

## Go 2025 Proposal [draft]

### **'From Division to Harmony'**

Cross border stories along the Slovenian-Italian border.

If we look at the map of Europe's nature, it shows extreme fragmentation. Decades of economic development without much consideration for nature have been taking a toll. Biodiversity has been in decline and at the same time traditional livelihood practices that used to strengthen nature have been undermined.

The map shows something else too. While the Western side of Europe has been more developed economically, the Eastern side is where the ecological value of the European union lies. More importantly, many of the key ecological areas are exactly at the borders. This is particularly shown in the Balkan region.

A paradigm shift is needed that emancipates the borderzones of Southeastern Europe to express their socio-ecological value. To show the diversity of the landscape and inspire to take actions by showing what people are doing in their daily practices that protects and connects the environment beyond borders.

This visual storytelling project will take lessons and document challenges along the former Iron Curtain - related to the European Green Belt project, to show, and unravel the web of traditional practices, geopolitics and how these relate to working on cross border ecological connectivity and therefore strengthen biodiversity. At the same time it will collect interesting stories about life in a border zone and open opportunities for cross border connections.

The following images are a start to cover the Slovenian-Italian part of this story which can hopefully fit in the GO Green program.

















POSTO-LETTO









## Captions

1 On the left side the partly open space was a former shooting range for cold war exercises. The open space is naturally biodiverse, and environmental organizations are making an effort to keep this space open as too many trees can constitute monocultures.

2 The border zone of Italy and Slovenia is scattered with bunkers and other abandoned security structures. The whole region used to be largely forbidden during the cold war, which gave nature the opportunity to thrive.

3 [name] started his dream of an environmentally sustainable life in the mountains and has a variety of animals, crops and hosting tourists. Much of the human activities that used to take place in the mountains actually help in keeping the region biodiverse.

4 This unused man-made pond was for sheep herds to drink, but turned out to provide sanctuary for special salamander species. Efforts are undertaken to keep the ponds healthy.

5 This former bunker will be transformed towards a bat sanctuary, as it provides a man-made shelter for this endangered species.

6 Waterfall

7 View from one of the bunkers that is transformed into a bat sanctuary.

8 Posto Letto - 'Sleeping Quarter' within the abandoned bunker.

9 Portrait of Countess Lyduska de Nordis. The countess made sure that her villa remained on the Italian side of the border, through her close relationship with Winston Churchill and other key political figures of that period.

10 Portrait of the wife [name] of the gardener [name] whom the Countess left the house to after her death.

11 Crossborder bridge at Soca/Isonzo River.



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*Alex Kemman is a cultural anthropologist and criminologist interested in showing invisible and underlying processes of power. His long-term photography projects relate to development issues, water politics, human rights and ecology.*

I have been visualizing and investigating ecocorridors throughout Europe since 2020 and I plan to continue working on this topic the future years, as with the intensifying climate crisis the mobility of flora and fauna is becoming increasingly urgent.

In 2021/2022 I travelled along the borders in Southeastern Europe to photograph and investigate the effect borders on animal movements. I followed a part of the so called European Green Belt, a project which aims to connect the former iron curtain as a transboundary continuing ecological corridor.

I plan to continue on this topic in 2023 and cover other parts of the European Green Belt.