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BEST EN_THINK THANK X
Networking for Sustainable Tourism

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Cultural-Touristic Network Altenkirchen- Perspective in Development

Dipl. –Ing. Sanja Zerlauth (sanja.zerlauth@tuwien.ac.at)
Univ. Prof. Arch. Dipl. -Ing. Dietmar Wiegand

Chair of Real Estate Development
Faculty of Architecture and Planning
Vienna University of Technology
Gusshausstrasse 30, 1040 Vienna, Austria

Agenda

- Introduction
- Theoretical framework
- Research Methodology
- Case study
 - Implementation of the theory
 - Interpretation of theory
- Network AKulTour.net
- Conclusions
- Findings

Introduction

→ Two studies conducted by Vienna University of Technology with partners located in Bad Mergentheim in Germany surveyed the Association of Municipalities Altenkirchen

the possibilities of establishing cultural tourism development in combining local culture, tourism and business sectors

→ Local actors from tourism, cultural, business sectors and local administration rarely develop institutionalised ways of cooperation in order to generate an economic benefit for all parties.

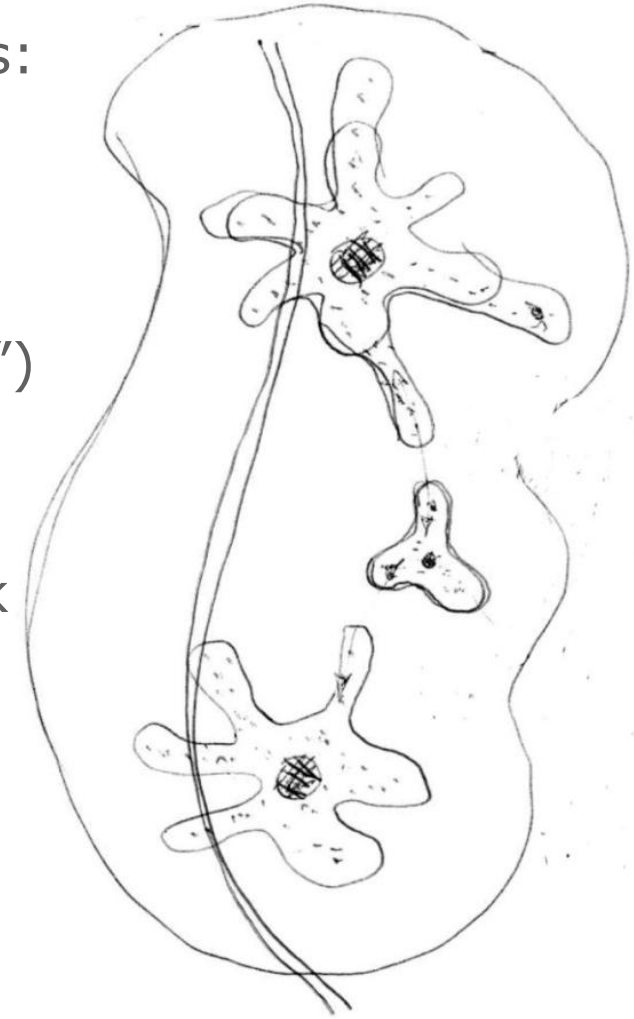
motivating local actors via networks to join co-operations with an economic focus offers an enormous economic potential

Introduction

- stimulating cultural economic power in small cities in rural areas cannot be done **by applying existing urban strategies** to the countryside, and notably so in culture tourism
- “some researchers warn of the **potential of introducing inappropriate frameworks to rural-based cultural initiatives**, and question the idea of **transferring „urban-centric“ creative economy policies and practices to rural locations**” (*study carried out by the Creative Cities Network; Duxbury et al., 2009*)

