TNC coaches connect with CCNet coaches in Europe

In November 2011, two of TNC's Global Conservation Network (CCNet) coaches, Annick Cros and Cristina Lasch, were invited to participate in the first workshop and rally hosted by CCNet Europe. The goal of the workshop was to introduce the Open Standards to conservation practitioners across Europe and help promote the method in their countries. Furthermore, this event served as a training ground for new coaches, and ended in a three day coach rally. The event lasted 7 days and was hosted by the Obra Social Caixa Cataluna in Delta del Ebre, one of Spain's and the Mediterranean's important wetlands and agricultural areas. The event had a great turn out with 60 participants, 19 nationalities, 6 projects and a very high level of enthusiasm and energy.

Delta del Ebre, Spain © Felix Cybulla

What was your role in this workshop?

Annick:

I was invited to bring the Climate Change aspect into Open Standards in partnership with another Global CCNet member from WWF. During the workshop, I presented new ideas on how to deal with climate change in the Open Standard process and helped teams integrate associated threats in their projects. Each project had to face climate change impacts and had information about it, but the teams just didn't know what to do with it. I think the exercise helped participants get a better sense of how climate change related threats fit into to their conceptual model and threat ranking.

During the rally we explored in greater detail tools available to introduce climate change impacts and climate change adaptation (as strategies) to project teams. We used WWF's "Happy Village" exercise and I presented the 3D modeling work done in the Solomon Island. At first I was worried that people would not receive the video very well but they absolutely loved it and wanted to transfer the idea to communities in Holland!

Teresa - coach in training in Annick's Tour du Valat group © TNC/Cristina Lasch

Cristina:

My case was a bit different because my participation focused mostly on the rally. Since this was the first time that coaches in Europe were holding such a big training event and organizing their own rally to share ideas and learn from each other, the CCNet board saw a great opportunity to strengthen connections between the Global Network and this young franchise. Together with two European coaches I helped facilitate a training session on "virtual coaching", where we built on a session from the 2010 CCNet Rally to explore ways to help project teams when we cannot meet "face-to-face". I also had the opportunity to share a bit of the CCNet's history and origins, in general what the Network is about and some examples of what our community of practice means to us as individuals from a more personal perspective. I asked Al Lombana (a fellow CCNet coach from WWF) and Annick to help in my session by talking about what the CCNet means to them and they shared great visual stories. Al used pictures on a flipchart to tell a great story. On the flipchart he had a mug with a panda, a little booklet and a T-shirt, yes with another panda! He started by saying that he often gets mugs at meetings, but in this case the mug represented the nourishment and ideas you take with you; the little booklet alluded to a small collection of inspirational notes that was given out at the rally which Al compared to the fact that when we attend coach meetings we leave energized and inspired; and finally, he mentioned that a T-shirt is used to cover your back, just like you can count on fellow CCNet coaches to cover for you when you need them. Annick, who had lost her voice to a terrible cold, surprised us all with a fun pictogram which told her story as a coach, and it was interpreted to songs from "the Police" that told the story!


Al sharing his story © Felix Cybulla

Annick, you work with the Global team with a focus on Asia Pacific, what will you be able to bring back to the region?

I validated the work that was being carried out in Asia Pacific in terms of community outreach for vulnerability assessment. It was great to see that coaches from richer and more developed countries thought that the tools used in the Solomon Island could be transposed to Europe.

Another interesting point was realizing that in Asia Pacific, even with the growth in population there are areas that still have a lot of space for ecosystems to adapt. It seemed like in Europe the context was slightly different with areas that were limited on all sides by various activities (agriculture, urbanization, private lands). Strategies for climate change adaptation were less about giving space for ecosystems to migrate, and more about finding engineering solutions to the threat, or accepting the loss and change of ecosystems. I am sure that we will see some relevant eco-engineering solutions come out of the region that we will be able to apply to areas in Asia Pacific where ecosystems and communities are also constrained.

Cristina, you work with the Global CCNet and with coaches in Latin America, what lessons can you bring back to the teams you work with?

