

Project narrative Example: Jühnde case

A group of scientists from the Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainable Development (IZNE) at the University of Göttingen implemented the basic project idea: a complete shift from fossil energy to bioenergy for an entire village.

The IZNE research group consists of different academic qualifications: energy and society, biodiversity, life-style changes, health, process research and gender research. The vision of IZNE is the implementation of a biomass strategy linked to social and economical welfare in rural areas. To find the appropriate project village, IZNE carried out a feasibility study. Within this precursor approach, 54 potential villages were interested in the model. At last, Jühnde was selected to become the first bioenergy village in Germany. The success of the project raised the interest of other villages to pursue the project idea, i.e. the success and the publicity are motivating more villages and other actors to replicate the Jühnde model. IZNE hoped for a kind of snowball since the initial project idea. The chosen scientific approach and the practical project structure aimed at a further dissemination. Among others, Bündnis90/Die Grünen (the Green Party) initiated a process on the regional level to implement other bioenergy villages as a measure for climate protection in the region.

The advantages of bioenergy like climate protection and energy supply security are reasons for the project dissemination. Therefore, the county and the EU LEADER+ Program finance the dissemination project. The financing supports the village selection and feasibility studies which are to be the base for decision making. The studies will answer the question how and where the implementation of further bioenergy villages is realistic.

The official decision of the county council was made on Nov. 29, 2006. The county committee confirmed the preliminary selection of 12 village candidates and provides financing for the further process. A working group prepared the decision for the county council. Members of the working group were IZNE, the managing board of the operating company Jühnde (Mr. Fangmeier and Mr. Tannhäuser), members of the county council and the manager of the new dissemination activities, Dr. Berndt. The consulting firm „Tannhäuser“ will carry out the feasibility studies. Mr. Tannhäuser was also responsible for the technical project support of Jühnde. The feasibility studies will include basics like the energy demand of households, supply of biomass, willingness of farmers to deliver biomass. Furthermore the feasibility studies include the calculation of costs for implementing the projects.

The participation structure of the new villages is similar to the participation structure of Jühnde. The planning workshops consist of representatives of IZNE, the mayors, speaker of the working groups, representatives of the villages and the village councils. The **inhabitants** are playing an important role for the successful implementation of the project idea. They decide on the project and participation structure as well as on the foundation of operating companies. Here they develop their own ideas, this includes the decision on the management board. The participation structure sustains self-esteem, creates acceptance and credibility.

An engaged communication process supports the dissemination of the project idea. In the villages, four working groups are set up (public relations, bioenergy, operating company, technical issues). The persons which play a key role within the dissemination project are described in the following. **Mr. Berndt** is a county staff and responsible for the regional implementation of the European LEADER+ program. He holds the function of project manager, and is an engaged supporter of the project idea. Over the years he collected much experience which is important for the advancement of bioenergy villages. Mr. Berndt reports that the key actors were surprised about the enormous interest of other villages to become a bioenergy village. This is an example for his persuaded work in the last years. **Mr. Ruwisch** is a scientist with IZNE and accompanies the dissemination process in the name of the county. He identifies the need of action and opportunities for inhabitants to participate. He is active since the beginning of the bioenergy village context. Mr. Ruwisch studied business economy at the University of Göttingen, and works as a scientist in the divisions' production management, ecology and economy and is teaching environmental economy and environmental policy at the University of Applied Sciences at Wernigerode. His main focus of work is sustainable management, which founds his motivation to disseminate the bioenergy village concept. **Mr. Fangmeier** is an inhabitant of the first bioenergy village, and now CEO of the operating company in Jühnde. Together with his partner Mr. Tannhäuser, he is working in an engineering firm which supports the technical aspects of the dissemination project. At the beginning of the project in Jühnde he was not concerned with the bioenergy issue. After the first village meeting in Jühnde and the visit of demonstration plants (best practices) he was convinced of the technological concept. This shows the successful involvement of former unconcerned inhabitants. **Nature conservation organisations** (German Society for Nature Conservation, Friends of the Earth Germany) raise concerns regarding certain aspects of the project, especially the sustainable supply of biomass. They fear negative impacts on tourism, habitats for animals, and a reduction of biodiversity from the cultivation of energy crops.

The involvement of **farmers** is a crucial issue, as the prices of the feedstock for the biogas plant depend on the contracts with this group. There is competition with fodder sales which offers potentially higher returns. A second reason is the potential danger of innovation without covering economical risks.

