

Venice, February 22-24, 2007 - International Conference  
'Terraced landscapes: Comparison of cultures and experiences'

**ALPTER Project Partner:** BOKU University of Vienna

**Speaker:** Arne Arnberger

**Study area:** Ödenkirchen, Ulrichsberg (Austria)

**Context and analysis:**

The terraced area of Ödenkirchen is part of the community of Ulrichsberg, a community with about 3000 inhabitants and an area size of 57 km<sup>2</sup>. The community lies in the hilly northern part of Austria, in the district of Rohrbach, which borders Germany and the Czech Republic. Due to its border situation close to the former iron curtain, the community has lost a considerable amount of its residents during the period between 1970 and 1990. The lack of working places still forces residents to commute to other places. During the last decades, tourism has gained in importance because of the establishment of a nearby skiing area and a Nordic skiing/walking centre. Up to 40,000 overnight stays are observed per year, about 62% in the winter season.

The terraced area ranges from 590 m of altitude to about 745 m and covers an area of about 4 km<sup>2</sup>. Terraces are remnants of the former traditional cultural landscape, typically for the region. Because of the high efforts needed to manage such areas, many slopes separating the agricultural fields were destroyed, also driven by the fact that the fields have been transformed into meadows what historical analyses have revealed. For this kind of land use, erosion problems are less prominent, and a terraced morphology is not needed. At the same time, more and more terraces have been afforested during the last decades. Because of their high value for nature protection – there are many habitats in the small area, i.e. stone walls, hedges with different kinds of vegetation, meadows, small-scaled forests, orchards etc. – the area is partly a nature conservation area. A currently finished survey of butterflies revealed that more than 300 species can be found.

**Strategies and developed project (foreseen interventions and expected results):**

Tourism could be one strategy to maintain such areas. The attractiveness of the landscape was investigated by an image-based choice model, indicating that the landscape has a high potential for summer tourism. Particularly, the terraces were found to be a significant factor for the attractiveness. Based on an analysis of the tourist situation in the community, the surrounding region and its natural potential, first recommendations for a tourism strategy were developed. Additionally, first recommendations for land management were developed. These recommendations will be discussed with the local population and land owners. First awareness rising actions have drawn attention to the area by the public, local stakeholders and administration, and more actions are planned within the next months.