



PERCEPTIONS OF A DRYING LANDSCAPE

TWO CASE STUDIES

from the Duna-Tisza Interfluve region, Hungary

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Noémi Ujházy¹ – Marianna Biró² – Mária Szabó¹

¹Department of Landscape and Environmental Geography, Eötvös Loránd University

²Ecological Centre, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

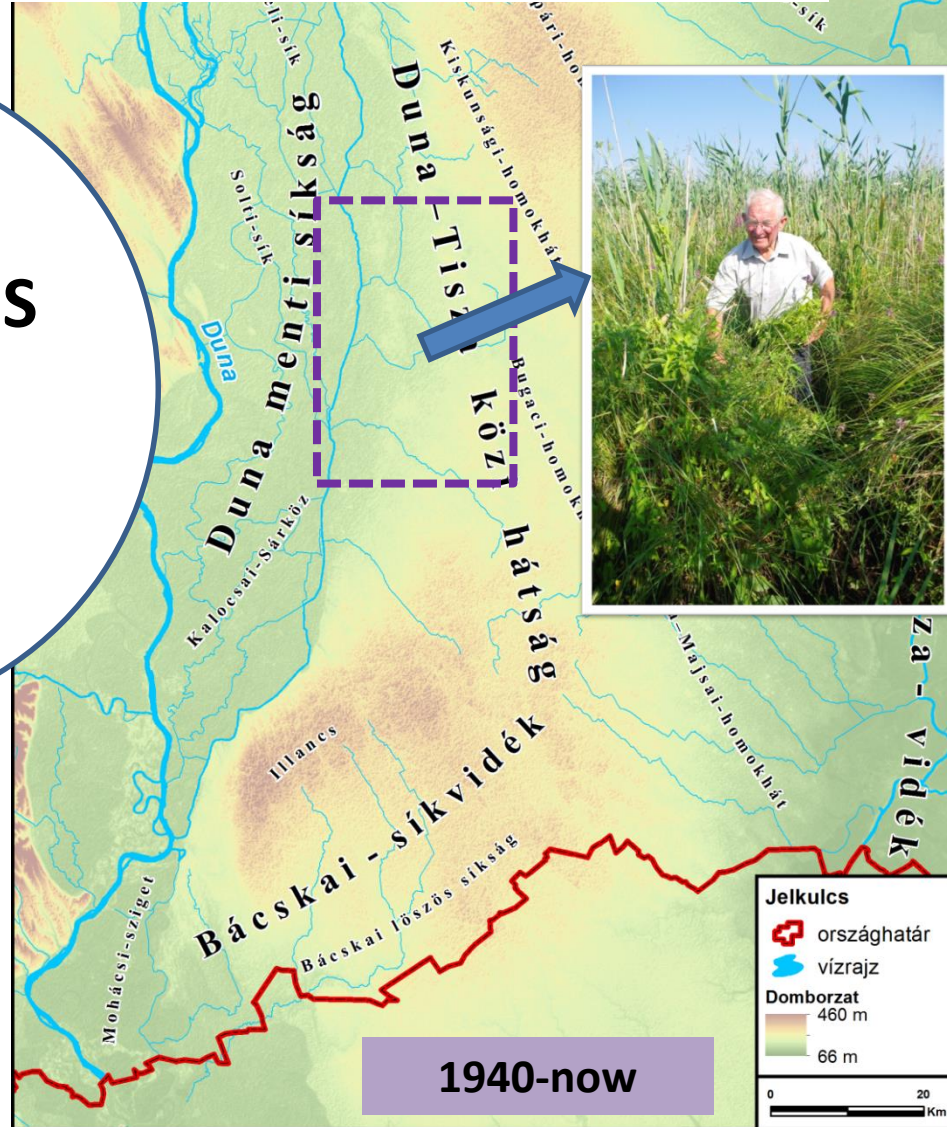
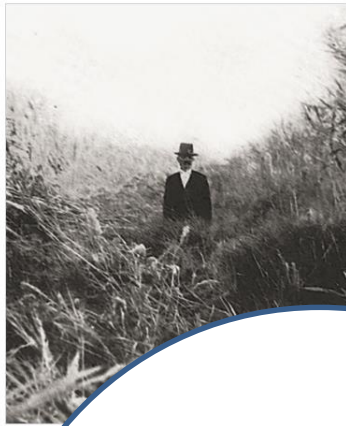
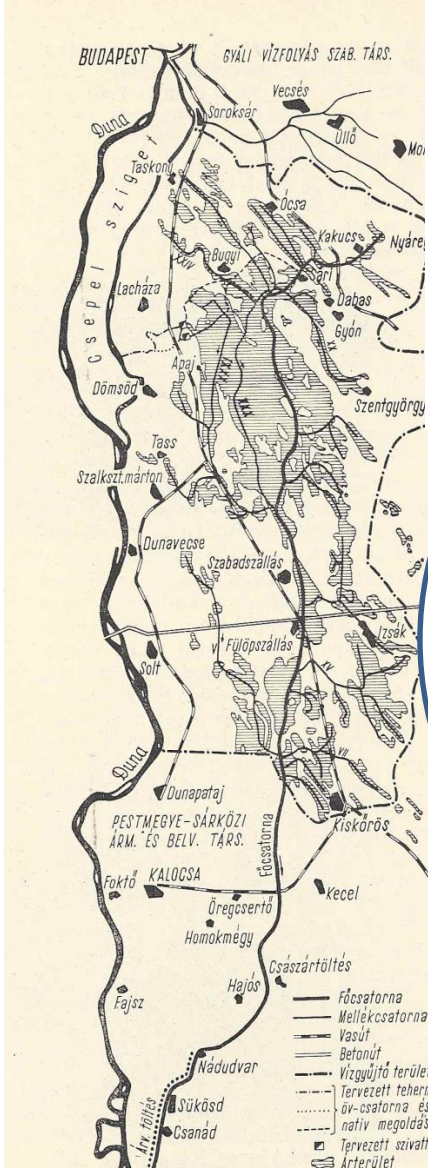
2. Recent perceptions of local farmers and nature conservationists

