The contribution of small and medium tourism enterprises to regional economic development – a comparison between two German national park regions

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Abstract

The paper examines a supply side analysis of tourism and concentrates on SMEs as the dominating form of enterprise in rural areas. Two case study regions were chosen, both enduing a National Park, but with quite different development paths. The regions are adequate examples for European rural tourism, because they represent a wide spectrum of peripheral rural areas.

Interviews with managers show that SMEs contribute considerably to regional economic development. Especially, because of their sourcing that is very much bounded to the region. On the other hand SMEs can show a kind of non-entrepreneurship, e.g. in the way the National Park as a state incentive to promote tourism, is adapted. The enterprises in the two regions show different strategies in this aspect. Leading to the conclusion that SMEs, regardless the usual suspect, are not necessarily declining against chance and innovation. A coherent policy, promoting regional cooperation, e.g. on the basis of such unique selling propositions as National Parks is therefore needed.

1 SMEs in tourism

Tourism industry in Europe is an economic sector dominated by small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This holds especially true for peripheral regions where family-run businesses scattered over the whole tourist destination prevail. On average, tourism SMEs in Europe provide jobs for six employees (micro-enterprises). They contribute considerably to individual countries' GDP: 6.5% of the total turnover generated by SMEs in Europe is sustained by tourism SMEs. Hence, the EU's rallying cry to promote tourism SMEs in peripheral regions (European Commission 2004).

Numerous authors have made out the case for the significance of SMEs and tourism SMEs in particular in regional policy and regional economic development. SMEs are often found to be highly flexible, stimulating competition, offering a wide variety of services and a character to the more and more *prêt-a-porter*-like services in mass-tourism – and above all to facilitate rapid cash infusions into the local economy through tourism spending and initiate multiple linkage effects especially in structurally laggard regions (Armstrong/Taylor 2000: 264; Bastakis *et al.* 2004: 151; Buhalis/Cooper 1998 324f.; Shaw/Williams 1998: 235). Yet, despite their uncontested economic importance, few studies have dealt empirically with the contribution of small and medium tourism enterprises to regional economic development so far.

This paper means to re-examine the widely held belief that tourism SMEs are able means to create jobs and sources of additional income for people in economically weak regions, paying particular respect to implications of the concept of learning regions. For this purpose it draws on a sample of tourism SMEs from two German National Park Regions: Berchtesgaden with more than 150 years of experience in tourism and comparably new established Müritz National Park. Two themes are of major relevance:

(1) The creation of employment and income within the region paying particular respect to the role of the National Parks.

(2) Enablers and disablers for creating learning regions in the two National Park destinations.

2 Constructing learning regions and regional economic development: a theoretical scaffolding

The concept of learning and of learning regions in particular, has become increasingly *en vogue* in regional science since the beginnings of the 1990s (Camagni 1991; Cooke/Morgan 1990; Florida 1995; Saxenian 1994). 'Learning' has been proposed as a, if not *the*, crucial factor to regional economic success (Hudson 1999: 59) and strong claims are made about regional policy for less favoured regions taking in learning concepts (Morgan 1997: 500f.). This might be merely viewed as a process in the wake of the resurgence of 'the region'; a process, however, which has gained considerable momentum in its own right embracing and integrating sociological and psychological concepts. While 'the region is a key, necessary element in the "supply architecture" for learning and innovation' (Storper 1995: 210), it is the elements of social cohesion and actor interaction in networks or, as Hudson (1999: 64) puts it, 'the permeability of the boundaries between economy, state and civil society', which rest and rely on this supply architecture. Yet, what are the characteristics of this complex architecture? What prerequisites need to be fulfilled to make it a bearing construction for a learning region?