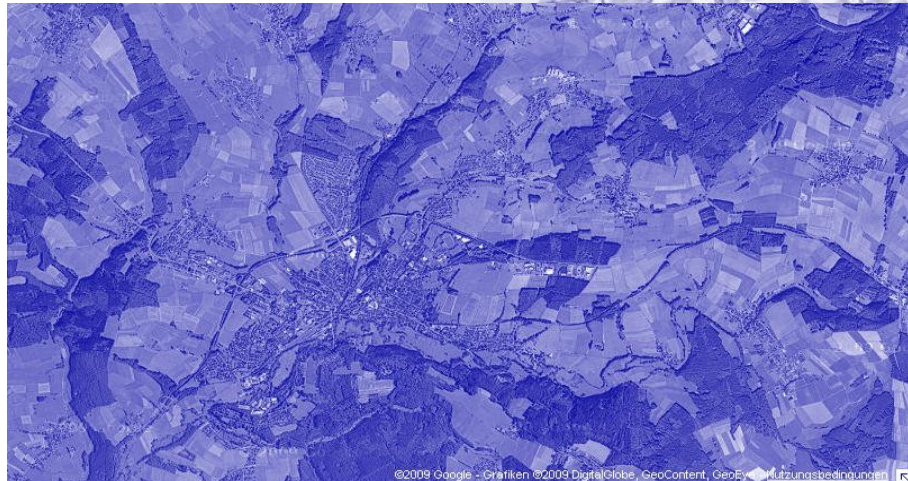
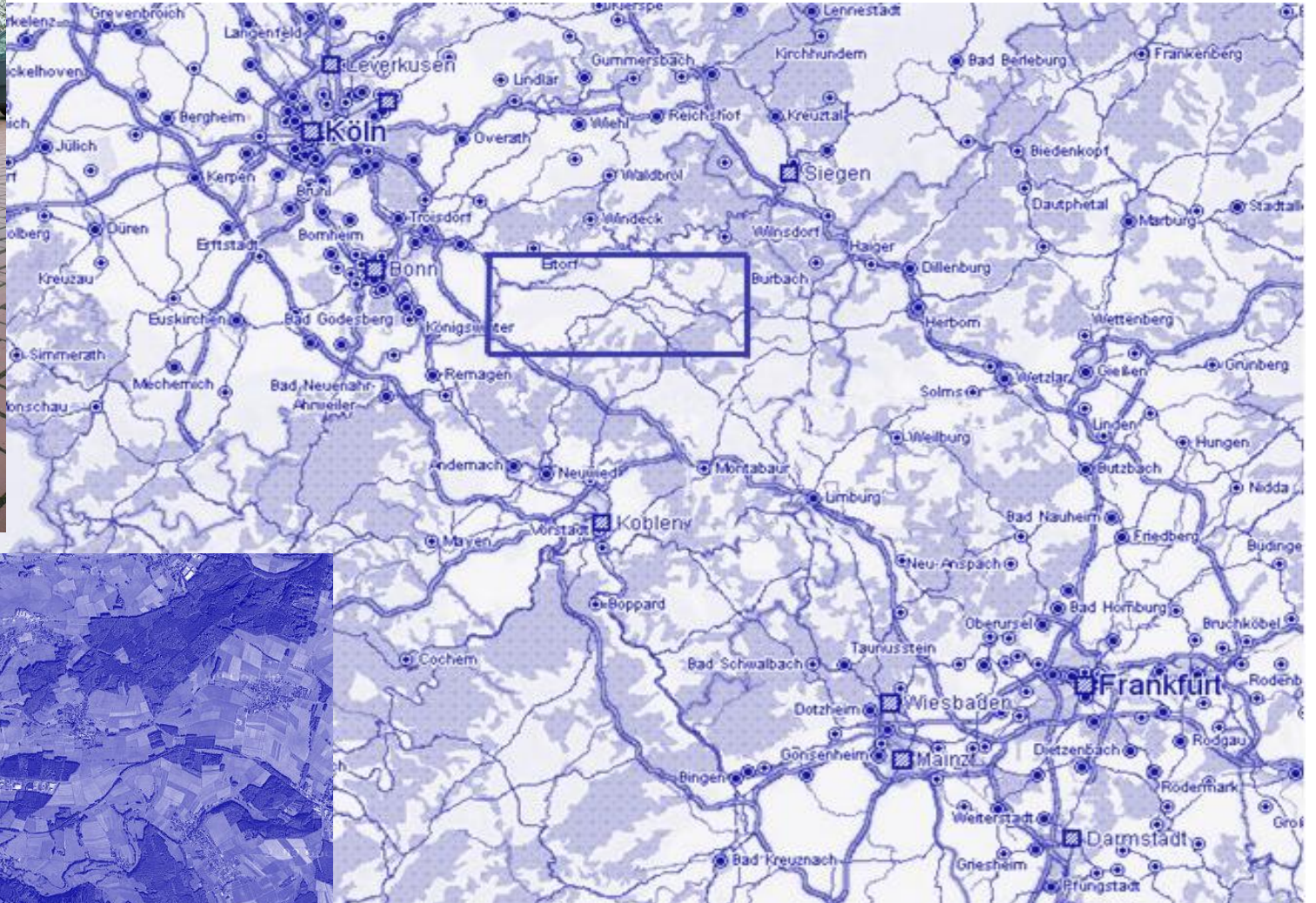
Introduction