PERCEPTIONS OF WETLANDS

1. History of the Main Channel of the Danube Valley („Cursed Channel”)

1890-1960 (now)

1940-now





1. HISTORY OF THE „CURSED CHANNEL”

**A KÁRPÁT MEDENCE
VÍZBORÍTOTTA ÉS ÁRVÍZJÁRTA
TERÜLETEI
AZ ÁRMENTESÍTŐ ÉS
LECSAPOLÓ MUNKÁLATOK
MEGKEZDÉSE ELŐTT.**

MÉRÉTÁRÁNY: 1:600,000

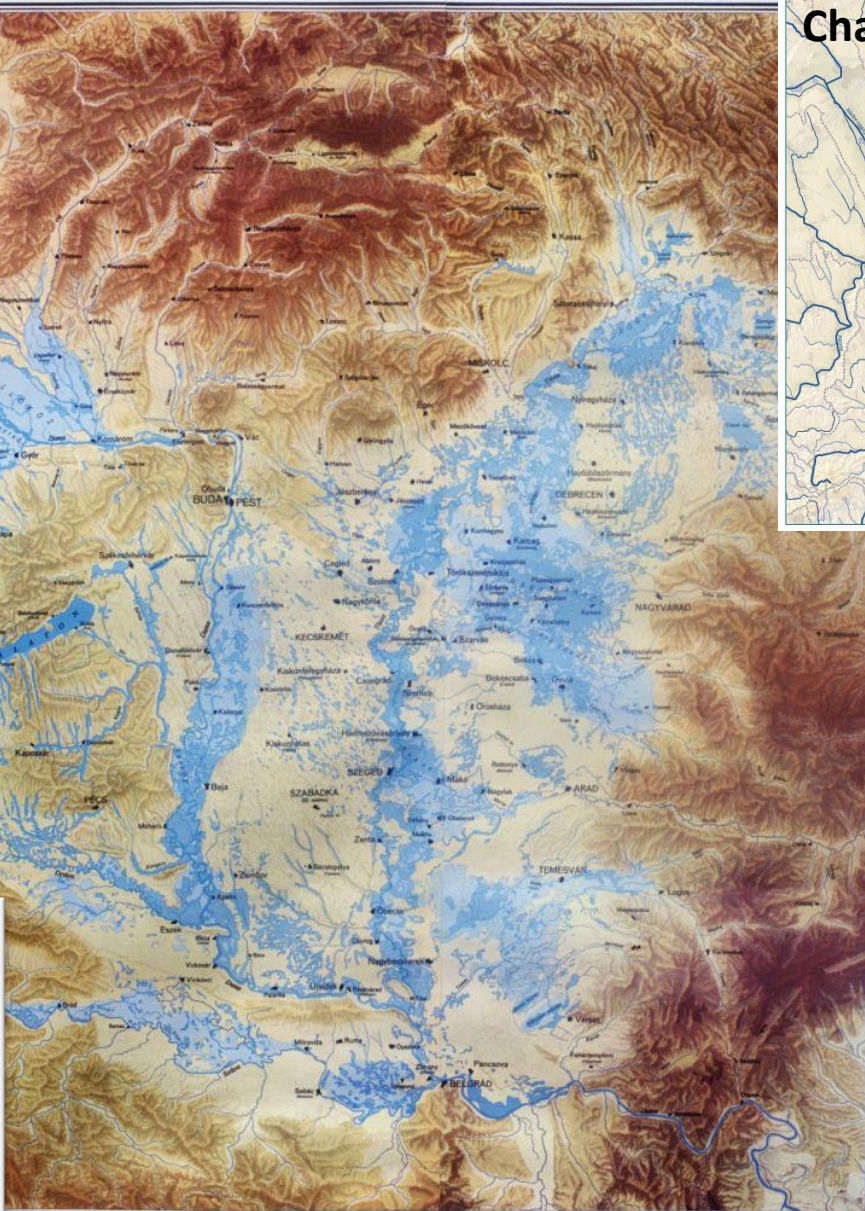
**Watershed of the Main
Channel of the Danube valley**

