

Integrated Rural Development (IRD) Waldnaabaue – From Nature Conservation Project to Economic and Social Land Development

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Key words: Land management, integrated rural development, IRD, land consolidation, Waldnaabaue

SUMMARY:

The Integrated rural development (IRD) Waldnaabaue first of all attends to a sectorally orientated nature conservation project of national significance. Supplementary to ecological tasks, economic objectives are implemented in a socially acceptable way. The Agenda 21 aims at that to the best of its sense. So the nature conservation project's narrow areal and technical boundaries are crossed and the project diversifies to a regional development initiative.

In this way, municipal regional authorities, five communities, and the Administrative District of Tirschenreuth attempt to strengthen "the economic and financial power with a lasting effect" in one of the economically most underdeveloped regions of Bavaria. This can be a contribution to support an area as a habitat that is threatened by migration. This present description also wants to show a facet of the changing role of land development administration in Bavaria that more and more adopts an activating function as creative director and network architect.



ZUSAMMENFASSUNG:

Die Integrierte ländliche Entwicklung (ILE) Waldnaabaue begleitet ein zunächst sektoral ausgerichtetes Naturschutzprojekt von nationaler Bedeutung. Ergänzend zu den ökologischen Aufgaben werden ökonomische Ziele sozialverträglich implementiert, dies strebt im besten Sinne die Agenda 21 an. Damit werden die engen räumlichen und fachlichen Grenzen des Naturschutzprojekts geöffnet, es wandelt sich zu einer regionalen Entwicklungsinitiative.

Die kommunalen Gebietskörperschaften, fünf Gemeinden und der Landkreis Tirschenreuth, versuchen so in einer der strukturschwächsten Regionen Bayerns „die Wirtschafts- und Finanzkraft nachhaltig zu stärken“. Dies kann ein Beitrag sein, um den von Abwanderung bedrohten Raum als Lebensraum zu erhalten. Mit der vorliegenden Beschreibung soll auch eine Facette der sich ändernden Rolle der Landentwicklungsverwaltung in Bayern gezeigt

werden, die zunehmend eine aktivierende Aufgabe als Ideengeber und Netzwerkarchitekt übernimmt.

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1. IRD – THE NEW SUPPORTING PRINCIPLE IN GERMANY

Since 2004, the new supporting principle under the GAK framework plan in Germany (GAK is the common task for improvement of agriculture and coastal protection) has been called Integrated rural development (IRD). The current framework plan is geared to the period from 2007 to 2010 and formulates the purpose of this support programme as follows: "Improvement of the agricultural structure in the course of integrated rural development approaches taking into consideration the aims and requirements of regional planning and state planning, the interests of nature conservation and environmental protection as well as the principles of the AGENDA 21." Rural areas are to be protected and further developed as habitat, working, recreation, and unspoiled nature areas in terms of (EC) Regulation No. 1698/2005 on promoting the development of rural areas. These measures are supposed to contribute to sustainable strengthen economical power beyond a positive development of agricultural structure.

In IRD, up to now separate instruments of land development are brought together in order to utilize them in a synergetic coordinated way. From the Bavarian point of view, this means advancement on the technical way in land development previously already taken. ILE leads to a concentration of limited human and financial resources. "Do the right thing at the right time in the right place!" says the apparently simple maxim. Essential characteristics exist in the clear focussing on the fields of activities of political communities and a strong orientation on implementation, the latter all times being a characteristic of Bavarian land development administration. The minister competent for this subject, Minister of State Josef Miller, therefore postulates that "agricultural politics can no longer be limited to farmers only, but has to consider and to configurate the entire rural area".



Characteristic landscape in the area of
Waldnaabaue



2. FEDERAL NATURE CONSERVATION MAJOR PROJEKT WALDNAABAUE

2.1 Initial Situation

About 35 years ago, a storage lake was supposed to be developed in this area with an accumulation surface fluctuating several times per year between 70 and almost 400 hectares. The historic pond landscape in this region and a unique meadow landscape were supposed to be sacrificed to a dubious hydraulic engineering project at that time. Acrimonious and persistent quarrels over decades by non-government nature conservation organisations, dedicated citizens and municipalities "finally overthrew the project".

