

Potential for applying Intergenerational Practice to involve underrepresented age groups in protected area management

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Abstract

Many protected areas' management objectives, in addition to conservation, include preserving cultural practices, education and supporting socioeconomic development of surrounding communities. Stakeholder participation is highly important in this respect, but certain groups remain underrepresented, such as older and younger generations. The contribution presents barriers and motivations for participation among youth and elderly women in activities of Lungau & Nockberge Biosphere Reserve in Austria. The authors suggest Intergenerational Practice as a potential solution for involving these underrepresented groups - an important aspect of reconciling protected area management with local sustainable development.

Keywords

intergenerational practice, participation, biosphere reserve, youth, elderly women

Introduction

Protected areas (PAs), in addition to preserving biological diversity, can play an important role in sustainable development on the local and regional level (CBD 2008). In order to implement this role, many PAs' management objectives, in addition to conservation, include preserving cultural practices, education and supporting socioeconomic development of the surrounding communities (GETZNER et al. 2010). Participation of the local residents in PA activities is considered important for successful management (eg. BERKES 2009), and constitutes a key aspect of sustainable development, equity and justice (ZELDIN et al. 2005; BUFFEL et al. 2014). However, some population groups remain underrepresented, such as older and the younger people (BUFFEL et al. 2014).

MITROFANENKO et al. (2015) proposed that involvement of these groups in PA management could be supported via Intergenerational Practice (IP) - an approach which facilitates cooperation among people of different generations via purposeful, mutually beneficial activities, which can also result in wider benefits for participants' communities (BUFFEL et al. 2014). Potentials for using IP are further explored in this contribution using the case of Salzburger Lungau & Kärntner Nockberge Biosphere Reserve (Lungau & Nockberge). Youth and elderly women were least represented during the participatory process leading to the reserve's designation (KÖSTL & JUNGMEIER 2012; HÜBER et al. 2013). The following research questions are addressed:

- What are the barriers and motivations among the youth and elderly women for taking part in biosphere reserve activities and in intergenerational activities?
- How could IP help overcome barriers to the participation of these groups?

Methods

Mixed methods were used to collect data, including: literature analysis, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and World Café. Purposive sampling and key-informant interviews were used to receive background information and references to interviewees. In total 25 elderly women (60+) and 40 youth (20 and younger) have been interviewed. In addition, 2 reserve managers, 2 process facilitators and 5 middle-aged women (40-50) were asked about their perception of the age groups in question. All accounts were recorded and transcribed. The data was analyzed via qualitative content analysis.

Results

The results, presented in tables below, reveal barriers and motivations to participation of youth and elderly women in the activities related to the Lungau & Nockberge (Tab. 1), and to their participation in intergenerational learning activities (Tab. 2).

Table 1. Barriers and motivations to participation in the Lungau & Nockberge Biosphere Reserve - related activities by the local youth and elderly women	
Barriers	Motivations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For the elderly women:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of economic benefits and frustration ○ Old age, lack of self confidence and reservation ○ Traditional behavior patterns and gender roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For the elderly women:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interest in the theme of an event ○ Receiving a personal invitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For youth:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Missing respect for the youth and insufficient addressing of youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For youth:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Possibility of receiving food or monetary compensation for involvement ○ Spending time in a convenient and relaxed atmosphere
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For both groups:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of information and awareness, unappealing information materials ○ Perceived power inequalities, lack of agreement and trust ○ Disinterest ○ Lack of time ○ Logistical Inconvenience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For both groups:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equity in participation, providing a contribution ○ Learning and education ○ Benefits for community: Potential for economic benefits and promotion of local products ○ Health ○ Social aspects and entertainment

Table 1: Barriers and motivations to participation in the Lungau & Nockberge Biosphere Reserve - related activities by the local youth and elderly women

Table 2. Barriers and motivations to participation in intergenerational activities by youth and elderly women living in the Lungau & Nockberge Biosphere Reserve region	
Barriers:	Motivations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For the elderly women:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Differences in interests and worldviews ○ Criticism of the youth' way of life and strong dependence on technology ○ Reservation and shyness ○ Lack of access to the young generation, including lack of meeting places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For the elderly women:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintaining contact with the youth, appreciation of their worldview ○ Receiving help and also providing help if needed ○ Reducing isolation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For youth:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Perceived lack of appreciation for knowledge and skills of the youth ○ Lack of communication by the elderly ○ Lack of interest among some youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For youth:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trust and appreciation towards the elderly ○ Learning about the local cultural and natural heritage ○ Changing the attitude of the elderly towards the youth and mutual respect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For both groups:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Perceived lack of interest and understanding from the other group ○ Perceived prejudice and generation gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For both groups:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spending time together and learning from each other

Table 2: Barriers and motivations to participation in intergenerational activities by youth and elderly women living in the Lungau & Nockberge Biosphere Reserve region

Most of the identified barriers to participation in biosphere reserve activities could be addressed via intergenerational practice – related examples from IP literature are presented in Tab 3.