The opportunity to interact with this energetic and creative group of coaches allowed me to see new ways of doing things. During a break at the workshop where six projects received training and hands-on experience to apply the Open Standards, sipping on my much needed coffee to I looked closer at some flipcarts that were pasted onto a window. The organizing team came up with a series of fun graphs as the one shown here on the side, where participants could use a sticky dot to express their level of "tiredness", "confusion" and "learning" at the end of each day.
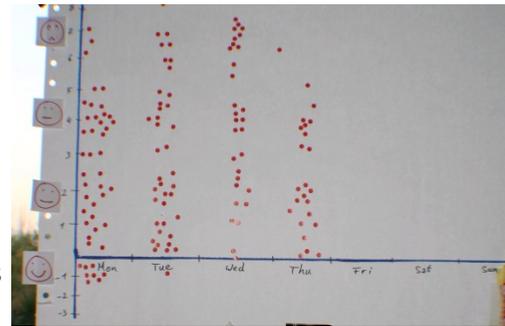
Example of a "tiredness graph" © TNC/Cristina Lasch

Another fun way of getting participants to express what they were thinking was a series of quick photo-interviews with a few volunteers at the end of each day. Nico and Felix told me they got the idea from the public bus system in Germany. Participants had to respond these questions with gestures:

♦ What day is today?
♦ Your thought when you learned about the Open Standards for the first time?
♦ Happiness or rage when thinking about being part of CCNet Europe?
♦ Life without nature conservation would be...?
♦ Your favorite facial expression of a coach during the workshop?
♦ What will you do when you come home?

Example of a series of photo interview results © Nico Boenisch/Felix Cybulla

What impressed you most about the workshop?

Annick:

I was extremely impressed by the level of energy that was sustained throughout the process. The organizers were enthusiastic and dedicated. Days were long, the schedule was full and work continued during meals. This reached a new level with the Spanish lifestyle mixed with Dutch rigor!!!!

I also enjoyed the mix of cultures. Most participants spoke two or three languages and it was extremely interesting to see and hear the interactions.

Cristina:

Just like Annick, I was also impressed by the high energy and warmth of this group. When I arrived, they all had already been working hard for almost a full week. In spite of this, people were actively engaged in all rally sessions, staying around after the meetings to connect with colleagues, and truly enjoying spending time with each other.

I loved being immersed in the constant ebb and flow of different languages throughout the meeting. For me that felt like the positive side of globalization. Our fluency with the Open Standards gave us the opportunity to connect with each other, but bringing our experiences, languages and cultural backgrounds with us to enrich each other and work together for conservation.

What do you think will be the next step for CCNet Europe and how can the Global net stay involved?

Annick:

CCNet Europe still has room for growth and giving them access to the tools and skills already developed by the Global network would accelerate the process. I also think that we need to follow the projects that use the Open Standards and ensure our access to them. I believe that they can engender some interesting new ideas. Encouraging groups to share spaces like ConPro where we can exchange lessons learned would be ideal.

Cristina:

From my perspective CCNet Europe is a very vibrant franchise whose members bring additional talents and great ideas to our community of practice. Our colleagues in Europe are trying a different structural approach, where members participate as individuals, not as staff members of an institution. This noble approach certainly allows for more freedom in many ways, but I believe it also can represent a risk for keeping momentum when coaches need to help projects or attend meetings in their spare time or using their personal funds. I think at some point CCNet Europe will need to reassess different options for greater sustainability. Actually the Global CCNet is currently analyzing alternatives to ensure better sustainability for the Network as a whole, and I believe in this process we will learn lessons that can also help our colleagues in Europe.

What the Global CCNet can do is maintain close communication with the leaders of CCNet Europe, to determine practical ways to support and nourish relationships across geographies and foster collaboration around concrete tasks such as integrating human welfare and climate change into the Open Standards, for example.

During the meeting we discussed ideas to establish connections between CCNet Europe and colleagues in the wider CCNet, and I look forward to helping make those connections a fruitful reality. I've already stayed in touch with European coaches to follow up on specific things and look forward to future collaborations.

Here you can find more information about the CCNet Europe & Rally:

- [CCNet Europe workshop & rally website](#)

Want to contact us?
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