In 1998, the Administrative District Parliament of Tirschenreuth decided after long intensive discussions to realize a nature conservation project instead, which was attested national significance. The Federal Republic of Germany and the Free State of Bavaria support the project with some 4 million Euros during the period from 2000 to 2008, and the Administrative District of Tirschenreuth contribute ca. 500,000 Euros. The project area comprises ca. 3,200 hectares, ca. 1,600 of which being located in the ecologically particularly important centre zone. The historic pond landscape, which originates ca. 500 - 900 years ago, shall be preserved. The pond landscape of Tirschenreuth is also named "Land of thousand ponds" not without reason. By the way, there are more than 4000 of them throughout the entire administrative district. Above all, persons in charge also want to protect the mosaic of marsh areas, meadows, and moors and also the dry locations as well through the federal nature conservation project. The persons in charge are aware of the fact that preservative approaches alone will not suffice. In the long run, only pond keepers acting close to nature but under economical general conditions will be able to achieve that. Measures to direct visitors will be conceived to separate the highly sensitive areas from the more frequented ones. Currently, the fostering and development plan for the nature protection area is on hand. First land acquisitions and implementation measures are undertaken.



2.2 Problems

Although soon after the start of the project, serious problems appeared, finally based upon absence of acceptance. Landowners, farmers, foresters, and pond keepers are worried about their areas, fearing conditions to utilization and damages caused by nature conservation measures such as, for instance, along with re-wetting of former moor areas. The population does not seem to have fully comprehended such unique potential. Local and regional politicians vehemently call for measures, which also provide evidence of economical effects and "sell well" to the public.

In the opinion of many persons involved, the restriction essentially to nature conservation technical interests narrows the scope for development too much. To dissolve these acceptance problems, we have asked for the objectives and possible achievements for the individual groups and found the following aspects:

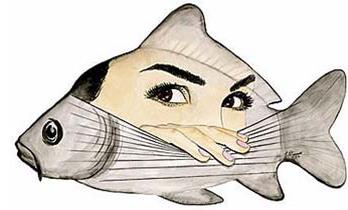
2.3 Target Groups – Their Potential Motives and Chances

Farmers and landowners:

- Would like to assure an extensive but long-term land use, from which they can achieve part of their income.
- Would like to see measures specifically conceived for their group to release their fears of economical damages. This is simultaneously supposed to underline the importance of their concerns and to express the social appreciation for that group.



- Would like to generate alternative sources of income in the sector of tourism and recreation through intensified turnover of their products (direct marketing, product fish, farm holidays, etc.).
- Want to recognise a win-win situation. Prosperities are to be achieved not to the disadvantage of agriculture, but in synergy with other sectors such as the combination of nature conservation and tourism.



Citizens in the region:

- Want to recognize the singleness of their homeland and shall learn to appreciate it (even more). This leads to higher identity, an indispensable basis for a future-oriented development in the region.
- Demand information, advice, and motivation, which is to be cultivated in a continuous process.
- Request economical activities based on the potential of the Waldnaabaue that lead to additional added value. The region is exceptionally depending on it because of its structural weakness.
- Experience in the action field of culture – so to speak as an integrative bracket – an individual access to the Waldnaabaue for additional target groups such as, for instance, children, recreation-seeking people, families, art-interested and art-creating persons. These target groups are normally not approachable by a limited sectoral initiative, perhaps exclusively limited to nature conservation.
- Demonstrate particular interest in the synergetic combination of tourism and recreation, agriculture, culture, and nature conservation, both, as provider as well as as user.



Politicians in the communities and in the region:

- Have to represent their citizens (voters) ex officio. If citizens, thus farmers, landowners, resident population, and others are satisfied, the politicians are also satisfied.
- Would like to be noticed as actors of regional development – unprogressive waiting does not satisfy! The approach not restricted to one community is the imperative to do. Many demands are just to be managed by cooperation only and not by confrontation among each other.
- Would like to draw profiles of their communities and combine them with specific contributions by private actors as in a mosaic picture to an overall profile of the region. Thereby the region can define itself and survive in the competition of regions among each other.
- Measure success also by how and in what amount subsidies can be activated for the region.