- There are different problems to overcome, such as:
- Obsolescence
 - Low population density
 - Low creative density (“producers” and “end users”)
 - Relocation of the economically active population
 - Less money available
 - Insufficiently developed cooperations and network structures
 - Due to the lack of broadband internet, limited access to data transfer and less opportunities to fully utilise new information technologies



Introduction

Small-sized city in rural area_Altenkirchen



Map2

Map1

Theoretical framework_Clusters

„...in small-scale or regional environments it is often the case that the benefits from clustering are optimized by combining different types of firms at different levels of production.“

(Michael, 2007)

- **horizontal clustering:**

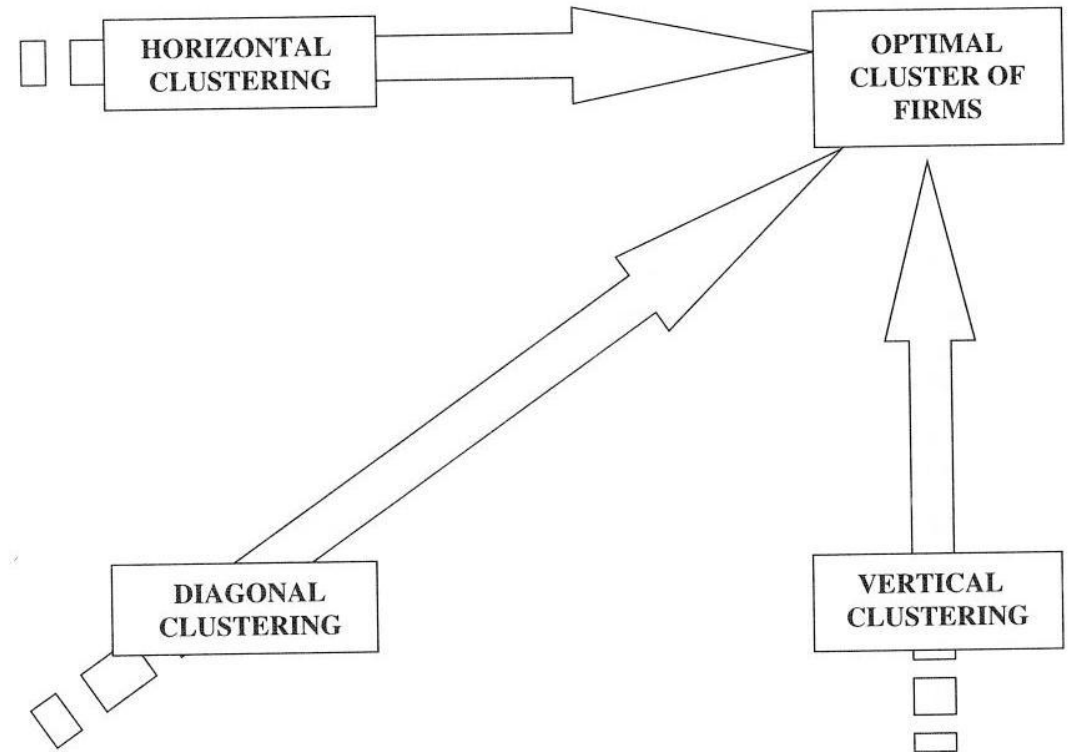
the co-location of competing companies operating at the same stage in the value chain, for example, hotels which cooperate with each other

