Multi-level governance for regional tourism development

Experience from the Canton of Valais, Switzerland

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Situation

Upper Valais Region in the Canton of Valais

~ Tourism contributes 11% to the cantonal GDP
~ 18% of the cantonal workforce works in the tourism sector

Small structures in tourism and service providers

Major destinations: Zermatt, Saas Fee, Aletsch Arena, Leukerbad

Regional Organisation:
Center for Regional and Economic Development – competence in project and process management for regional development
Wir schaffen Orte guten Lebens!

We create places of good life!
Organisation – governance

- Corporate governance systems
  Decision-making in strategy, products and services, financing

- Touristic governance systems
  Federal, cantonal, municipal level
  Decision-making in marketing, products and services, financing

- Administrative governance system
  Federal, cantonal, municipal level
  Decision-making in legislation, strategies, financing

Challenge: horizontal and vertical coordination of different bodies and systems
Organisation – governance

Strategy, support and intersectorial project implementation at the regional level

Center for Regional and Economic Development

- Competence in project and process management in regional development

Project-related cooperation in tourism

- Development and implementation of local and regional projects
Success factors

«Formula for success»
in regional tourism development

Center for regional development

Project-based cooperation in tourism

Intersectorality
Which actors are critical and/or relevant?

Governance
Who decides at which point?

Competence
What competences are needed at what level?

Flexibility
What organisation for what question and step?

→ Multi-level government framework
→ Intersectorial and coherent approaches
→ Implementation of strategies
Examples

Project «Bike Valais/Wallis»

Development of bike infrastructure and products across DMO and municipality boundaries
Examples

Project «Hub for Public Transportation in Fiesch»

New railway station with the integration of areal cableways and other public transportation providers.
Thank you

For further information and more projects visit https://rw-oberwallis.ch
From marketing to tourism development organisation
- Change in self-understanding of tourism actors, especially DMO
- Change in resource planning, competences, processes, aim of touristic organisations towards a networking organisation with competences in project and process management etc.
- Example Adelboden: Cooperation tourism, municipality, local trade/craftsmen → renovation project for second homes

Simplification of structures / larger structures
- Towards larger organisations and bodies means professionalisation, less decision-making bodies, more opportunities to distinguish between strategic development and every-day business. → resource efficiency
- Governance processes become more simple, less «critical points» in decision processes
Examples:
- development of a roof-organisation Aletsch Arena AG
- Tourismuszirkel Oberwallis as attempt for a bottom-up process to improve cooperation between smaller tourism organisations

Steps to improve multi-level governance in tourism

Governance as first principle in project management
- Who decides? At what point?
- Who does enjoy results? Who is financing the project?
- Who is project manager? → neutral management helps
→ Solutions and projects have to be developed jointly (development rather than consultancy) → project participants have to fully support the idea in front of their own decision boards, etc. and need to be closely involved in the process. The project has to be seen as «OUR» project, not as «YOUR» project (self-responsibility)

Right competences, regional network, proactive project management towards the use of synergies in the region
- Neutral regional organisation as strategic driving force and project/process management, support for destinations
- Regional network beyond tourism, coordination
- Knowledge transfer and synergies

To clearly define tasks and responsibilities
- Front-end against back-end → Cooperation serves most in the back end and is less critical → less competition; i.e. discover.swiss, center of competence for digitalisation, cooperation in legal topics, back-end systems, infrastructural projects etc.
- Within a destination → i.e. supply and development of touristic infrastructures to be defined between municipality, cablecar company, tourism organisation a.o.
- Across destinations → definition of role of regional development organisation as strategic driving force and NOT part of the tourism system; further developments: definition of process for cross-destination products and services, who is responsible for what step? Service providers, tourism organisations, cantonal marketing organisation etc. → from strategy to product development to marketing to sales
Project-related cooperation
- Every project has its own board of decision (steering group),
  financement, etc. → allows thematically and structurally
  adapted cooperation
- Relevant partners are part of the project / strategic and
  operational → intersectorial thinking from scratch
- Governance as a principle – who is legitimated for decisions?
- Transparency required!
- Project management by an external, neutral organisation →
  independence from financial, political, local interests

Regional development organisation as a center of
competence for project and process management
- «Problem to be solved» as a reference, not an actor, an
  economic sector etc. → intersectorial solution-oriented
  approach
- Servants towards the region, not towards a political party /
  financial instrument / local actor etc → integrative
  perspective as a basic principle for our work. Main question:
  How can we improve the quality of life and the attractiveness
  of our region?
- Implementation of projects across economic sectors;
  knowledge transfer across economic sectors; networks
  across economic sectors.
- Cooperation rather than negative competition: confluence
  of particular interests and attitudes in the solution process

Federal / cantonal level: Sector-related thinking and
acting – legislation, politics etc.
Local level: Implementation and coordination within
projects
Sometimes contradictory situations; need for
definition of priorities along the local conditions and
needs; municipalities / local actors often overstrained
by different requirements
- Support at local/regional level to merge sectorial
  strategies and legislation needed

Examples
- Hub for public transportation in Fiesch
- Bike Valais Wallis: partners instead of hierarchies.
  orientation to the guest’s need - breaking through
  administrative, political, economic structures
- Support in implementation of new tourism tax legislation
- WIWA (non-touristic background)
Etc.

Integrative and coherent development
Structures
- Federal level, canton etc. usually prefer larger organisations and bodies
- Often, larger organisations are organised more professionally and have the resources (financially, personally) to care about strategies
- Small organisations work along their «every-day-business» and often do not have perspectives in long-term

Competences in the local organisations and companies
- Strategic thinking
- Understanding for processes
- Long-term business models and self-supporting structures rather than subsidised corporations which fail after public finances are no longer available

Support by public bodies (federation, canton, municipality)
- Not collective distribution of financial means because this leads to false incentives, inefficiency in the use of public finances etc.
- But incentives that are bound to projects fulfilling conditions: cooperation, sustainability and independence, thematic fields etc.
- Do actors know the different instruments and are they able to use them? ≫ Support by regional organisation

Strategy implementation: top down and bottom up need to meet at the regional level

Neutral «interpreter» at the regional/local level
- What does a strategy at the federal or cantonal level mean for the region and the local conditions?
- How can it be implemented?
- Competences, projects, approaches?
- Relevant actors, network?

Top Down vs. Bottom Up – combination of both «voluntary commitment»
- Top down: What? strategic fields, Wirkungsorientiert. What structures, thematic fields etc. are relevant for tourism in order to survive in global competition?
- Bottom up: How? How do we reach that goal? Considering local conditions, actors, networks, heterogeneity etc. ≫ acceptance as «own» strategy in order to enhance local engagement

Financial incentives
Need for a «caregiver» at the regional/local level close to local organisations, municipalities, economy to implement strategy via projects, networks