

Learning for Lakes:

Public Involvement Case Study

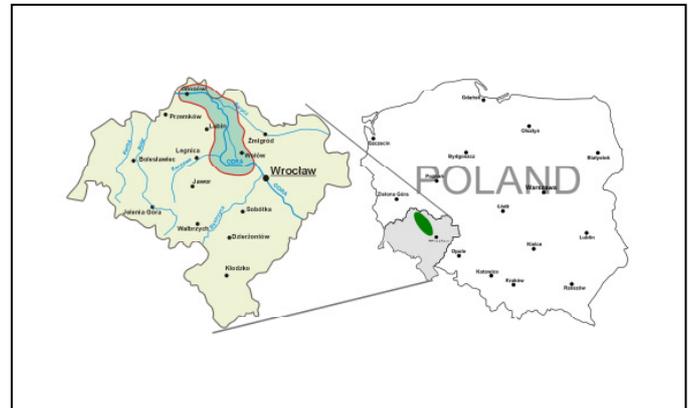


Title: Partnership of the Odra Valley
Location: Odra River Valley, dolnośląskie, PL
Period: 2000 - present

Organisations: Partnerstwo Doliny Odry (Partnership of the Odra Valley)

Location and Background

The partnership operates in SW Poland, along the Odra River section between Wrocław and Głogów. It covers an area of 2319 sq km. The partnership consists of ca. 40 partners, local authorities, NGOs and local business entities. It was created in a process lasting a dozen years.



In 1997 first cooperation of NGOs and local authorities (LA) concentrated on a campaign against canalisation of the Odra river. It resulted in signing of the cooperation agreement by 12 partners from LA and NGO in 2000. The agreement was initiated by LA of Ścinawa and focused on sustainable development and nature conservation. First common project „Bike, horse and foot trails” was implemented in 2001-2002. Partnership of the Odra Valley, formally created in 2002 implemented many activities and set up the Partnership Fund. The EU accession brought up new opportunities, like the PILOT LEADER programme. It was available only to local entities which had a clear local development strategy in place. Such integrated strategy was developed by the freshly created Middle Odra Foundation in 2005-6. However, the formula of the foundation was not applicable to later LEADER+ programme, and in 2008 the new entity, LAG „Odra Alluvial Forests” was put in place by the partnership.



Problems/Issues and Causes of Issue

The area in question is located along the river with its rich natural features, first of all alluvial forests of international importance. These natural values are recognised by national and international designations: 7 national nature reserves, 2 landscape parks, and 10 Natura 2000 sites (1 SPA for the protection of birds, and 9 SACs classified under Habitat Directive). It was important to ensure that sustaining of the Odra River Valley biodiversity is among priorities in planning, and that local community (both individuals

and institutions) understands conservation principles and implements them in everyday life rather than occasionally.

Organisations Involved

The Partnership of the Odra Valley

Actions Taken

The partnership started from a common action against the plans of river canalization. Over several years it developed, became formalized and created its strategy. The strategy indicates that development is based on local (including natural) resources.

The Partnership defined their cooperation focus as “Activities in tourism, local entrepreneurship and conservation of natural and cultural heritage”.



Some examples of the common activities were:

The ODRA TRAIL (Szlak Odry) – a bike trail established along the Odra River, across territories of all involved local authorities
 WATER TOURISM – a programme to develop economic activity that would use the waters of the river but would create an alternative to mass water transport

LOCAL INITIATIVES – supporting local groups in their initiatives, like interactive open air museums, private reserves, education on nature, local conservation projects

LOCAL PRODUCT – the support to promote and develop local quality products, based on natural and cultural resources of the region

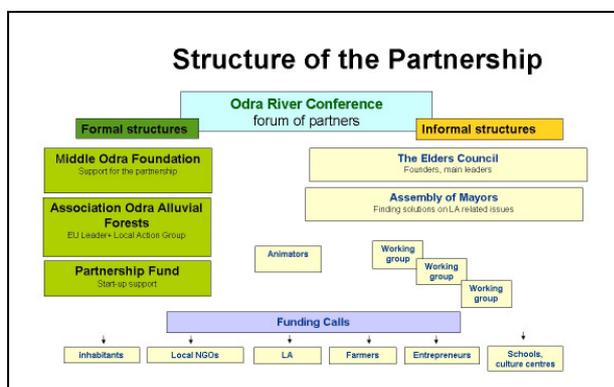
RURAL TOURISM – network of trails, interpretation paths, local guides, etc.

AGROENVIRONMENTAL SCHEMES – support to conservation of meadows by local farmers through promoting and help in use of the environmental subsidies

MOBILISATION OF LOCAL PEOPLE – some new local groups and NGOs were created



Maintenance and Monitoring



The partnership over its history had different structures. At the very beginning it was an informal cooperation platform, which was later formalized but sustained some flexibility.

The secretariat serves a subsidiary role of the administrator not that of the leader.

The Elders Council assures the continuity of the partnership in the changing circumstances.

Assembly of Mayors provides a platform for the local administration to agree on the common issues at the safe environment.

Results and benefits

The partnership implemented a menu of activities. The projects helped to consolidate the partnership and bring attention to natural values and caring for the environment.

Lessons Learnt

The experience from the Odra Valley helped to define some hints for successful partnership:

Regular management requires leaders and staff.

Reminding is a key to keep the partnership together. It may be achieved by regular Assembly, but also by common events. They may be opening of the open air museum, local festival like Patison festival, Blues on the Odra, Siege of Monastery Reconstruction, Wine and Treasure, Tarchalice Iron Stoves, Partnership day of Odra Alluvial forests (with the red kite as logo).

Feeling of the ownership is essential – this may be achieved by a proper structure and decision making processes.

Funding is necessary, not only covering the administration costs but also supporting the local initiatives, creation and development of the new NGOs.

Deciding both large and small issues should be shared: Strategy of the Partnership, its structure, working groups, where the seat of the partnership will be, but also where to call the next meeting or event.

Responsible actions, like the one of the Assembly of Mayors calling for the designation of the Natura 2000 site despite the gap in the official list or for the creation of the landscape park in the area.



Besides its successes, the partnership still faces some problems. There is a general question “How to stabilise the partnership despite changes related to political elections?”, as the local authorities play crucial role in the partnership.

Some other are more specific to the area of Middle Odra Valley, like “How to manage expectations of profit from water and wind energy with conservation of birds, bats and landscape?”

References:

www.etna.eko.org.pl

Credits: Andrzej Ruszlewicz, Roman Guziak

Photos: Andrzej Ruszlewicz, Krzysztof Ostrowski