions

- **09:00 Morning working session**
- Welcome by Binntal and Veglia Devero parks and Europarc representatives
- Presentation of new TransParcNet Members
- *10:30 Coffee break*
- **11.00 Introduction** by Léa Marie d’Avigneau, culture expert of the Canton of Valais
- **11:00 Round Table:** Cultural Intangible Heritage: experiences ad examples from participants
- 12:30 Transfer by bus to the entrance of the Twingi gorge
- 12.35 Twingi LandArt: Walk between nature and culture”
- *13.30 Open air lunch (raclettes)*
- **16:00 Afternoon working session**
- Examples of best practices in cultural issues
- **Workshop:** what are the cultural links between people and your transboundary parks?
- 18:00 Short trip to the hamlet of Fäld
- 19:30 Dinner at Hotel Ofenhorn
- 22:00 Museum’s night on archeology

The day started with a welcome by the Directors of Binntal Landschaftspark (Moritz Clausen) and Parco Naturale Alpe Veglia e Alpe Devero (Daniele Piazza).

Stefania Petrosillo introduced and reminded the features of the Transboundary Parks Programme, stressing the importance of cross-border cooperation in order to achieve the important goals shared by Europarc, European Union and Protected Areas as a whole. Indeed, transnational cooperation is a powerful tool for nature conservation and biodiversity protection, but also for local and regional sustainable development.

Andreas Weissen (in charge of transboundary cooperation for the Binntal Landschafts Park) introduced the main theme of the meeting (Parks and cultural heritage) and briefed the programme.



Picture 5: indoor mornig session set up. Photo Daniele Piazza



Picture 6: Stefania Petrosillo and Andreas Weissen give their speech during indoor morning session. Photo Daniele Piazza

After the introduction given by Stefania Petrosillo and Andreas Weissen the floor was left to Soledad Luna from Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS), who explained the cross-border cooperation experience of the Common Secretariat, as a best practice in trilateral transnational cooperation for the protection of a marine and coastal area.

The Wadden Sea is the largest tidal flats system in the world, where natural processes proceed largely undisturbed. It extends along the coasts of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. For its globally unique geological and ecological values the Wadden Sea is listed by UNESCO as World Heritage. Nowhere else in the world is there such a dynamic landscape with a multitude of habitats, shaped by wind and tides. Global biodiversity is reliant on the Wadden Sea. In the framework of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands take on the responsibility of preserving this irreplaceable ecosystem for the benefit of present and future generations (<https://www.waddensea-secretariat.org/>).



Picture 7: Soledad Luna from CWSS gives her speech during indoor morning session. Photo Daniele Piazza

Then it's the turn of the Scarpe-Escaut Plain European Nature Park (Raymond Zingraff and Lisa Bardot) to present its cross-border natural area and its recent candidature to become a Transboundary Protected Area certified by Europarc.

The certifications process is still in progress; Raymond and Lisa present their recent and ongoing experience to the audience, giving a fresh and up-to-date overview of what a verifying and certification process is about.



Picture 8: Raymond Zingraff and Lisa Bardot give their speech during the morning session. Photo: Daniele Piazza

Léa Marie d'Avigneau, expert of intangible heritage of the Canton of Valais (part of the federal administration of Switzerland), introduces the theme of intangible and cultural heritage in the Wallis Canton:

History of the concept of intangible heritage:

- 1972: World Heritage Convention (world's natural and cultural heritage)
- 2003: Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Tangible and intangible heritage are complementary
- 2018: Inclusion of the safeguarding of intangible heritage in the law on the promotion of culture in the canton of Valais

Definition of the concept of intangible heritage:

*"Intangible cultural heritage consists of the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them – that communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals have recognized as part of their cultural heritage for several generations."* (Law on the promotion of culture in the canton of Valais)

#### Application of the UNESCO-Convention in the Canton of Valais/Switzerland:

- Inventory of intangible heritage of cantonal and national interest (representativeness rather than exhaustiveness)
- 199 traditions of national interest
- 17 traditions of cantonal interest
- Financial support to projects of institutions committed to the safeguarding of intangible heritage
- Documentation project on the Valaisan carillon tradition
- Support for an institution preserving the old Valais rye varieties
- Awareness-raising actions on intangible heritage
- Organisation of events during heritage days

#### Examples of intangible traditions from the Valais

- Avalanches Risk Management
- Hammer Dulcimer (= Hackbrett, Salterio, Cimbalom, Santur...)