Research on so-called 'learning regions' and 'innovative milieux' has largely focused on industries so far (cf. for example Saxenian 1994; Lawson/Lorenz 1999) with only little attention paid to the service sector, particularly to tourism. However, a few common enablers for creating networks for learning regions seem to be agreed on:

(a) *Spatial Proximity* (Hudson 1999: 68), a pre-requisite that is fulfilled if a region does not extend over a critical size to be determined,

(b) *Potential for Synergy* among enterprises, i.e. the prospect for long-term economic benefit through cooperation (Lawson/Lorenz 1999: 305f.),

(c) *Trust*, especially including the readiness to take on risks and accept dependencies (Lorenz 1996),

(d) *Susceptibility to Change* and the will to continuous transformation to avoid institutional lock-ins and 'to evolve in order to compete' (Amin/Hausner 1997: 28),

(e) *Dense Educational Base* as represented by skilled labour market flows and educational institutions (Lawson/Lorenz 1999: 309; Amin/Cohendet 1999: 92).

Eventually it depends rather on the nature of network relations than on their very presence if learning can be successful: loosely knit ties and reciprocal relations spur learning (Grabher 1994: 31ff.) and counter-balance competitive pressures with cooperation (Tremblay 1998: 850).

The concept of the learning region is particularly appealing to overcome some of the structural weaknesses tourism SME in peripheral areas typically face: Most of them are family-owned and -managed and display a considerable lack of professional business planning that could be made up for by joining efforts (Bastakis *et al.* 2004: 152). Poor levels of entrepreneurship, conspicuous especially with family-owned SMEs, are a frequent observation that might be remedied by infusing an innovative spirit (Getz/Carlsen 2000: 558; Ioannides/Petersen 2003: 411; Shaw/Williams 1998: 254f.). Finally there is the call to unite in order to stand up to the increasingly fierce competition both among national tourist destinations and with global players which offer exotic trend destinations at low prices causing people to move away from traditional destinations (Saretzki *et al.* 2002: 2f.; Smeral 1998: 372).

Gauging the economic effects of tourism SMEs on regional development, economic analysis shows serious limitations when it comes to embracing the spatial context (Sinclair/Stabler 1997: 12). Two older models, the economic base model and the Keynesian regional multiplier, are commonly used as framework for theorising economic impact and yield in tourism (Job *et al.* 2003; Küpfer 2000). The economic base model distinguishes two inter-linked economic sectors in a region: the basic and the non-basic sector. While the non-basic sector caters for local demand, the basic sector sells its services and products outside the region. Rising demand in the basic sector is seen as the dynamic stimulus for regional economic growth since the supply linkages also cause expansive effects in the non-basic sector. The growth stimulating effect of the cash infusion in the first round pushes demand in the non-basic economy in the second round, which in turn triggers a third round of input demand and so on. Thus, the initial demand is multiplied in several rounds of expenditure in the regional economy leading to a growth in income that is higher than the original cash injection (Maier/Tödtling 2002: 37f.).

The value of the multiplier depends on the individual characteristics of each region: It increases when imports are minimized.

This holds especially true for larger, highly diversified regions whose economic setting is attractive enough to prevent businesses and residents from spending their money outside the region (Armstrong/Taylor 2000).

The enterprises in our sample are first-round suppliers of tourist services, i.e. from the basic sector, and second-round demanders as they demand input from the non-basic sector and from sources external to the regional economy in order to be able to generate their services. Hence, the multiplier effect of the second round depends on the geographical sourcing system of the tourism SMEs. In practice, it is virtually impossible to calculate exact multipliers since on the one hand supplier relations ramify tremendously with each round, which requires extensive field research in each region, and on the other hand multipliers vary from branch to branch and depend on a range of factors which are equally difficult to compute (Fletcher 1989: 515f.). Moreover, regional multiplier analysis does not take capacity constraints into account neither does it provide for an appropriate time frame for economic stimulation to come into effect (Armstrong/Taylor 2000: 20f.). It is this array of limitations, which makes regional economic impact analysis in tourism more of a rough estimation than an exact model (Dwyer/Forsyth 1997: 225).

3 Tourism SMEs and their economic impact in Berchtesgaden and Müritz region: how to grasp them empirically

Chapter 2 shows the pitfalls one is confronted with when regional economic effects are to be assessed. In this paper we do not want to follow neither a qualitative nor a pure quantitative path. To avoid getting stuck in the middle telephone interviews have been chosen. They provide an appropriate means to receive both data of a more standardized character as well as information on e.g. networks or cooperations.