Danube valley Sandridge region

~100 km long



Hungary in Europe



SZINMAGYARÁZAT
Világos kék: az árvíz alkalmával hosszabb-rövidebb ideig vízzel borított területek.
Sötétebb kék: állandóan vagy az év legnagyobb részében víz alatt álló területek.
Sötét kék: jelenlegi tavak.

SZERKESZTETTE
A M. KIR. FÖLDMŰVELÉSÜGYI MINISZTERIUM VÍZRAJZI INTÉZETE
BUDAPEST, 1938.

**The 'Puddle Map' of Carpathian Basin from 1938
Agricultural Ministry of the Hungarian Kingdom , Hydrological Institute**

History of the constructions

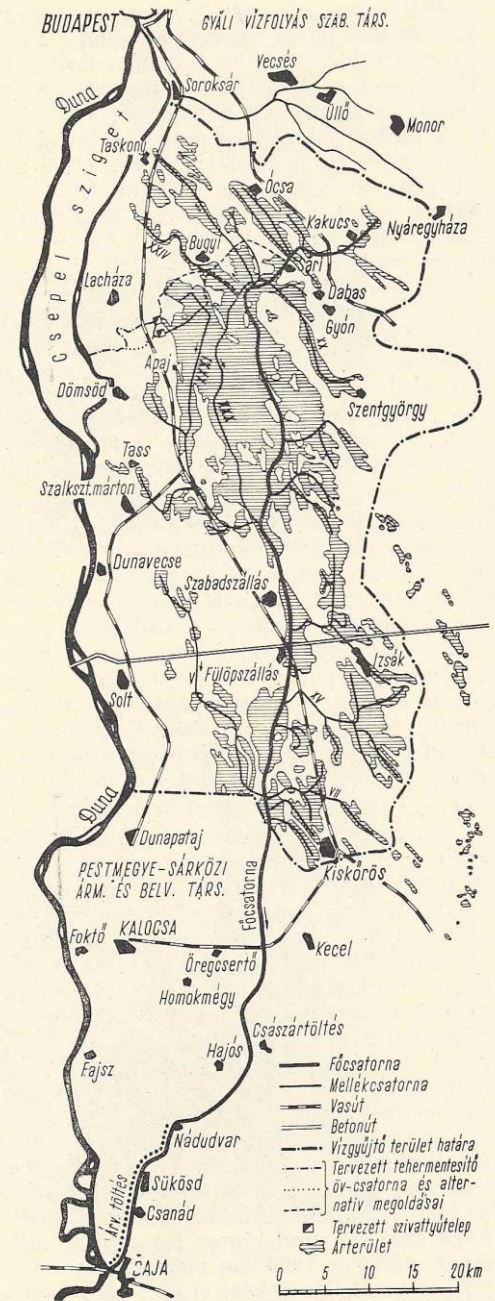
First plans: 1850-80s, 1898

*"our aim is to win this large, practically completely useless territory in the heart of the country for **civilisation**, as soon as possible"* (Elek Zlinszky 1898)

“Danube valley Irrigation and Drainage Association of County Pest” (1909)

Constructions (1912-1929)

- World War I
- Loan to the Company (1925)



II.35. ábra. A Pest megyei Dunavölgy Lecsapoló Társulat területe

Drained wetland with tussocks



Reeds in Lake Kolon



Pictures of drained wetlands

(Brunó Lupkovics, engineer)

Environmental risks

Short term effects

+ financial,
economical risks

- Rainy years- floods
 - Dry years - drought, decline of groundwater
-

Long term effects?