- **vertical clustering:**

the co-location of companies operating at different stages of the value chain, for example, the automobile industry and its suppliers

- **diagonal clustering:**

cooperation between companies and the creation of a pool of previously separate products and services which the consumer perceives as one product



(Michael, 2007)

The terms “network” and “cluster” are used synonymously in this study.

Theoretical framework_Networks

“Networks make potential partners aware of each other’s existence, needs, capabilities, and alliance requirements, and thus reduce search costs”
(Gulati 2007)

Concerning tourism networks, their benefits can be summarized in these three main types:

- learning and exchange
- business activity
- community

“Understanding why individuals engage with tourism networks is fundamentally concerned with understanding their attitudes and values”
(Lynch et al., 2000)

Research Methodology

- **Empirical study of the area Altenkirchen**
(questionnaires and interviews)
- **Relevant case study research:**
 - **“Koppelschleuse Meppen”**
organisational aspect; creation of cultural tourism packages suitable for school visitors, through the promotion of local cultural values; stimulation of exchange relationships
 - **“Werkraum Bregenzerwald”**
in Vorarlberg, a network which consists of artists, craftsmen and designers, who see themselves as promoters of craftsmanship and sustainable development in this particular region

Implementation of theory

Case study _Altenkirchen

Characteristics of observed area:

- low density of creative actors
 - scattered cultural activities
 - Insufficiently promoted tourist services
 - fewer career opportunities: lower salary levels, fewer chances for further education and qualification
 - emigration of mostly young population toward big city centres
 - loss of purchasing power and tax income for the municipalities and the region
- + variety of single creative and cultural local actors
 - + very attractive undulating landscape (nature, space)
 - + art of landuse and performing craftsmanship
 - + gathering spot of songwriters, sculptors, landscape artists, writers, storytellers and many other artists

Case Altenkirchen

Cultural and nature experiencing activities play an important role in keeping rural areas attractive for inhabitants as well as visitors

- Local initiatives in the last 20 years developed a kind of “cultural climate” by establishing high quality cultural events which also attract people from outside the region:

_ well known German artist Erwin Wortelkamp created a sculpture park in the rural setting of a valley, which is open to the public and presents more than 40 sculptures from leading international sculptors



_ “Haus Felsenkeller”, another cultural initiative, offered for many years prominent and high quality cultural events in the region of Altenkirchen

- Local sport initiatives “Naturerlebnistage” for experiencing nature and for retreat possibilities



Pic 1

Research Questiones

Case study Altenkirchen

What kind of relationships could be established between culture, tourism, economy and local/regional policies in order to support economic activities and promote the region?

