

Management and Research in Park Gantrisch of National Importance

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Abstract

The park of national importance Gantrisch has gained valuable experiences in knowledge transfer between theory and practice from his progressive cooperation with the research environment in Switzerland. The management converted its experiences in the context of studies work exemplarily. The results are summarized in form of a research strategy and in defined constituents for the coordination of scientific works. Both made a specific procedure possible. The partly considerable workload for many park employees was reduced distinctly and the research results reliably flow back to the park management.

Keywords

Switzerland, parks of national importance, protected areas, research, environmental education

Introduction

The park Gantrisch of national importance in Switzerland began the first 10-year business phase on 1-1-2012 and includes 26 park communities as bearer of the Fördervereins Region Gantrisch. The park area is about 400 km² with 43'500 inhabitants. Between the towns of Bern, Thun und Fribourg it reaches geographically into the midlands and into the alpine foothills.

The charter shows beside the management plan 25 projects, which support the three pillars of sustainability: ecology, society and economy. The executive institutions for the Gantrisch are besides the management committee five working teams with concentration on key areas: wood chamber, culture, tourism, landscape, regional products and quality.

Although by the legislator optional, research in park Gantrisch is firmly anchored in the management plan to the project "Park knowledge". From strategic partnerships with institutions from education and research on the one hand and the exchange with local experts on the other hand knowledge becomes generated. Special attention is devoted to knowledge transfer between theory and practice by the park management because the experiences have pointed that knowledge and behaviour are still two separate areas.

Bases for research

Research activities in parks of national importance are in the strategic aims of the federation associated. Because it is optional, the park Gantrisch is very progressive in comparison with other parks of national importance. The park management has realized early that research can contribute to reach the necessary aims of the park and in order to take adequate measures for valorisation and development.

After the first few years of experience with research activities within the confines of parks, three strategic requirements were defined to reduce the work load of the park personal by questions from the research areas and on the other hand to make sure, that in the park arisen dates flow back.

The three strategic areas for research activities in Gantrisch are as follows:

1. From park Gantrisch independent research, which is in any way, not accompanied by the park. These activities are, as far as known, listed in a database. As far as new projects in the park are finished, one can fall back to those dates and those relevant experts.
2. Research initiated by institutions, which are supported by dates of the park buisenes. With these research activities the experiences of the park practice flow back into research studies and it is secured, that those results are lead back to the park business.
3. Research initiated by the park and accompanied in cooperation with research institutions. Themes are generated by the projects from the management program. The results flow back instantly into the practice work of the park.

Own research of the park and on behalf contracted research are not part of the strategic areas. Neither the financial means are available none are personal capacities existing. On the other hand the areas 2. and 3. are executed by study works of students of different disciplines from research institution of the whole of Switzerland. The park aimed to accompany two to three studies by students. For these on one hand themes are formulated and written down by project leaders from the working groups, like tourism or wood. On the other hand requests of students are judged and dealt with in accordance to their relevance to the park.

Research commission on parks in Switzerland

Relevant to the park are of course also questions from other protected areas. For the coordination research on parks Switzerland has a project- and experts database (WALLNER). In Switzerland the foundation of a park law (Natur- und Heimatschutzgesetz) supports opportunities to study the development in comparative studies. The first step towards formulating a research strategy a thematic catalogue of research topics on Swiss parks was developed by a commission of experts (WALLNER & HUNZIKER 2013).

Knowledge transfer

The coordination between the management of protected areas and research experts by that way is consequently secured. But how can the results be converted reliably into the practice and how can knowledge transfer from theory to practice be organized in a protected area? This will be shown as an example of a bachelor thesis in the field of environmental education. It is known that newer discoveries in research about environmental education generally are considered too little in existing education concepts and courses. Parks of national importance offer themselves as an area of education about nature, environment and sustainability. With their offers they get in touch with large sections of the population and contribute an important part to the law (Natur- und Umweltschutzgesetz) (BAFU 2012). Exactly at this point the bachelor thesis "Education course for the promotion of the sheep's wool use in the park of national importance Gantrisch" (MÖSCH 2012) sets and offers a versatile example for the most important aspects of education on the environment (see the presented poster for the contents).

The coordination work of park management for knowledge transfer is going on parallel to the draft of scientific work (summarized in tabular form, table 1). Judging by experience the listed constituents have to be taken into account generally. As far as the content is concerned differences arise by the scientific topics. For example scientists and practitioners have mostly different ideas of a practical result. A written concept as a practical result often suffices the scientists. The park management however, demands something ready to hand. In the represented work about education these were:

1. very simple a complete list of contacts of experts around its primary topic "sheep" within and out of the region
2. a further training for park employees about "sheepwool"

Table 1: Most important constituents for the coordination between a scientific thesis and the park management in temporal sequence

	Scientific work	Coordination park
Temporal sequence	Written concept with contacts and time schedule	Information of involved park employees
		Discussion of the results to be achieved in terms of a practical aspect
		Contacting the scientific supervisor
		Data base entry of Swiss Research Commission on Parks
	Literature studies	Questions from the operating park
	Get in touch with experts	Prior information to selected known experts
		Documentation of contacts inside and outside the park area
		Exemplary participation in personal interviews with key persons
	Exemplary implementation for an evaluation	Further training for park employees
	Written report	Content study, correcting and supplementing in consultation with the lecturer
		Ensure practical results
	Presentation	Organizing an event with all parties and person of interest from research and practice
		Discussion about further research issues
	Completion and publication	Archive written work, photos and addresses
Update the database of Swiss Research Commission on Parks		
Publish an article in a regional magazine or news paper		
Internal use of the results		

In connection with the charter of the park, in the course of the study work it became obvious to the management that besides the education supply as such, the topic "sheep" until then had not been considered as an exclusive feature for the park Gantrisch. The variety of regional and supra regional experts and dedicated practitioners in the park area were the reason that further scientific work could be initiated to the topic "sustainable sheep farming on alp's in summer".

Research as a pillar for the park development

The graphic represents research functions as a pillar for the classic triangle of sustainability, which again are: ecology, economy and society (figure 1). The borders of research go beyond the practical knowledge. But also practical knowledge isn't investigated completely. Local experts make an astonishing contribution to the development of a park by dealing with experiences without scientific bases. By tourism and education the practical knowledge can get connected and carried further. In a developing region like a park of national importance, a complete picture for knowledge arises only by the exchange between practitioners and scientists.



Figure 1: From knowledge to behaviour represented by a course on the basis of the three pillars of a park according to research results

Conclusion

In company of a bachelor thesis in the park Gantrisch, an excellent example was worked out how the park management can organize knowledge transfer with scientific work. It was for the time being necessary to formulate a strategy for research activities and to become conscious which opportunities exist to establish research in the program of a park under a professional. Coordination of park research is time expensive and therefore studies must be restricted to a certain number. However, at the same time, the effort for other park employees goes down because you can assess whether an enquiry for an interview or a tour is regarding the aims of the park. Particularly the data flow and the transformation into the practice can be guaranteed by coordination and accomplish the park aims.

Knowledge transfer is said to create connections between research and practice in both directions by a constant flow of information and exchange. The explained example confines itself to the work with students and their attendants in scientific institutions. For the future it would be desirable if research institutions would get into contact with regional institutions like the park Gantrisch in general, in order to strive for information and data exchange. So the first area of the research strategy, which was listed above, could fundamentally become more important and research would get a higher value in the park management for its development.

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