

How to Achieve Nature Protection Involving Local People

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Introduction

The UNESCO MAB strategy established in Sevilla 1995 aims to create models for sustainable development, enhancing benefit and added value for local population and conserving natural and cultural heritage. The Section Natural Sciences of the Swiss Commission for UNESCO has started to disseminate and support projects implementing the MAB philosophy and methods. The targets are:

- Respecting needs and local knowledge of the inhabitants
- Taking into consideration ecological cycles, local resources, production and service chains
- Involving people into the whole decision and implementation processes
- Creating public private partnerships
- Building up a management system responsible for the integrated development
- Developing participatory research and education
- Implementing a Quality Economy strategy, e.g. by creating new offers and services for a sustainable tourism and labelling schemes for local products.

Methods

The implementation of a sustainable regional development will be reached through participatory processes and bottom-up network structures. Participatory processes ask the contribution of interested participants and a permanent learning pro-

cess. Therefore a Biosphere Reserve is focusing on creating stakeholder and public involvement, corporate citizenship, management structures and capacity building within regional networks. The bottom-up approach is including the stakeholders from the beginning into the decision and implementation process. In fact the bottom-up process will not be successful without the top-down support by politics and the side-in effect due to support from research, national and international organisations, increasing know how and competences within the region.

The Interreg IIIC project INNOREF (2004 – 2007) derives from the MAB philosophy and the Entlebuch methodology. In INNOREF the target process is initiated by networks, assisted and moderated by a Professional Service Centre (PSC), which define goals relating to the regional strategy and topics of sub-projects, according to needs having emerged in the area and defined through a SWOT analysis. Networking is essential already in the decision process in order to create acceptance, synergies, innovation and to improve co-operation and resource efficiency. Capacity building is improved through training of PSC and stakeholder networks.

Results

The Entlebuch Biosphere Reserve (CH) has achieved increasing added values and a well established participatory culture. The main achievements are: a new tourist destination strategy, high authenticity and stakeholders involvement, diversification of the tourism offers linked to agri-tour-

ism, packages for seminars connected to research, education, nature and recreation, the Biosphere Reserve school, increased overnights during summer season (3.5 - 5 %), increased income for producers of local products, improved guest flow in the core area through excursion offers and formation of guides. The project's website, media, presentations and excursions are most effective means of communication and multiplication to make a process visible and to obtain feedback: in 2005, 104500 visits to the website, 900 articles, 8000 participants at excursions and presentations.

In INNOREF the four regions Friuli Venezia Giulia, Umbria (Italy), Western Greece (GR) and Hranicko (CZ) are creating successfully new opportunities through innovation and resource efficiency in eight sub-projects e.g. sustainable tourism services, labelling of agri-tourism offers, biomass energy, environmental management system, restructuring historical buildings, ICT medicine, participative spatial planning. Through creation of bottom-up structures with stakeholders networks, capacity building of local authorities, professional service centres and an impact oriented communication strategy, the regions have initiated a participatory long-term process in order to protect natural and cultural sites and to develop marginal areas.

The Swiss Commission for UNESCO has initiated with the Task Force Quality Economies of UNESCO MAB a labelling scheme for commercial goods and services and a pilot project in order to achieve benefit for local people, to improve visibility and recognition of the activities of the Biosphere Reserves.

Furthermore the Swiss Commission is involved in the coordination of the "Decade of education and sustainable development" and has started cooperation with other countries, implementing concepts based on the program MAB, e.g. with the MAB Committee of the Czech Republic, disseminating the experiences and methods from Switzerland and INNOREF in their Biosphere Reserves.

Conclusion

The process of the Entlebuch Biosphere Reserve has been made possible through the private-public partnership, giving the needed flexibility and

freedom to the management. The cooperation process allows sustainable growth and prosperity in the region. The experiences from the Entlebuch process, the 'I-method' may enable the adaptation and application of the model in other regions as well. The 'I-method' as a concept can therefore be used in regions with different historical, political, cultural backgrounds because it is based on local human and natural resources and knowledge and aims to benefit the local population. The methodical course of action allows for an acceleration of all processes, which additionally enhances the development of added values in the region. Therefore, a secure economic perspective is prerequisite for the conservation of a natural and cultural landscape and of intact social structures.

References

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