

The real-world laboratory

“Knowledge Dialogue Northern Black Forest: The National Park Black Forest as catalyst for a regional transformation towards sustainability“ (WiNo)¹

What is at issue?

In January 2014, the National Park Black Forest was founded in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. The establishment of the park raised high expectations both as regards nature conservation goals and as regards the sustainable development of the surrounding region. However, how to foster the ecological development of the area and, at the same time, capitalize on the opportunities a National Park offers for a regional transformation towards sustainability? These questions are the core of the WiNo project. Thus, under the slogan “The National Park Black Forest as catalyst for a regional transformation towards sustainability”, the real-world laboratory “Knowledge Dialogue Northern Black Forest” analyses and evaluates the ecological, social and economic interrelations between the newly founded National Park and the surrounding region.

Who is behind the project?

Five research partners are working together in the WiNo project: University of Freiburg, University of Applied Forest Sciences Rottenburg, Forest Research Institute (FVA) Baden-Württemberg, Oeko-Institut, and EVOCO GmbH. The administration of the Black Forest National Park and the Black Forest Nature Park Central/North are supporting the project as practice partners.

What are the main project steps?

Following a pronounced transdisciplinary design, the project is organized in three distinct phases:

1. Setting the research agenda in co-design (pre-phase and project phase January – September 2015)

Compared to classical research projects, the WiNo project put great emphasis on the participatory co-design of the research agenda. The WiNo consortium spent more than one year on the development of a coherent research design: In the project’s pre-phase, interviews with practitioners in the field helped to identify the most relevant research areas. In a next step, six research teams from the above-mentioned institutions further specified their research ideas.

The co-design phase culminated in a one-day ‘knowledge dialogue’ event in the Black Forest region. During this event, researchers discussed their ideas with more than 70 regional practitioners and citizens. Subsequent to the event, the researchers revised their project drafts and submitted them to a Scientific Board consisting of independent scientists.

¹ German title: „Wissensdialog Nordschwarzwald – ein Reallabor-Projekt“ (WiNo)

The Scientific Board provided recommendations, including a ranking of sub-projects, to the WiNo Steering Board, which finally decided on the set of commissioned sub-projects and their level of funding.



Pictures: More than 70 regional actors discussed and assessed the project ideas at the 'knowledge dialogue' in June 2015 (© Rhodius).

2. Research in co-production (October 2015 – April 2017)

In the second phase, research is organized and implemented in seven subprojects. The topics addressed range from silvicultural restoration measures to 'speed up' the development towards natural forests, management strategies to deal with bark beetles, synergies between the National Park and 'health tourism', modes of sustainable mobility to the identification of local knowledge on questions related to the park. In all subproject researchers cooperate with practitioners. Different financial instruments support the exchange between researchers, practitioners and regional stakeholders: Researchers and practitioners can draw on grants to learn from other experiences by e.g. visiting other National Parks or temporary working in a partner institution. Students will be actively involved in research activities. To get in touch not only with organised stakeholders, the project started a new series of events in the region called 'knowledge dialogue on-site' ("Wissensdialog vor Ort") with activities ranging from excursions to evening talks and tastings.

3. Synthesis of results and problem solution (May 2017 – December 2017)

In the third phase, work will be organized in 'science-practice working groups' that reflect the research results and jointly elaborate problem solutions. In a final event named "SynPuls", practitioners, regional stakeholders and researchers will come together to synthesise results and to set new impulses for problem solutions and new projects.

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Project partner