Table 3. Proposed solutions from IP literature to identified barriers to participation of youth and elderly women in biosphere reserve-related activities	
Barriers	Examples from IP literature
<i>Perceived lack of benefits</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP could support processes leading to local economic development – such as sustainable tourism development based on the traditional knowledge (of the elderly generations) and networking and technical skills (which could be provided by the youth) (Mitrofanenko et al 2015). • IP has been used to help stakeholder groups to set priorities, take reflective actions, and evaluate their efforts – useful in sustainable development process (EAGLE 2008).
<i>Power hierarchy and conflicts, missing respect</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP can enhance participation and communication among stakeholders, as well as support community cohesion, trust, cooperation and mutual respect among age groups in the community (Zeldin et al. 2005; Vegeris and Campbell-Barr 2007; Newman and Hatton-Yeo 2008; Springate et al. 2008; Mitrofanenko et al. 2015). • Successful IP activities should be planned well and participants selected carefully (Zeldin et al. 2005; Cohen-Mansfield and Jensen 2015); during the activities open discussion and expression of opinions should be encouraged (Springate et al. 2008).
<i>Disinterest</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP can lead to enhanced rates of volunteering and active citizenship in community development (Vegeris and Campbell-Barr 2007; Newman and Hatton-Yeo 2008). • IP can facilitate pro-social life values (EAGLE 2008, Buffel et al. 2014), and has been used to increase interest and engagement in conservation and biodiversity protection (Mitrofanenko et al. 2015).
<i>Lack of time</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP could be integrated into school activities (to address the lack of time among the youth), which could render academic, social, and emotional benefits to both youth and elderly (Cohen-Mansfield and Jensen 2015).
<i>Old age, lack of self-confidence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP can increase self-esteem and self-confidence for both elderly and youth (Vegeris and Campbell-Barr 2007; EAGLE 2008; Newman and Hatton-Yeo 2008; Buffel et al. 2014). • IP can facilitate increasing individual capacity and energy, improved health and well being extended social networks and inclusion for the elderly (Vegeris and Campbell-Barr 2007, Reisig and Fees 2006).

Table 3: Proposed solutions from IP literature to identified barriers to participation of youth and elderly women in biosphere reserve-related activities

Discussion

The revealed barriers in participation of the underrepresented groups in Lungau & Nockberge activities are consistent with previous studies conducted in the reserve (KÖSTL & JUNGMEIER 2012, HUBER & ARNBERGER 2015) as well as other studies addressing participation in PA management elsewhere (RAVINDRA 2004; REED 2008; HUBER 2011). The identified barriers and motivations for participation in intergenerational activities are also consistent with literature (eg. ZELDIN et al. 2005; SPRINGATE et al. 2008, REISIG & FIES 2007; BUFFETL et al. 2014).

Mutual interest and motivations to engage in IP expressed by both elderly and young interviewees imply that IP activities organized by the biosphere reserve could facilitate participation of these groups in the reserve management. Since motivations and barriers are consistent with other studies, IP could be also suitable for involving these underrepresented groups in other PAs.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that IP could facilitate participation of underrepresented age groups in PA management, which will contribute to reconciling PAs with local sustainable development. IP organized by the management could provide suitable occasions for increasing awareness about the biosphere reserve, facilitate development initiatives and constitute an added value of the reserve for the region.

Based on the study results, general recommendations have been elaborated for biosphere reserve managers, which might also be applicable to other PAs:

- Managers should facilitate IP activities in cooperation with schools and other local associations. These activities can inform the youth and elderly about the PA. However, most of all they can help to mobilise hitherto untapped opportunities (e.g., synergies between traditional knowledge/skills, creativity and digital skills of the youth) for sustainable PA development .
- Specific needs and interests of the youth and elderly should be considered in designing PA communication strategies. Local youth and elderly could be involved in preparing PA-related information, as well as in co-organizing PA participatory activities
- Barriers for participation of the underrepresented groups should be considered when organizing PA activities and events

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