2.4 Concrete Method of Resolution – Focal Point of Development Waldnaabaue

The administrative district, the five communities involved, government authorities, and private actors constitute as strategic method of resolution the "focal point of development Waldnaabaue" Objectives and activities followed up to now on a sectoral basis are centralised and integrated into a common development concept. Nevertheless, actors restrict themselves



in the realistic estimation of their vigours to the most important fields of action, which on the other hand soonest guarantee an impulse on development; which are, supplementary to the subject nature conservation, the sectors of tourism and local recreation, agriculture, and culture.

Integrated rural development (IRD) Waldnaabaue means nothing else!

3 IRD WALDNAABAUE – THE APPROACH

3.1 Organisational Structure – Who is Acting?

The five communities and the Administrative District of Tirschenreuth agreed on a strategic cooperation with the administrations of agriculture and land development. Private actors and organisations cooperate in the concrete project.

The local district administrator, representatives of the InitiAKTIV circle (association for regional marketing), one of the mayors, one each LEADER manager, tourism delegate, and project leader of the nature conservation project in the administrative district as well as the contact person for the land development administration form the supporting organisation group, whose job it is to control the development initiative. At the same time, they represent the essential institutions in the IRD process.

At first, the Concept of Integrated Rural Development (IRDC) had to be drawn up. Already during the concept period (March through November 2005), the projects were to be coordinated as far as possible together with the involved institutions and authorities, ways to obtain support were sought, and financing was to be assured. Later on, the supporting organisation group will support the implementation of measures. An external planner was commissioned to process the worked out results graphically, to deepen the touristic scope of actions, and to submit a convincing presentation for the deciding political committees.

End of 2005, two consortia (ARGE) were established by the municipal regional authorities, the "ARGE Tourism" and the "ARGE Bicycle Path Former Railway Line". Supplementary, three participant communities for land reorganisation (TG) are available in the region as supporting organisation for measures in addition to the five communities and the administrative district.

The individual measures of implementation are largely realised by the abovementioned organisations, both, in procedures according to the German Farmland Consolidation Act

(primarily the legal basis for land development administrations) as well as outside thereof. The sponsorship for respective measures is determined individually. The different private and public project executing organisations utilize further ways to obtain support by the EU initiatives LEADER+, Interreg III A, the nature conservation project, as well as the conventional supporting programmes

3.2 IRDC – Where does the Trip Go?

The existing fostering and development plan of the nature conservation project as well as the das Regional Development Concept (RDC) in the course of the EU Initiative LEADER+ constitute two important fundamentals for the conceptual approach. Based upon that, the Concept of Integrated Rural Development (IRDC) Waldnaabaue is drawn up, which concentrates and also restricts to the above-described supplementary action fields of tourism and recreation and agriculture and culture.

Based on a strength-weakness analysis, the following objectives were formulated:

Objectives describe the future condition, not the way to get there.

Objectives must be concrete, measurable, and reachable.

- The acceptance in relation to the project Waldnaabaue by the involved pond keepers, foresters, and farmers as well as by the municipalities and particularly by the people in the affected areas has noticeably increased. The associations and organisations involved argue for the project.
- In the Waldnaabaue respectively in the involved municipalities, the economic added value from the project and the correlating enterprises have verifiably increased.
- The initiative potential in the region (people and topics) was activated.
- In the municipalities and in the administrative district, development approaches are on hand, particularly touristic concepts, with special regard to the territory of Waldnaabaue and with individualised concentration on focal points.
- The organisational structure, based upon which the projects and measures for the focal point of development Waldnaabaue are followed up target-oriented, is clarified and installed (e.g. project management, attendance of implementation, agency office, etc.).
- Cultural projects and activities enhance the profile of the region, they are networked together with the topic and the territory of Waldnaabaue.
- Waldnaabaue has noticeably been developed as an overall project.

The implementation strategy is:

- Formation of the "focal point of development Waldnaabaue" in which the relevant activities and initiatives are combined.
- Upgrading of municipal and local acting into a regional initiative.
- Strategic cooperation of municipal regional authorities together with administrative departments of state.
- Realisation of enterprises under synergetic utilization of existing human and financial resources.

- Parallel development of structural measures (hardware) and higher-ranking needs for action (software).