- Fear of ‚desertification’ of the
Great Hungarian Plain

fear of salinisation, drought and change of climate

Role of the media



Kunszentmiklós, picture of the 1936 flood from a newsreal
(source: filmhiradokonline.hu)

Lajos Dinnyés, oppositionist politician

Noble, local landowner
born in Dabas, 1901

Politician: 'Independent
Smallholders' Party'

MP 1931-1939

Author of the pamphlet
„Cursed Channel” 1937



Suggested resolutions

(by Lajos Dinnyés)

Financial and legal resolution

Technical resolutions

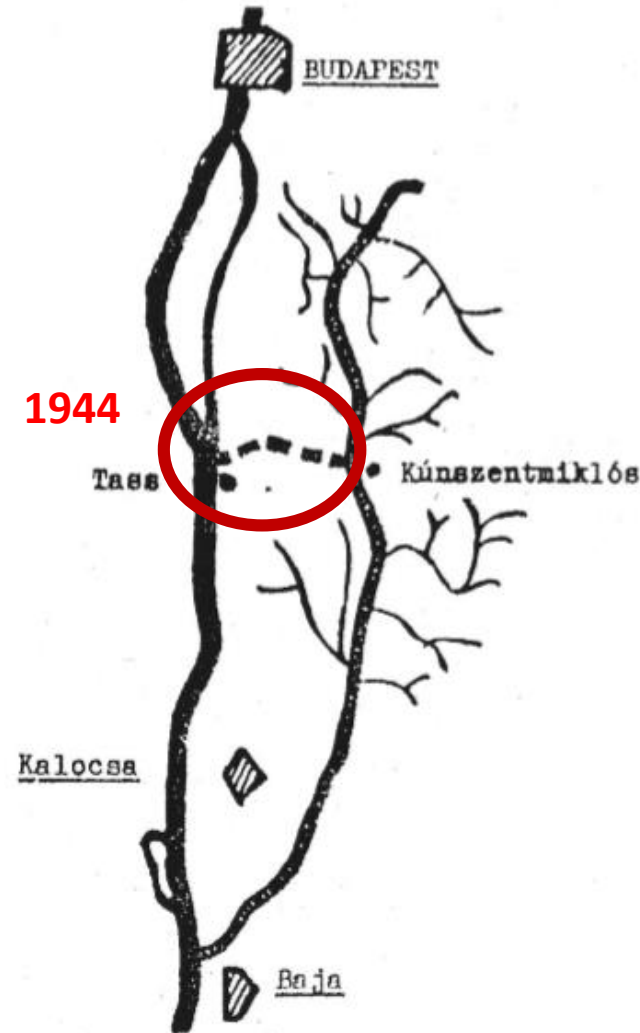
IRRIGATION+ FLOOD CONTROL

Floodgates, sluices, new side-channel

SOIL IMPROVEMENT,

MODERN AGRICULTURE

Who is responsible?



DESTROY the channel!
(László Szalay)

