



Networking in Geotourism A Successful Way to Promote Geological Heritage

Lutz-Michael Vollmer & Dr. Andreas Megerle

Networks - Tools To Handle Multidiscipline Fields ...

Geotourism is more than just geology - geotourism is a multidisciplinary field. Therefore, the best way to be successful, is to involve different stakeholders of many adjacent fields. With the idea in 1997 to promote geotourism, a multilateral communication and participation strategy was needed. The solution was found in the tool "network".

What is a Network?

- A network is a cooperation, featuring the following characteristics
- Persons from different disciplines are linked together in the network.
 - Each partner keeps its independence.
 - The basis for information exchange is reciprocal.
 - A winning-situation for each partner is created. (financial and/or intellectual profit).

Advantages of Networks

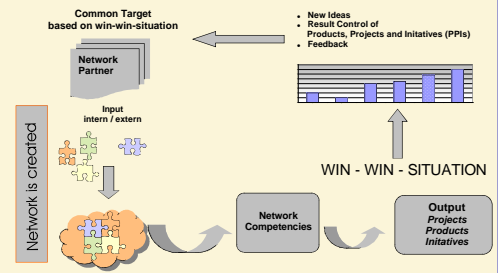
- Besides the advantages of the cooperation form itself, networks have more abilities ...
- ... to bring together representatives with different experiences and know-how and create „creative surroundings“.
 - ... to assure an efficient participation of NGOs and interested non-organized persons, which increases the acceptance of projects, products and initiatives.
 - ... to imply different advantages for each individual partner, like increasing profit through cost sharing.
 - ... to facilitate the development, the acceptance and the application of quality standards.

Research Project

The processes of know-how-transfer and development of competencies within the network are examined by a special national research project "Learning within the working process". The research targets are to work out instruments to measure the development of competencies and know-how-transfer on different levels and to find out supporting factors for this.

Network Process Model

(BORKENHAGEN, JÄKEL, KUMMER, MEGERLE, VOLLMER (2004))



Network History of the Earth (South-West Germany)

Sustainable Geotourism as the Main Target

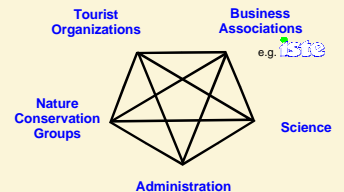
Founded in 1997, the main target of the Network History of the Earth consists of the establishment and the operation of a sustainable system promoting and managing geotouristic products, projects and initiatives ("PPIs").



Products - Projects - Initiatives ("PPIs")

The output of the network process varies over time. In the beginning, the products were focused on the Unique Selling Propositions and the development of package tours with a network brochure, with the single stations linked together turns into a trip through History of the Earth. Additionally, guidelines of sustainability and evaluation and controlling systems have been elaborated within the network and are established. Meanwhile, the process of know-how-transfer and the development of "geotouristic network competencies" was given attention. The result was a creation of GEO-consciousness and the establishment of regional "sub"-networks. Field guide training systems and quality standards have been developed and put into action. One main success is demonstrated through the earning of the label "National GeoPark" for the regional sub-network Swabian Alb.

Bringing Know-How Together



The Win-Win-Situation

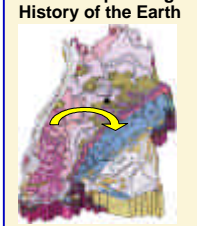
Every partner wins in the network. For example the business association ISTE (Association of Quarry Industries) found a new marketing platform in the network and profits from an increase in awareness of issues concerning the quarry industry.

① Unique Selling Propositions



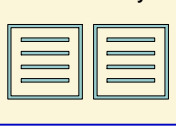
Package tours for every Touristic Partner.

② The Trip through History of the Earth



The cuesta landscape of South-West-Germany offers a trip through the History of the Earth.

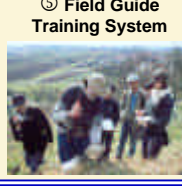
③ Guidelines of Sustainability



④ Evaluation & Controlling Instruments



⑤ Field Guide Training System



⑥ Quality Standards



⑦ Sub-Network Geopark Swabian Alb (South-West Germany)

The Geopark Initiative

On the former idea of the UNESCO to establish a geopark program, an initiative of the Network History of the Earth started in 2000 to link several regional stakeholders together.

From the Network to the Organization

Received the Certification as one of four National GeoParks in Germany in 2003, the initiative was appreciated by the national government. Meanwhile, the National GeoPark Swabian Alb has set up an organization structure which is representing the core objectives of the geopark idea (MATTIG 2003):

- Environmental protection
- Sustainable regional development
- Geo-education.



Products of the National GeoPark Swabian Alb

With the realization of the geopark, the geopark itself started to develop its own products:

- Application form structure - Model for German National GeoParks Application
- First Official Geotouristic Map in Germany

Results and Conclusions

The results of the research project Network History of the earth showed that the network provides an excellent learning environment for the partners. Each partner profits from the know/how of the other partners. The idea of geoparks could make an important contribution to the aims of the Agenda 21, as long as regional sustainable development is realized (PFORR & MEGERLE (in prep)). Within the upcoming structure of the UNESCO Network of World Geoparks, the structure should be used to intensify learning effects from each other.

Sustainable Audit for Geoparks Network

One Tool could be the establishment of sustainable audits. Like in Quality management, managers of geoparks could visit each other and check and approve the realization of guidelines of sustainability.

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More information ...

<http://www.erdgeschichte.de/>

Contact:
Lutz-Michael Vollmer & Dr. Andreas Megerle
Applied Geography - University of Tübingen
Hölderlinstr. 12
D-72074 Tübingen
Germany

Tel./phone: +49 (7071) 29-77506,
Fax: +49(7071)29-5318,
lutz.vollmer@uni-tuebingen.de
andreas.megerle@uni-tuebingen.de

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