3.3 Priority Measures – to Tackle Now!

The conceptual preparation results in a bundle of measures, which are to be implemented by priority. Among those are substantial structural measures, in many cases also higher-ranking needs for action.

The most important structural measures are:

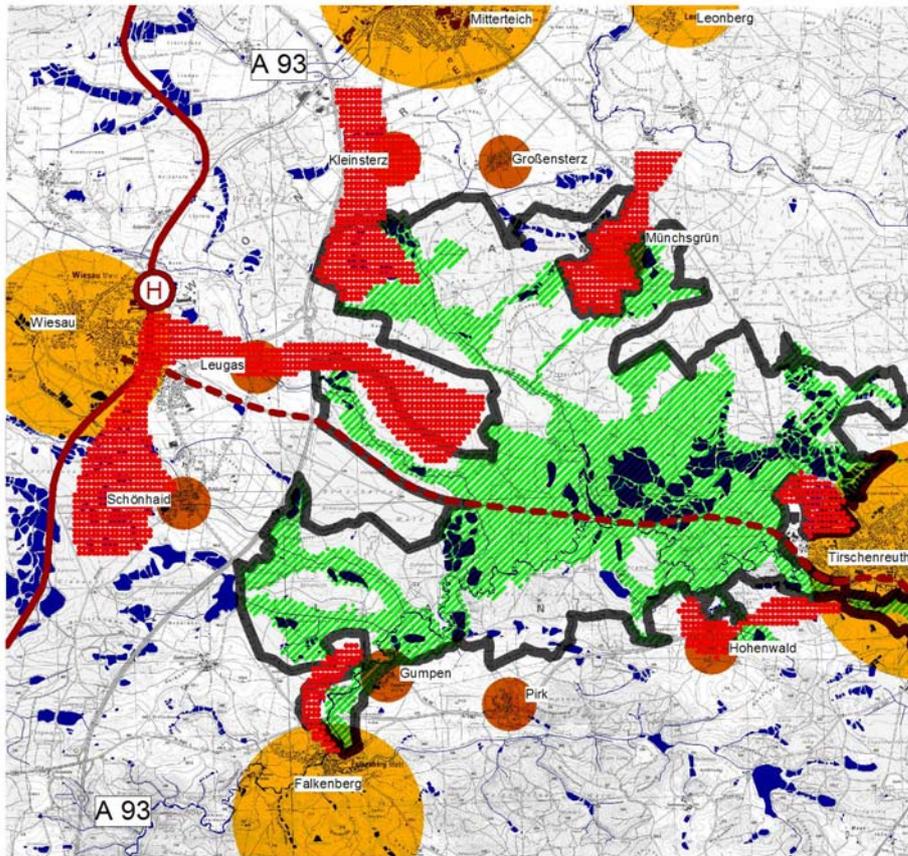
- Bicycle path and hiking trail network including the border-crossing bicycle path Wiesau-Tischenreuth-Bärnau to the Czech Republic.
- Nature and adventure trails.
- Information and guidance system in the territory.
- Lookout towers, defined access ways to the Waldnaabaue, picnic areas.
- Development of cultivated land plots to secure land use.
- Visitors centre / pond adventure world.
- Upgrading of specific municipal development zones by selective measures.

Higher-ranking needs for action result from:

- Real estate regulations for the nature conservation project and for the involved.
- Well-structured public relations to "publicise Waldnaabaue", advanced creation of image (corporate design).
- Touristic target group analysis, marketing.
- Establishing of an organisational structure for inter-municipal cooperation, attendance to project-supporting organisations and implementation monitoring.
- Development of cultural concomitant programmes (e.g. Jeff Beer).
- Qualification by training and further education measures, collaboration with the regional Vocational School and tourism agencies.

Aside from structural measures willingly standing in the foreground of consideration, there is a definite need for formation of organisational structures, for creation of image, qualification, and other "soft" factors. The project Waldnaabaue needs a clear profile. Fixing on internal and external target groups needs to be done in a differentiating way. The handling of aforesaid higher-ranking needs for action will be a prior and permanent task for the following next years. The so-called municipal development zones again retain deepening of existing approaches as needed with a palette of further enterprises.

That all means Integrated rural development Waldnaabaue!