Áldás válik az Á

Téli munkával készül a Duna mindkét part

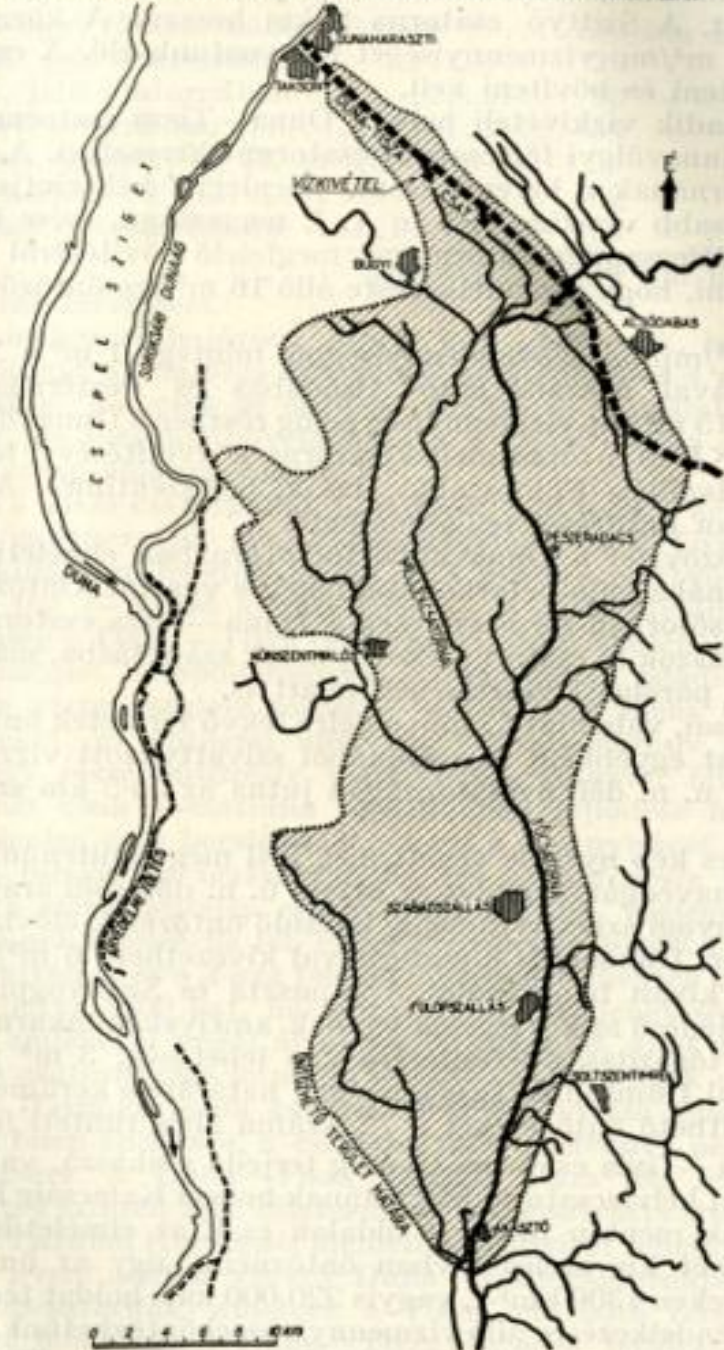
(Atokeszatorna, Ercsi. — A Népszava kiküldött munkatársától.) Befúta az utat a hó, Befedte a földeket s mindent fehérség borít. A földek és a bennük meghúzódó őszi vetések dermedten térnek téli pihenőre. Azelőtt, télidőben, ősztől-tavaszig

lyítenek és új esatornahálózatokat építenek ezek a gépmesztárosok. A kotró hatalmas lapátjával belemélyed a földbe és

egyszerre másfél köbméter földet emel ki.

Olyan játszi könnyedséggel készíti

A DUNA-TISZA CSATORNÁBÓL ÖNTÖZHETŐ TERÜLET
A PESTMEGYEI DUNAVÉDGTÁT TÁRSULAT ÁRTERÜLETÉN.



From curse to blessing

After WW II

→ short democratic period

1947 Building new
irrigation channels

March 1947, Starting the
Danube-Tisza channel
Népszava articles

Lajos Dinnyés (2)

1945-1947

Minister of Deffence

11 May 1947 – 11 Dec 1948

Prime Minister



Mátyás
Rákosi



Reorganization of water management and cartography

Water management

- 1948 Socialization of drainage associations and water management
→ state irrigation programs

(Great Stalin Plan for Transformation Nature)

- 1957 socialist water management companies

Cartography

- New Military Survey (1953-59)
by the restructured Defence Agency
- School maps in 1957

'Cursed Channel' in the 'Geographical Notification' (Földrajzi Értesítő) 1953-1960



Dinnyés republished the 'Cursed Channel' pamphlet in 1957



Drainage of the ,dirty waters' of Nagy-Csukás Lake, 1958 (MTI Fotó)

Memory

- **Opposing narratives**

„it couldn't take the water away when it should have, but it took the water out of the soil when we would have needed it”



“swamps became fine soil”

- Lots of people drowned in it...
- Channel from the **'the cursed period'** 1950s?
- **Eco-perspective:** groundwater decline, loss of natural wetlands, restoration programs





2. COMPARING LOCAL FARMERS' AND CONSERVATIONISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF LANDSCAPE CHANGE

WETLAND HABITATS

**SAND
HABITATS**



FAUNA



40 observed phenomena

There are more or less...?

1-5 Likert scale

Is this process good or bad?

positive/neutral/negative

What are the causes of the process?