When laying a special focus on SMEs the question arises how the term is used in this study. Definitions of small and medium enterprises vary greatly rendering it difficult to conduct studies with a comparative methodology (cf. Page *et al.* 1999), a fact that has impeded academic progress in this field.

We follow the definition of SMEs as businesses, which employ ten people, or less corresponding to the definition of micro enterprises by the European Union. This benchmark was also used in the studies of Thomas *et al.* (1997) in the United Kingdom and Page *et al.* (1999) in New Zealand.

Especially in peripheral regions SMEs are the dominating form of enterprise in tourism. This also holds true for the regions in this survey. Most of the enterprises do not even have one full-time employee. In many cases these enterprises are of informal character, making it difficult to gather information about them. This supported the conclusion to contact directly the enterprises in order to receive first-hand data.

The two regions were selected because they are two extremes when comparing the German National Park destinations and therefore represent a vast spectrum of such tourist areas.

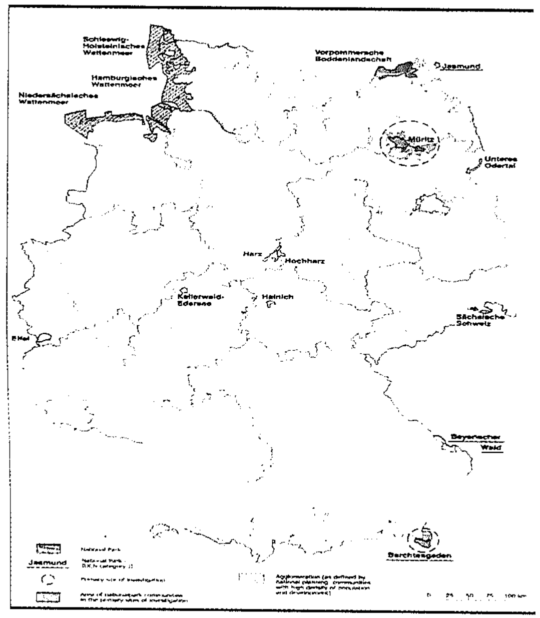
Most striking difference between the two regions is their distinct development path: Berchtesgaden, situated in the German Alps, looks back on 150 years of tourism, whereas in Müritz National Park Region it was only after the German reunification in 1990 that it has developed market-based tourism.

When Berchtesgaden National Park was founded in 1978 the tourist destination had been established for over a century – already 261,462 arrivals of overnight tourists were counted (BayLfStD 1980: 27). The protected area was designated in the aftermath of an emotional debate about a cable railway, which was planned to promote winter tourism on the slopes of the Watzmann as the tourism product was geared to summer tourists. Not at least these circumstances still make the reputation of the national park as hindering a free (tourism) development. A wide acceptance is still missing, although the first steps are made to integrate the national park in the destination profile (Job et al. 2003: 68).

In contrary, the designation of the Müritz National Park can be seen as an instrument to push tourism development. Tourism was expected to give a good opportunity to strengthen the weak economic base of the region. In contrast to the situation when Berchtesgaden National Park was designated, the protected area was seen as a label for good environmental quality thus providing the region with a competitive advantage in tourism market. The national park has been incorporated in tourism development since the beginning.

Although the two regions differ in many aspects, one thing both have in common is a quite peripheral location and a rural character. Both are situated comparably far from bigger agglomerations (see map). A characteristic most national park destinations share being spread centrifugal.

Figure 1: ***National parks in Germany***



Sketch: Job/Losang 2004

In this study, the two national park regions were defined referring to Hannemann/Job (2003:10). Therefore all municipalities (*Gemeinden*), which are lying completely or partly within respectively bordering the National Park are considered to belong to the region (see table). The size of the regions adds up to 348 km² (Berchtesgaden region), respectively 1,228 km² (Müritz region), with 24,196 inhabitants for the first region and 65,259 for the second. Both regions have low population densities compared to the German average of 231, especially the Müritz region with 53 inhabitants per km² – Berchtesgaden has 70 (see table 1).

