



CREATION

March 2015

SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The gradual withdrawal of the army has profoundly transformed the territory over the past twenty years or so. Generally, there has been a territory-wide decline—industrial decline, decline in rail services, agricultural decline, demographic decline and a decline in public services (maternity care, surgery, schools, post offices)—a trend that has accelerated since the late 1990s.

DISRUPTING EVENT

The profound reform of France's national defence system in 1996 hinted at the prospect of a break-up (or relocation) of regiments, camps and military bases, which could have a major impact on the territory and socio-ecosystems of Pays de Bitche.

KEY TOPICS

The OHM aims to promote the following themes:

- Lifestyles in a transformational context
- Biodiversity dynamics
- Environmental, social and cultural amenities
- Developing expertise in these fields



TERRITORY

Located in the northeast of the Moselle department, Pays de Bitche is a landlocked rural area with the German border (Rhineland-Palatinate) to the north and the Bas-Rhin department to the south. The western part is characterized by an open plateau, whereas the eastern side is mainly wooded. With a surface area of 237,45 sq.mi, the territory has just under 35 000 inhabitants in 46 municipalities. The Rhine Franconian language, commonly known as Le Platt, is still widely used. Pays de Bitche was marked by a strong military tradition from the second half of the 15th century onwards.



SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

The speeding up of restructuring in the defence sector, against a backdrop of economic recession, is creating a sense of uncertainty about the future of Pays de Bitche. For several centuries, the territory has been shaped by military presence, which has left its mark on the landscape, the local economic fabric, the organisation of public services, the distribution of space, means of transport and ecosystems.

The general decline (industry, rail sector, agriculture, etc.) has thus led to some profound changes. This transformation must be examined particularly closely given that, from a historical point of view, land-use planning has always been based on the extraction and management of natural resources (by industrial players and farmers/farm labourers) and on the control of space (by the military). The OHM Pays de Bitche thus aims to closely study the disruptions that have occurred in recent decades, while measuring the capacities and strategies for human and ecosystem resilience at the scale of this territory.

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