Structural interviews

PICTURE SORTING



**ARTIFICIAL
OBJECTS**



LIVESTOCK



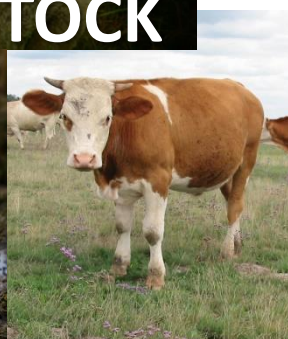
LAND USES



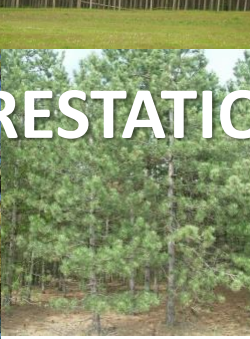
**NATIVE
PLANTS**



CLIMATE



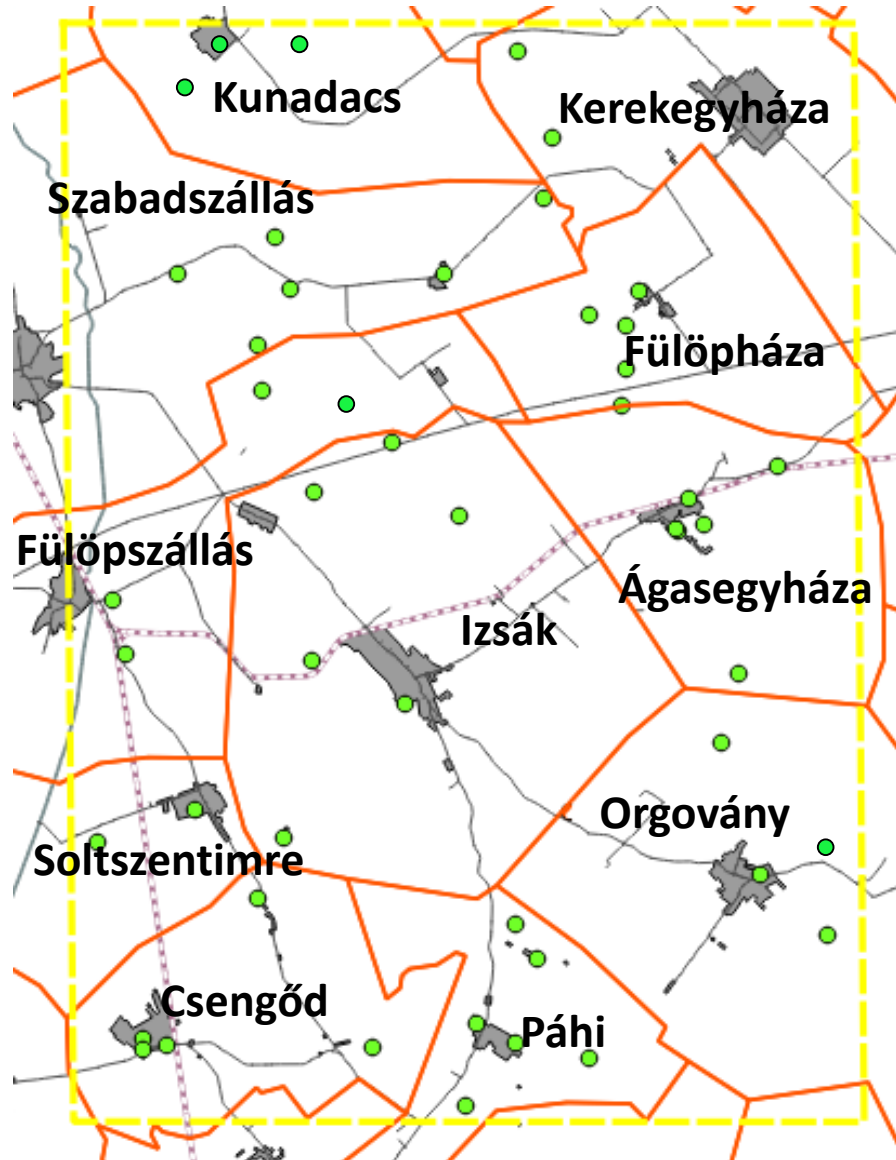
AFFORESTATION



INVASIVE PLANTS



The methodology of the interviews



Informants



LOCAL FARMERES

57 persons

47 men -10 women

age: 41-87 year, average: 66 year

Livestock keepers-vinemakers, pensioners

NATURE CONSERVATIONIST

9 person (planned ~15 person)