4 THE ROLE OF LAND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

FIG president Prof. Dr. Holger Magel refers in a lately publicised interview to the changing demands on administrations, so also the ones on the land development administration: "These can no longer be defined by the disbursed amount of development funds. In future, they will rather have to be visionaries, providers of ideas, and moderators!"

The formerly willingly used term of "wait-and-see application management" is giving way to the profile of a more active authority. So have representatives of the administrations of agriculture and land development given triggering impulses by regional marketing and have convinced the political decision makers of the expansion of the ecologic project by economic and social components. Particularly in cases of stagnating processes are impulse providers in demand, who can think and act cross sectional oriented.

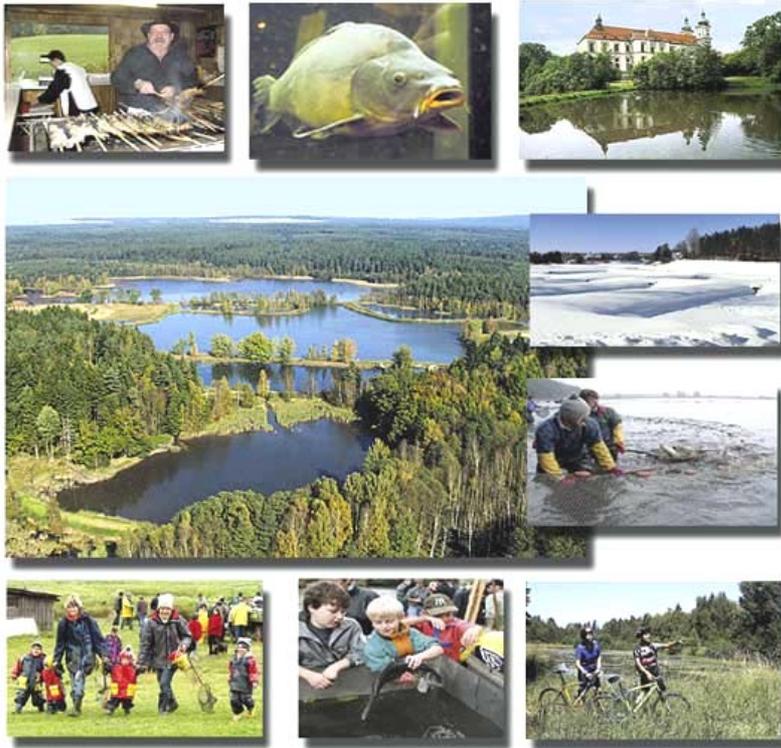
This for instances, finds its expression in the strategic integration of cultural and social process steps. When children create works of art in the nature, it leads to direct sympathy and to advanced perception, e.g. by family members. And publicity creates sympathy!

The traditional orientation on implementation by the land development administration, thus planning and realisation, facilitates problem solution also in more complex development processes and creates in many cases confidence among municipalities and citizens. In 2006,

several field paths were constructed and an access way to the Waldnaabaue was conceived. Finally, the bottom-up-approach cultured in land development for many years assures a participation of citizens and social groups, and a high degree of affection is the natural consequence.

Administrations involved in the Integrated rural development Waldnaabaue, above all the land development administration, demonstrate their activating, concept-creating and implementing abilities.

5 RESUME



By IRD Waldnaabaue, the narrow resources of private and public actors are bundled, respective activities are coordinated, and in wise restraint focussed on the most important projects. Synergy effects result from strategic cooperation between municipal regional authorities together with state administrations, which are baldy needed for the development of this economically underdeveloped rural area.

The example Waldnaabaue shows that sectoral approaches often threaten to fail or at least show lesser development effects. Just the extension of the initiative, at first technically only geared to nature conservation, by economic (added value) and social (participation, acceptance, appreciation) approaches enhances the chances of success considerably and allows to expect a holistic development – in terms of Agenda 21 – out of the nature conservation project for the area.



This example also shows the change in duties and responsibilities and in the self-image of the land development administration in Bavaria.

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Pictures by the Administrative District of Tirschenreuth and Raimund Böhringer, Landschaftsarchitekt, Markgrafenstr. 9, 95680 Bad Alexandersbad, Germany

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