Picture 9: Hackbrett live performance during the morning session. Photo: Daniele Piazza

At noon, a yellow “Postauto” bus takes everybody to the Twingy gorge, nearby the hamlet of Binn. An art exhibition is hosted here annually and Andreas Weissen takes the whole group along the narrow road through the Twingy gorge and through the art installations.

A very much welcome surprise waits for the hosts at the very end of the promenade: an open air *raclette* (a typical culinary product which features melted mountain cheese, potatoes and vegetables) just prepared by the Binntal Landschaftspark staff!



Picture 10: Ready to visit the Twingy gorge and its art exhibition. Photo: Daniele Piazza



Picture 11: Preparing the *raclette*. Photo: Daniele Piazza

In the afternoon, all the participants were asked to display and explain their interpretation of the existing links among parks and their people.

It was really interesting to notice that the links among territories and their people ranged from traditional climbing to local culinary products, from liquors and spirits to traditional dresses and fibers, from local legends and tales to traditional agriculture and dairy products. Also migrations (it's the case of the Walser population, who moved from the Wallis (Valais) to Italy during the centuries XIV and XV)

Territories of transboundary protected areas host a wide range of productions, traditions, languages, dialects and skills which overcome borders and make people connect and share their goods as well as their

Such a variety of linkages and couplings shows a great complexity of relations that calls for further investigation!

Here follow some examples provided by participants:

National Park Saxon Switzerland, Germany

- Sandstone Climbing
- Historical Trail Marks

Krkonoše National Park, Czech Republic

- Kyseloh, local sour soup
- Sejkory, potato pancakes
- Pivo, beer

Karkonosze National Park, Poland, Survival Kit

- a traditional house to live
- a traditional shirt to wear
- a traditional herbal liquor to survive long winters
- mountain spirit to ask for a long summer

Šumava National Park, Czech Republic

- Czech Beer Tradition
- BETON composed of BEcherovska and TONic Water, since 1967 (Beton = Concrete)

Podyjí (Thayatal), Czech Republic

- Traditional Legends, e.g. "Thaya's Waterman"

Wadden Sea, Netherlands/Germany/Denmark

- Frisian Tea Tradition

Maas – Swalm – Nette, Netherlands/Germany

- Water molens = water mills and water rights

Ecoregion Julian Alps, Slovenia/Italy

- Zas'ka
- Salame
- Grissini

- Ribolla Gialla (spumante)

#### EUROPARC

- “Orangette” (composition of chocolate and oranges, south and north)

#### Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary Park, Switzerland/Italy

- Mountain farming = Agri-Culture
- Cheese factorys
- Walser culture

The first intense day of the gathering was closed by:

- A short trip to the nearby hamlet of Fald and to the local museum of rocks and minerals;
  - A networking dinner at the Ofenhorn Hotel;
  - A late visit to the local ethnographic museum in Binn
- 

## 5.2 Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June in Alpe Devero, Italy

- 8:00 Transfer from Binn to Devero
- 10:30 Arrival at Alpe Devero
  
- **Morning working session**
- **10:45 Dialogue with local farmers:** Agri-culture and mountain dairy as intangible heritage (with intervention of local farmers)
- *13:00 Lunch*
  
- **14:00 Afternoon open air working (walking) session**  
**3 Working Groups** (TB protected areas and landscapes, TB protected areas and cultures - including trading and migration, TB protected areas and languages)
- 16:00 Wrap up
- 16:30 Information from EUROPARC
- 17:00 Open questions and conclusions
- 18:00 **Evening walk to Witches' Lake** (Lago delle Streghe): The Walser people between Wallis Canton (CH) and Ossola Valleys (IT)
- 19:30 Dinner at the "Albergo la Baita", accommodation at "Albergo la Baita", "Agriturismo di Crampiole" and "Locanda Fizzi"

After the transfer from Binn (CH) to Alpe Devero (IT) the group of participants gathered at the "Museo dell'Alpeggio", a visitor center run by the Ente di gestione delle Aree protette dell'Ossola (Veglia Devero Natural Park).

Here, the attendees met Vittoria Riboni (President of the Ente di gestione delle Aree protette dell'Ossola) and Luca Olzeri (member of the Board of the Ente di gestione delle Aree protette dell'Ossola). Vittoria Riboni and Luca Olzeri are both farmers coming from different experiences:

Luca is a veterinary now running the family-owned farming business, He's deeply rooted in the territory and belongs to a traditional farming activity which has now turned into a modern farm, producing dairy products (the well-known and very much appreciated Bettelmatt cheese) and running a tourism activity in the hamlet of Crampiole, Alpe Devero. His life has been shaped and influenced by the local environment and he's very much into local tradition as well into innovation and modernity.