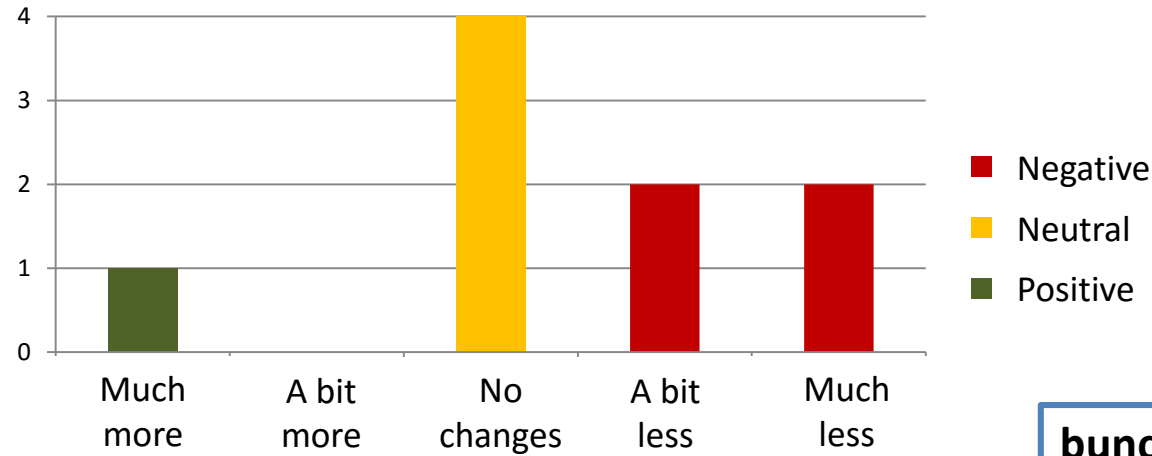
7 men – 2 women

age: 37-59 year, average: 47 year

rangers, researchers, environmental educators

CHANGES OF TUSSOCKS perception of nature conservationists

N=9

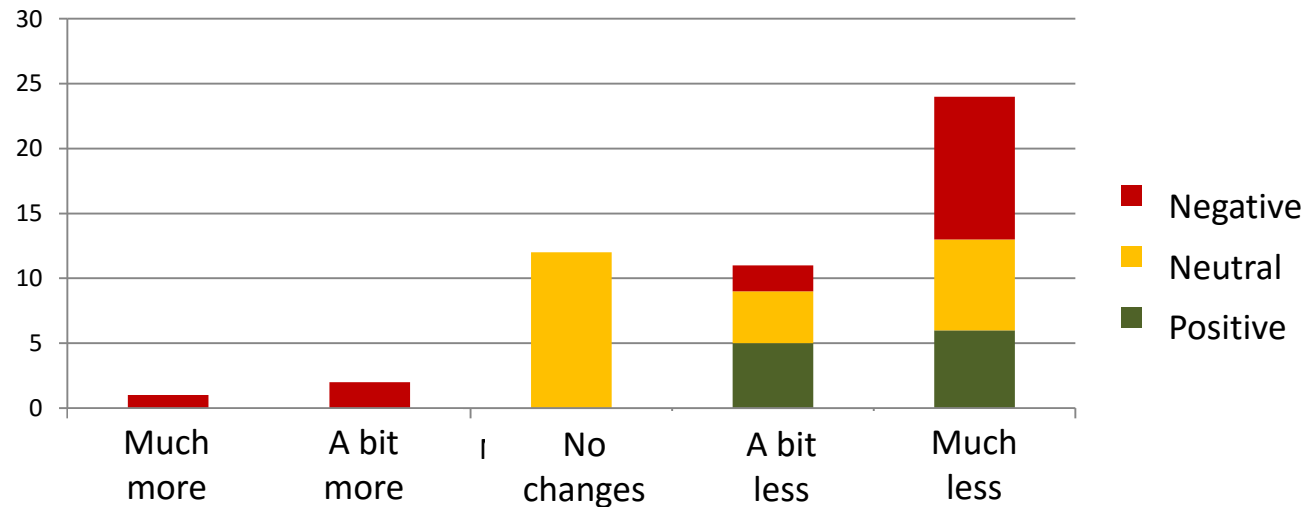


bunch of grasses , mainly *Carex elata*



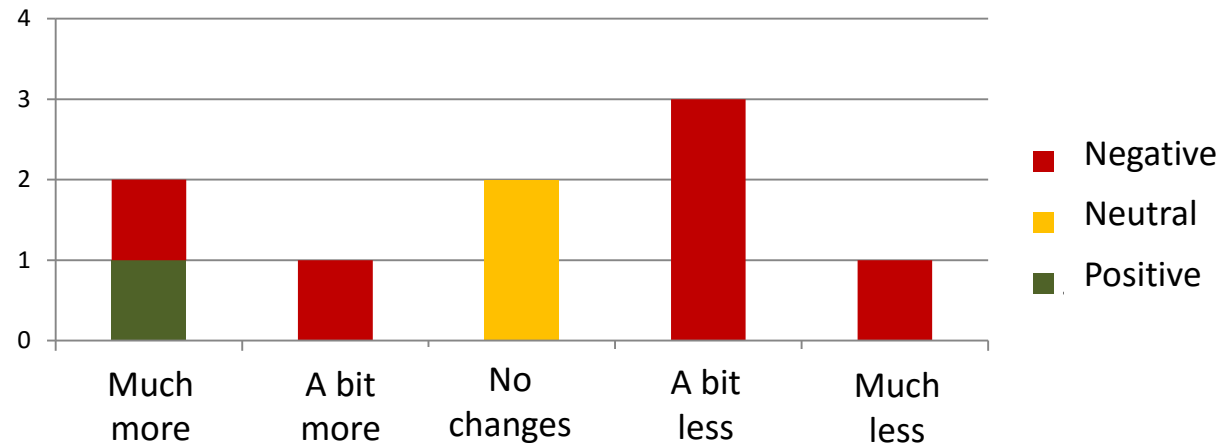
CHANGES OF TUSSOCKS perception of local farmers

N=49



CHANGES OF REED perception of nature conservationists

N=9

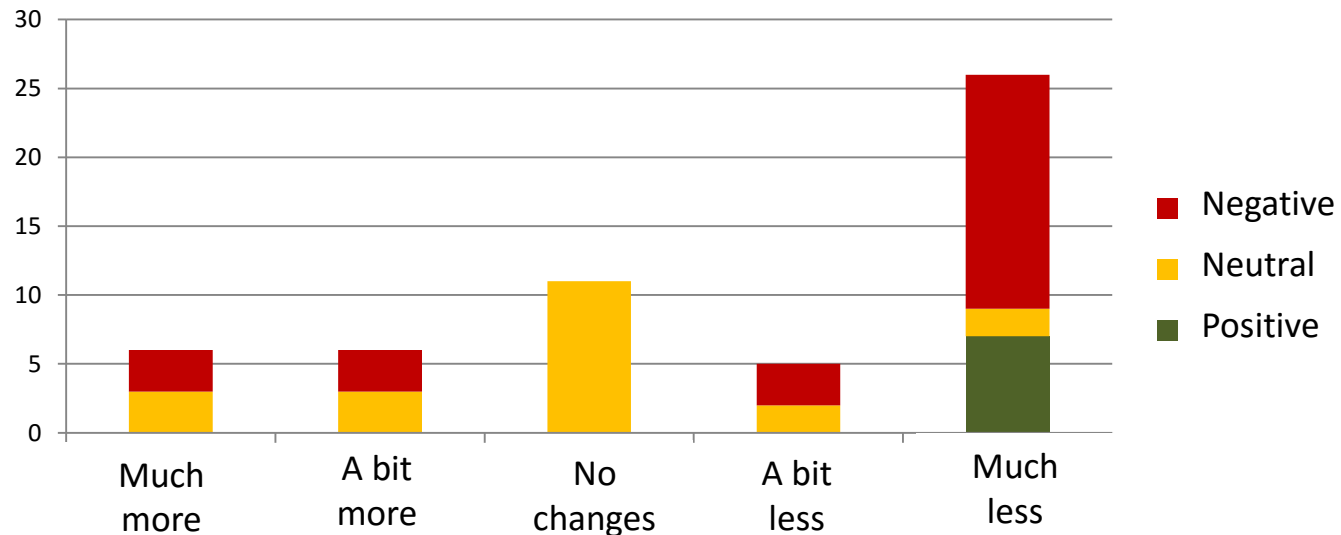


Wetlands, mainly with *Phragmites australis*



CHANGES OF REED perception of local farmers

N=57



Causes of changes according to local farmers

Number of mentioning



LESS TUSSOCK		LESS REED	
	36		31
Less water	29	Less water	23
Grazing, mowing	4	Mowing	2
Destroying	4	Agricultural subsidies	1
Mowing with machines	3	<u>Nature conservation</u>	1
Burning	1	Used as arable land	1
Agricultural subsidies	1	MORE REED	
Schrub encroachment	1	Lack of mowing, grazing	9
MORE TUSSOCK		<u>Nature conservation</u>	5
Lack of mowing	3	Land abandonment	2
Not maintained channels	1	Not maintained channels, sluice gates	2

CONCLUSIONS about the two cases

- Environmental perception:
Practices, identities and power
- Positioned knowledge
- Reducing environmental risks and
restore landscapes as a political issue
- Shifting narratives and baselines of
perceptions – historical continuities