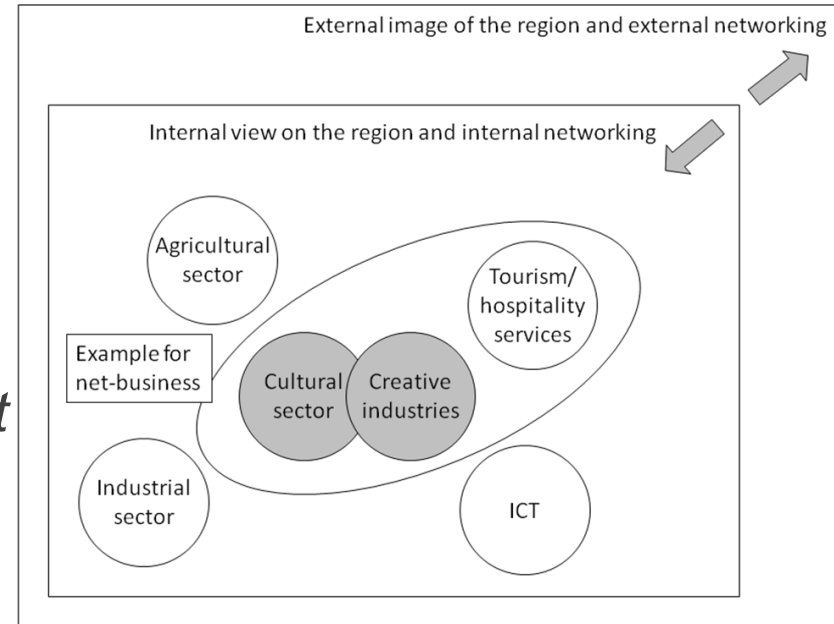
Proposition:

Based on a relationship of exchange and mutual learning, networking with different local actors diversifies the original services of each one.

That diversification causes wider openness of local cultural and service assembly and leads it towards broader public acceptance inside and outside of the region.

Initiative:

⇒ **Local entrepreneurs were joined in cultural tourism network AKulTour.net.**



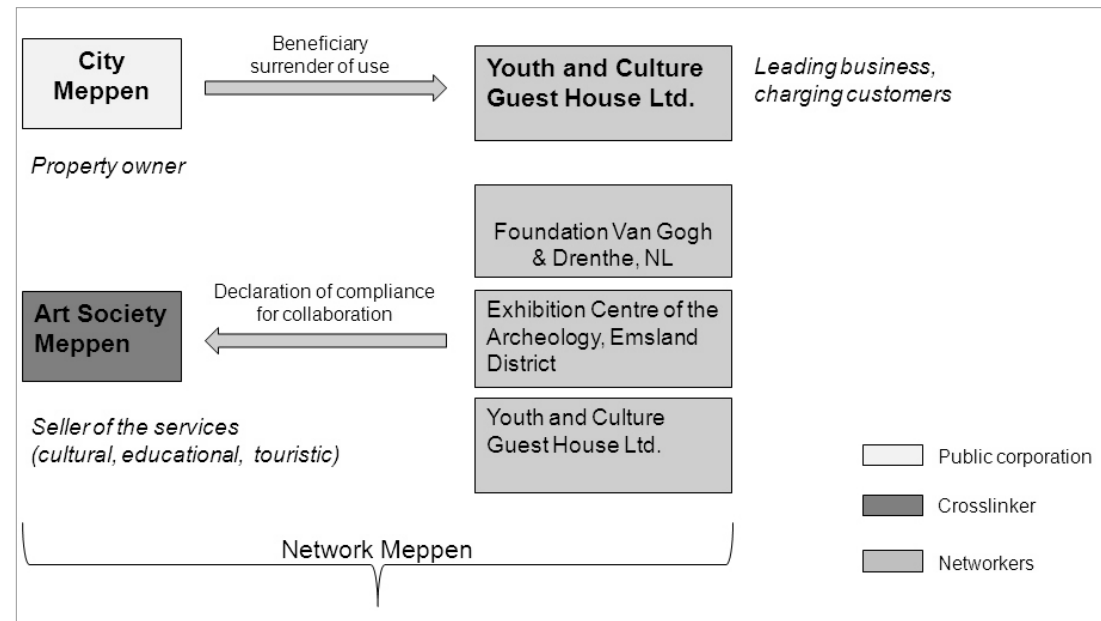
Interpretation of theory

Case study Altenkirchen

“A network can be defined as a set of relationships between individuals acting in an organizational and/or private capacity to achieve a particular purpose.” (Gibson et al., 2005)

Network relationships can be:

- Formal
- Semi-formal
- Informal



Structure of the culture tourism network Meppen, Germany

Proposition:

In order to achieve the needed level of commitment, networking parts must be related through certain agreement of formal nature. Social interactions between the actors are requested, but subordinate to the formalized objectives defined through the networks purpose.