Vittoria is an environmental engineer; she has her origins in the valley, but spent most of her life in Milano. When her daughter was born, she decided to "change her life" and moved back to Premia (in Antigorio Valley) to start a farming business with her husband: they run a farming business, breed goats and sell their own dairy products.

In her inner feelings, "intangible and cultural heritage" is linked to the ability of local traditional farmers to know and understand their animals deeply and naturally. She is a trained breeder, but yet she experiences a "lack of natural empathy" with her animals. It has very much to do with traditional and long-lasting family farming traditions rather than with up-to-date technologies and know-hows.

Nonetheless, Luca and Vittoria represent a vital and vibrant example of what mountain farming is about, nowadays.



Picture 12: Listening to Luca Olzeri and Vittoria Riboni, morning session at “Museo dell’Alpeggio”, day two. Photo: Daniele Piazza



Picture 13: Getting to know how mountain cheese is produced in Crampiolo, Alpe Devero (intangible heritage and know-how, Bettelmatt cheese) day two. Photo: Daniele Piazza

After lunch in Alpe Devero, an experiment started: the “Walkshops”.

Walkshops are walking-workshops in which three groups led by a facilitator discussed over a given theme while walking in the environment of the Veglia Devero Natural Park, heading to Crampiolò (45' walking).

The participants split into three groups who discussed three different topics, walking their way up to the final destination (the hamlet of Crampiolò, in Alpe Devero):

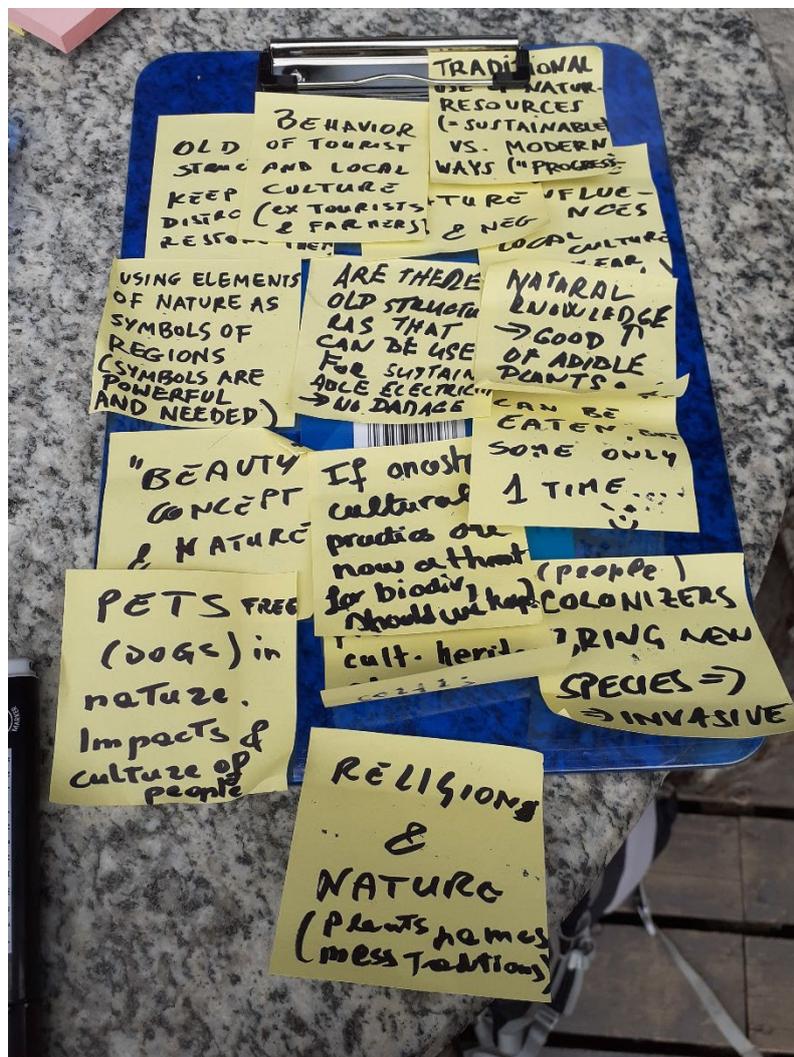
- *Group 1*, led by Daniele Piazza, Director of Ente di gestione delle Aree Protette dell'Ossola, investigated the theme “protected areas and landscape);
- *Group 2*, led by Stefania Petrosillo, EUROPARC Policy Officer, investigated the topic “protected areas and cultures”;
- *Group 3*, led by Andreas Weissen, Responsible for transnational cooperation of Binnental Landschaftspark, investigated the topic “protected areas and cultures”.

