

“Leben 2014”: Perspectives for Regional Development in the National Park Region Oberpinzgau/Hohe Tauern (Case-Study) – Methods and selected Results

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Abstract

The inter- and transdisciplinary project “Leben 2014” (= Life 2014) in the Nationalpark region “Hohe Tauern”, Salzburg was a research and teaching project initiated by the BOKU University Vienna and the University of Salzburg. The Project was funded by the Austrian Cultural Landscape Research Program (KLF). During the project time 50 students from six disciplines (Geography, Sociology, Communication Sciences, Landscape Planning, Agriculture and Forestry) supported by 18 researchers from both universities worked on possible futures (scenarios) for the Oberpinzgau region together with more than 300 local participants (FREYER et al. 2004). The project concept was based on the scenario technique adapted for transdisciplinary case studies (SCHOLZ, TIETJE 2002, GAUSEMAIER et al. 1996).

The students and local participants were organised in 6 different inter- and transdisciplinary working groups, so called “polarity fields”. Based on the results of detailed system analyses, each group developed various scenarios for the year 2014, which then were evaluated by local inhabitants. In a final step the groups elaborated convertible projects in context of the best-rated scenarios. Examples and results were taken from the polarity field “wilderness & culture” referring to the subject of the symposium.

Keywords

Case Study Teaching, Scenario technique, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity

Time Schedule

The lifespan of the project was 3 years from June 2002 to June 2005, subdivided into 3 phases.

Phase I, (June 2002 to September 2003): The prearrangement phase included the development of a network for all participants, the organisation of preliminary lectures for the students and the multi staged work out of themes in collaboration with local participants.

Phase II, (October 2003 to September 2004): In the beginning of the main phase, the students completed their lectures as a preparation for thematical and methodical pretensions of the project (until April 2004). The core phase started in April 2004 and was separated in 2 field phases in the Oberpinzau region (each with a duration of two weeks), a interim time (also two weeks) and a post-processing time of three weeks for finalising the reports.

Phase III, (October 2004 to July 2005): The final phase of the project was dedicated to reporting and publishing the results of the case-study. A first documentation of the results was published in April 2005 in the form of a handbook for the region (GLANZER et al. 2005). A second task for the phase was the embedding of the results in the region by identifying local responsables and support for the implementation of the first convertible projects.

Polarity Fields and Cross-section groups

Students and local participants were constituted in 6 working groups named “Wilderness & Culture”, “Single & Together”, “Inside & Outside”, “Fast & Slow”, “Tradition & Innovation” and “Young and Old”. The formation of these groups was based on the analysed results of the selection of themes in project phase I.

A polarity field represents a field of tension (MUHAR et al. 2005) and enables an interdisciplinary approach. The conception was based on the idea to integrate students from all six disciplines as well as local participants in each group to provide a wide range of knowledge. The size of the groups varied from 12 up to 33 members. Each polarity field was supported by lecturers from both universities (2-3 persons) to ensure a stable disciplinary and methodical background.

Among their work in the polarity fields, the students participated in cross section groups named scenario technique and superior methods, data management, layout & speech, gender & cultural aspects, group monitoring, transdisciplinary coordination & communication as well as group process guidance, for superior working tasks and comprehensive interchange.

Scenario technique – the methodology basis

The project conception was based on the scenario technique (GAUSEMEIER et al. 1996), adapted for transdisciplinary case studies at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich (SCHOLZ, TIETJE 2002), which was structured into several process phases. First step was the scenario planning with problem definition and the definition of questions and goals. This was followed by the system analysis with data collection and identification of system components as well as influencing factors and their characteristics. System benchmarking was the next step using methods like SWOT, influence analysis and social network analysis. Based on the results of these steps the students developed scenarios by choosing key factors and description of scenario characteristics. This resulted in short scenario stories how the year 2014 could look like.

Scenarios for 2014 from the polarity field “wilderness and culture”

“Big Bio Business”: Marketing of a biological and sustainable production by installing networks for processing, marketing and sales and the creation of a sector comprehensive brand “Oberpinzgau”

“Oberpinzgau – Today and Tomorrow” (trend scenario): Tourism as well as agriculture and forestry still have an important function in the region. There is a larger dichotomy between the national park region in the south and the easy accessible touristic regions in the north of the valley.

„Beautiful new old world Oberpinzgau”: The region is well-positioned for eco- and nature tourism. Due to the climatic change, the winter ski tourism disappeared. To provide a “perfect natural scenery” the farmers get paid by the tourism companies to obtain meadows, pastures and mountain pastures.

“Much wood outside the hut...”: Snow- and timber line rise in consequence of the climatic change and the lack of cost-effectiveness for agriculture in unfavourable sites increases. As a bulk of the forests is semi-natural, this quality results in a wood-Cluster and a brand for semi-natural products.

These scenario stories were evaluated by local habitants in a public scenario evaluation event, which resulted in a best rated scenario for each polarity field. For the group wilderness & culture the “Big Bio Business” scenario was the most popular. Based on this output the last phase, the scenario transfer started. On this stage, each polarity field developed convertible projects as a position of points for reaching the scenario-conditions in 2014. To integrate these project ideas into regional planning processes, local key personalities for several projects were identified.

Discussion and future prospects

The project was a big challenge for all participants and ended successfully after all. A goal from the beginning was, to implement several convertible project ideas. In October 2004 local representatives selected five projects for the prior realisation. Examples are the project “KunstVerjüngung”, a land art-project for the afforestation of windbreak areas, that was started in cooperation with the “Österreichische Bundesforste AG” (ÖSTERREICHISCHE BUNDESFORSTE AG, 2005, S69) and the concept for an active regional alliance.

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