Interpretation of theory

Case study Altenkirchen

The potential local network actors in small-sized cities in rural areas have to **overcome a transition from social interconnectedness to a formal networking organisation.**

Proposition:

Having required capacities and resources, the local policy bodies can play an important role in initiating and accompanying the local network organisation.

*How do you see the role of the municipality in network future?

- Strong engaged (16%)
- Supportive (67%)
- Rather inactive (0%)
- Observant (17%)

*(Evaluation of the survey outcomes for AKulTour.net in the framework of the first network project „Tuscany Night and more“, Technische Universität Wien, 2009)

Interpretation of theory

Case study Altenkirchen

Proposition:

To reach the level of self-supporting mechanism, networks in small sized cities in rural areas need to become independent from local authorities. The needed preconditions for that are a stable network structure and self guidance by the network coordinator.

* How important for network is have one specific person, which would be responsible for organisational and administrative functions?

- Very important (100%)
- Rather important
- Rather unimportant
- Not important at all

Network AKulTour.net

- AKulTour.net = A network between the public administration, the tourism and the local cultural sector with the aim of bringing resources and ideas together**
- this network is **currently developing products and services in a cooperative way** and is monitored by Vienna University of Technology with the aim of creating a functioning cultural economic network
 - consequently, the network approach will be translated to the **communication of products**. Therefore the activities of the network will be **communicated and evaluated by new electronic social networks that are characteristic of Web 2.0**. Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and others play an important role in these communication processes and are at the moment tested with regard to the opportunities they bring for cultural tourism in Altenkirchen

Conclusions

- C I** › Cultural, tourism and other service providers **scattered** across local landscape and **acting alone** cannot produce enough positive effects, which could enhance the growth of local economic and social development
- C II** › Through **networking** products and services that are completely unattractive, when considered in isolation, suddenly become highly attractive to customers in a **temporally and spatially “condensed”** form
- C III** › To overcome an obstacle, which common in low density populated and creative areas, the **local authorities** should overtake an **initiating role**
- C IV** › For a certain commitment level of the networking parts, the relationships between them should be of **formal nature** (real business networks)

Conclusions

- C V** › If networks should become **self-supporting mechanism** they have to reach stabil structure (relationships, coordinating body) and to become autonomous from local government

- C VI** › **Diagonal networks** can be very successful model in providing mixed cultural-tourism products and services in small cities in rural areas

- C VII** › In order to overcome big differences between cultural and economic sectors, both sides need to accept the fact, that they **need time to grow** and to initiate the processes of mutual learning and exchange.

Findings

- the temporal and spatial density of cultural-tourism products and services that is lacking in rural areas and
- the associated inconveniences for customers are compensated in **organizational terms by the network** in different manner, e.g.:

- *coordination, promotion and pooling of products and services (one face to the customer)*
 - *spatial and temporal clustering of products and services (target-group oriented packages)*
 - *pooling of the booking and billing of products and services*
- the network also relieves customers of searching for temporary products and services

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Source

Map 1

<http://www.feuerwehr-niederhadamar.de/image/niederhadamar/koeln-frankfurt.jpg> (28.10.2009)

Map 2

www.googlemaps.com (27.10.2009)

Pic 1

<http://www.westerwaelder-naturerlebnistage.de/html/index.php> (seen on April 29th, 2010)

Rest of the Pic

Chair of Real Estate Development and Management, Vienna University of Technology, 2009