The groups walked different trails and gathered together in Crampiolò, after the “Walkshops”, for conclusions and wrap-up.

Inspired and influenced by the surroundings, here are the main findings of the groups (wrap-up):

- *Group 1*: landscapes are in many cases designed and shaped by men and populations. In some cases managing landscapes and natural resources may lead to conflicts: should we preserve artificial landscapes or should we let nature follow its course? On the other hand, traditional activities contribute to preserve and maintain semi-natural landscapes and habitats, so we should keep in mind that what we witness today is a product of centuries of fragile balances between local population, human activities and nature. Pastures, meadows and grasslands are some of the examples we could experience during our workshop. Moreover, today tourism longs for such landscapes; are tourists aware that what they look for is not always wilderness, but a delicate balance between man and nature?
- *Group 2*: local nature and natural features influence local cultures: dressing, food and culinary traditions depend very much on local resources. Our idea of beauty (landscapes) is pretty much linked to a mix of nature and human actions. Traditional farming is definitely a part of local culture, but also a driving force which shape landscapes and territories. Nonetheless, tourism is very much interested in the interactions between nature and culture. Inevitably, we have to carefully consider also the interactions among tourism, nature and culture. Migrations may have impacts on nature. It is not a topic of past centuries, but it's becoming once again important because of modern migrations. The Alps, in particular, are influenced by such modern migrations flows.
- *Group 3*: apart from the languages, there exists a high variety of dialects in transboundary areas. This wide diversity may be a cultural richness, but very often turns into an obstacle for communication and cooperation. Conclusions/Recommendations to increase the capacity of foreign languages:

- Each Transboundary Park should have at least two people in staff who can speak and write the language of the neighbouring park and who have cross-border cooperation in their contracts/terms of reference;
- When employing staff, knowledge of the language of the neighbouring park should also be taken into account;
- For translations of written texts such as emails, check a variety of online free translation tools, before translating. The first and easiest choice is not always the best one;
- Encourage people to pass the leisure time or holidays in the neighbour park and make friends. (A park director married a girl from the other side of the border. Falling in love is the easiest way to learn a language)
- Visit events in the neighbour park, watch cartoons and other films in the neighbour's language, be curious and courageous!



Picture 14: Our "Walkshop" wrapping-up toolkit, day two. Walking and taking notes at the same time is not that easy...day two. Photo: Daniele Piazza

### 5.3 Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July, Departure or field trip

- 8:30 Departure from Alpe Devero and travel back home (2 hours by car to the airport Milano-Malpensa or 2 hours by bus/train to the international railway station of Brig/Switzerland)

or

- Post-meeting-trip to Alpe Veglia: visit of the alp, transfer to San Domenico/Ponte Campo, hiking to Alpe Veglia (90 minutes; uphill/downhill 400 m each), visit of the most beautiful place of the Transboundary Park
- End of the trip at 16:00 in Varzo/Italy (1.5 hours by car to the airport Milano-Malpensa or 20 minutes by train to the international railway station of Brig/Switzerland)

Unfortunately, the excursion of the third day was canceled because of weather reports. After a short walk to the Witches' lake in Crampiolo, Alpe Devero, the participants headed back to the parking and prepared for their trips back home.

## 6. Conclusions

The Trans Parc Net Meeting 2022 was intense and inspiring.

After 2 years of COVID restrictions and withdrawals, meeting in person was great.

In COVID time, speaking about nature and intangible heritage makes a lot of sense: there has been a rise in the interest of people, tourists and visitors in nature and open areas as "safe" places to ensure social distancing in a natural way. Nonetheless we can't forget that our Transboundary Parks are made by nature and people who cross borders, walk trails, breed animals, migrate and trade. People are attracted not only by natural areas, but more and more by a mix of nature and vital local communities.

Managers should also consider local human dynamics and attitudes when plan and build projects

We really believe that some more focus should be put on the linkage among territories and our people in the forthcoming years.

The meeting has efficiently identified the "pillars" of parks and cultural heritage: **culture, migrations and trading, languages** have proven to be the common drivers of a variety of local processes, and transboundary cooperation should focus on such resources as well as on nature protection at the highest levels achievable.