The unemployment rate in Berchtesgaden region accounts for 6.3% (Landkreis Berchtesgaden, April 2004), which is quite below the German mean (10.7%, April 2004), whereas the unemployment rate in the Müritz region is one of the highest in Germany (Landkreis Müritz: 22% and Landkreis Mecklenburg-Strelitz 24,5%, April 2004) (BfA 2004).

Table 1: Berchtesgaden national park region

	Inhabitants	Area in km²	Nights	Arrivals	Beds	Tourism Intensity (nights per 1,000 inhabitants)
Berchtesgaden	7,682	34.8	409,178	79,392	3,833	5,326
Schönau a. K.	5,418	131.7	674,351	91,565	4,927	12,446
Ramsau	1,825	129.2	242,285	40,365	2,175	13,275
Bischofswiesen	7,463	34.5	180,044	32,033	1,946	2,412
Marktschellenberg	1,808	17.7	43,523	6,303	686	2,407
Total	24,196	347.7	1,549,381	249,658	13,567	6,403

Source: BayLfStD 2003, p. 28ff.

Table 2: Müritz national park region

	Inhabitants	Area in km²	Nights	Arrivals	Beds	Tourism Intensity (nights per 1,000 inhabitants)
Ankershagen	746	28.2	–	–	–	–
Blankensee	857	41.3	–	–	–	–
Blumenholz	–	–	–	–	–	–
Carpin	1,005	63.6	–	–	–	–
Feldberger Seenlandschaft	5,129	199.6	120,451	27,336	1,208	23,484
Groß Dratow	402	25.8	–	–	–	–
Grünow	337	23.2	–	–	–	–
Kargow	774	69	–	–	–	–
Klein Vielen	803	45.4	–	–	–	–
Kratzeburg	565	54.7	9,491	2,574	123	16,798
Möllenhagen	2,048	49.8	10,513	3,559	121	5,133
Neustrelitz	22,863	138.1	49,041	25,921	453	2,145
Rechlin	2,376	77.3	86,242	16,524	817	36,297
Roggentin	771	72.3	3,700	767	69	4,799
Userin	846	45.8	35,372	11,696	382	41,811
Waren/Müritz-Stadt	21,838	158.4	190,474	51,650	1,337	8,722
Wesenberg-Stadt	3,305	89.5	63,061	16,453	692	19,080
Wokuhl-Dabelow	594	46.1	–	–	–	–
Total	**65,259**	**1227.9**	**568,345**	**156,480**	**5,202**	**8,709**

Source: StLaMV 2003

Nowadays the Berchtesgaden region is suffering from declining overnights (-4,4% 2002/2001), whereas the Müritz region shows an increase (+12,6%) (BayLfStD 2003, 41; StLaMV 2003).

Between March and May 2004 270 owners/managers of tourism enterprises, 153 in Berchtesgaden region and 117 in Müritz region have been interviewed. Because no official compilation of all SMEs in the two regions exists, we compiled own lists of all tourism-related enterprises based on catalogues and internet platforms. We differentiated between holiday flats/summer cottages, hotels/guesthouses/inns and further services like ski schools or boat rental facilities. In each of these strata, we contacted 15% of the enterprises.

The length of the interviews varied between 10 and 20 minutes. We asked for the structural characteristics of the tourism enterprise for example location, size and business volume/total revenue, and for the creation of employment and income (some questions are based on Page et al 1998: 454ff.; Ioannides & Petersen 2003) In addition the role of the national park for the enterprise was analysed. In the part on enablers and disablers for creating learning regions in the national park destinations, we followed Saretzki *et al.* (2002) and asked for the managers´ opinion concerning cooperation, fairness of business partners, economies of scale resulting from cooperation and the role of corporate advertisement.

