

“La Semaine du Goût”, The Beginning for a Sustainable Tourism?

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The “Grande Cariçaie” is a great marshland, about 3000 hectares of area, situated along the south shore of the Lake of Neuchâtel, in the occidental part of Switzerland. This string of seven natural reserves with a strict protection is alternating with intensive touristic zones (harbours, camping places and secondary homes). Since 1982, the “groupe d'étude et de gestion” (GEG, Studying and managing group), commissioned by the authorities of Fribourg and Vaud cantons, manage this area. One of the main mission of the GEG, out of keeping the marshland up and doing scientific studies on the site, is planning how to receive and informing people in this protected area. A working group, named “sous-commission d'information” (SCI, committee for planning information), was created in 1992 to help the GEG in this function.

At the beginning, the information strategy was limited to the natural reserves but, since 2002, managers want to extend this way of thinking by associating several south shore's stakeholders. Lake leisure represents an important part of local economy and protected areas are often considered as pulling the country's development up short. Thus, protected area users and tourism representatives were invited to join the SCI. The idea of the protected area managers is to develop a sustainable tourism concept. This alternative form of tourism, in opposition with massive tourism, would cover conservation and enhancement of the environment and heritage, economic and social development and preservation and im-

provement of the quality of life of local residents. Within the SCI, the different stakeholders, brought together in a participative process, could elaborate actions in this way.

To put this concept in concrete form, the GEG has organized, in association with the local tourism office, and in partnership with the SCI, a manifestation for the “Semaine du Goût” (Week of Taste) with the South Shore as a full-scale “festive country”. This Swiss event upholds taste diversity and produce quality, in a sustainable development way. The goal of the manifestation was to illustrate the link between consumers and natural resources, and to show that preserving natural heritage was important for local economy too. So, as a central theme, the SCI decided to use the lake's fishes: a natural resource which take part of the local heritage and brings income for restaurants and fishermen in the country. Moreover, to follow as much as possible a sustainable process, organizers watched over all restaurants and all fishermen were invited to join the event, and to express themselves in a meeting. It was important to communicate about sustainability which is a foreign concept in the country too.

For ten days, several types of activities were proposed. Thirteen restaurants proposed a special menu with fishes from the lake and caught by a local fishermen; five fishermen opened their door to the public and proposed to bring people on their boat during the fishing; three centers for growing public awareness of nature and history, located on the South Shore, proposed activities, and a pisciculture showed several of the lake's live fish-

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• Centre Prostatava de Champ-Pittet
• Restaurant du Centre Pro Naturo

Yvonand
• Luc Ottonin
• La Couronne
• Le Colvert
• Restaurant de la Gare
• Restaurant de l'Hôtel de Ville

Cheyres
• L'Écu

Estavayer-le-Lac
• François Schmid
• Pisciculture
• Les Lacustres
• Buffet de la gare La Renardière
• La Gerbe d'Or
• Hôtel-restaurant du Port
• Restaurant du Cercle de la voile
• Restaurant de l'Hôtel de Ville
• Café-Restaurant du Châteaue
• Poissonnerie du Camus

Chevroux
• Le Jura

Gletterens
• Village lacustre

Cudrefin
• Luc Galléron
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Un projet de la Sous-commission d'information et d'accueil du public de la Grande Caricaie et de l'Association Touristique d'Estavayer & Région

Figure 1: Brochure of the "Semaine du Gout" on the South Shore of Lake Neuchâtel.

es. Each of these stakeholders received documents about fisher trade, lake's fishes, protected areas for them and the public. The results are: 721 special menus were sold, 25 persons joined the fishermen and about 150-200 persons were present for all of the activities proposed.

The organisation of this event was interesting to measure difficulties but also potentialities for putting into practice a theoretical concept such as sustainable tourism. The country is not sensitive to this idea and it was impossible to make a real "sustainable event", because many independent stakeholders were involved. Another difficulty was to mobilize fishermen and restaurant owners which are not used to be requested for events and to work together. More than that, the message about sustainability was difficult to explain because each one was thinking according to his personal interest. Finally, public participation was not as important as hoped for, perhaps in part because of a bad weather and a geographic dispersion of activities proposed.

However, this event succeeded in joining together stakeholders from economic, environmental and cultural worlds around a same subject which en-

hances the countryside, which was an innovation. Speaking about enhancing natural and cultural heritage was very new for this countryside where massive tourism is the only form known and this approach was appreciated by all the stakeholders questioned at the end of the event. At last, this manifestation permitted to speak about sustainable tourism and to sensitize people about this notion.

This impulse was only a beginning on the long way of sustainability tourism, but it could be a basis of new collaborations in the future.