4 Findings

The strong supremacy of SMEs in peripheral regions is confirmed in our sample: only 4.4% of the interviewed enterprises employ ten or more people and thus do not fall under our definition of SMEs. More than three out of four enterprises belong to the category 'accommodation', while 14% of the remaining businesses are in the catering sector and almost 4% in other tourism-related sectors (i.e. excursions, canoeing, souvenirs etc.). About two out of three enterprises providing accommodation rent out holiday-flats, while hotels make up only 10% and guesthouses 14%. This chances when looking at accommodation capacity, as for each bed in *non*-holiday-flat accommodations there are only 0.62 beds in holiday-flat accommodations. Family-owned businesses (operated and owned *only* by family members) are dominant among holiday-flat enterprises, whereas their share is significantly smaller in the other categories.

Table 3: Comparison of the two national park regions

n = 270 (100%)	Berchtesgaden dwellings/ cottages n = 67 (24.8%)	hotels/ pensions n = 57 (21.1%)	other services n = 29 (10.7%)	Müritz National Park dwellings/ cottages n = 78 (28.9%)	hotels/ pensions n = 11 (4.1%)	other services n = 28 (10.4%)
age (years)	16.7***	34.6***	19.0	8.5***	6.1***	14.4
employee (average)	0.8	3.6	5.3	0.7	6.5	3.9
family-owned (%)	88.1	52.6	20.7	91.0	27.3	28.6
suppliers (average)	2.2*	4.4	8.7*	1.2*	6.9	5.1*
turnover (% < 25.000 €)	90.0	46.9	13.4	94.8	25.0	13.0
turnover (% > 200.000 €)	1.7	18.4	43.5	0.0	25.0	17.4
beds (average)			–			–
price/bed (average)	17.4*	25.6*	–	15.1*	32.6*	–

Source: Own survey

Almost all holiday-flats are operated in addition to the normal job in order to create an extra source of income. Many businesses are located in the house the owning family lives in renting rooms which are no longer occupied, for instance because some family members have moved out. As a consequence of these different modes of operation and ownership turnovers of the surveyed enterprises show very distinct features: The majority of holiday-flats have a turnover of less than EUR 25,000 per year and do not employ any staff. In fact, normally there is just one family member with less than 20 hours work a week running the whole business, since service is limited to providing rooms and occasionally breakfast.

Although they do create income, most of the holiday-flats (86,8%) are not officially registered as businesses, i.e. they do not have any specific legal form or tax.

Apart from these differences between various types of SMEs, there are also significant discrepancies between the enterprises in the two National Park Regions. The first difference concerns the average age of businesses: While most of them in Müritz National Park are naturally younger than 15 years, average age in Berchtesgaden is considerably higher with some enterprises looking back on more than 100 years of operation. Müritz National Park, as a relatively young rural German tourist region, is characterised by only a small number of non-holiday-flat accommodation. This results in a proportion of beds by holiday-flats to non-holiday-flats of 1.74, whereas a ratio of 0.55 in Berchtesgaden hints at an accommodation situation where guesthouses and hotels are more prominent.

The type of SME also has influence on income and employment in the respective region in a decisive way: As outlined above, holiday-flats create an extra source of income for the owners but only give few impulses to the local labour market. Because of their comparably low capacities, family members are able to do the whole work necessary by themselves and there is no need to employ additional staff. As a result of the plain, no-frills service offered – just housing – they are almost completely lacking constant business connections with suppliers. Therefore, backward linkages within the region and in total are fairly insignificant. Yet, the small and varying demand is generally covered by local businesses like carpenters for a new bed or bread service for the guests by a nearby bakery.

Things are different looking at the other accommodation and service enterprises, which create full-time jobs outside the family: On average there are 2.8 non-family employees in Berchtesgaden region and 2.9 in a Müritz region enterprise. The typical employee and owner of a SME does not have more than ten years of schooling and no specific tourism-based education. Caused by seasonal variability with a summer peak, which is more marked in Müritz than in Berchtesgaden, every SME employs an additional 0.8 people during peak season. Projecting total numbers from our sample, the tourism-related businesses add 2,635 all-season-jobs in Berchtesgaden and 1,214 in Müritz National Park. The holiday-flats are excluded from this extrapolation due to their high seasonal dependency and their little share of human labour.

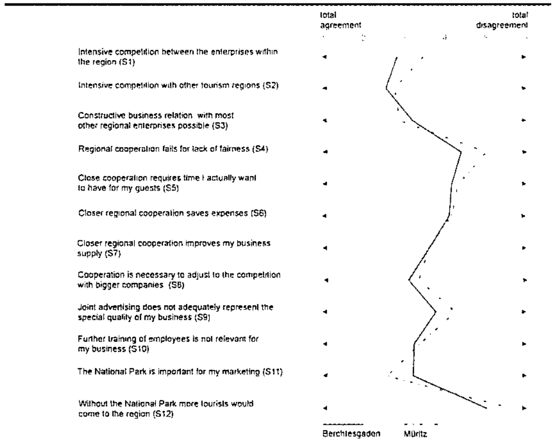
This striking difference in projected total employment figures between the two regions is by large owing to the higher population of guesthouses and hotels in Berchtesgaden.

In a similar way, relations between hotels/guesthouses and suppliers are clearly more salient than in the case of holiday-flats: On average there are 4.8 suppliers for hotels/guesthouses and 6.7 for other tourism-related services – compared to holiday-flats with an average of 1.6. The majority of suppliers are located within the *Landkreis*[1]: Approximately 80% of hotels/guesthouses and 67% of all other tourism-related service enterprises create income and jobs in the *Landkreis* itself (suppliers).

Undoubtedly, there are structures of a supplier-network in the two National Park Regions. The relations *between* tourism SMEs, especially regarding enablers and disablers for the concept of learning regions, remain to be investigated, though. The *Potential of Synergy* is gauged by the three statements S6, S7 and S8 in Figure 2 which aim at identifying the will to cooperate with each other in order to achieve long-term economic advantages for the participating enterprises.

1 Administrative boundary in Germany (county/district)

Figure 2: Statement profile



The potential to save expenses is assessed cautiously whereas the improvement of businesses' supply through regional cooperation shows more positive attitudes. The question on the need of cooperation in order to adjust to the competition with bigger companies meets with most enterprises' strong approval. Finally, a sizeable number of SMEs expects general advantages by better regional cooperation; as a matter of fact just about half of all SMEs in the sample have an ongoing cooperation with another tourism SME, two thirds of which are from the same category. Most often, these cooperations are of very low intensity. For example, a hotel might offer canoeing tours from a local tour company or if a guesthouse is overbooked, it will refer potential guests to a partner guesthouse with vacancies. The category of enterprises does not have influence on this behaviour, yet the location in one or the other region does:

While there are only 39% of enterprises pursuing some sort of intra-regional cooperation in Berchtesgaden, in Müritz almost 60% have permanent connections to other businesses.

It is *Trust* between enterprises as described S3, S4 and S5 which constitutes another pivotal enabler for the development of learning regions. Evaluation of these three statements generally indicates a disposition to trust each other, but once again it is more salient in Müritz region, whereas operators in Berchtesgaden region are slightly more suspicious of cooperating with their competitors.

The *Susceptibility to Change* is assessed by the interest in further training programs and the creative adaptation to the National Park as a marketing potential to attract new tourists. Roughly one third of all interviewed SMEs participates in further training programs offered e.g. by the local tourism association. Sixty percent of enterprises believe that the provided training is not useful to them (S10). This general result has to be analysed against the background of the different types of enterprises: Holiday-flats with their scarcely developed management structure show a low rate of participation of only 20% as opposed to 43% for hotels/guesthouses and more than 50% for other tourism-related services. The highest discrepancies between the two regions are revealed in enterprises' attitude towards the National Park: Although they agree on the National Park's function as a tourist attraction, attitudes are generally less positive in Berchtesgaden region than in Müritz region.

The two statements S11 and S12 describe the high importance of the National Park for each region, but in a more obvious manner in Müritz region. Especially the local tourism business in Berchtesgaden region, where the National Park was established against resistance in the 1970s, but tourism exists for more than 150 years, has accepted the status of protection only within a part of the region and tries to make economical use of it. In spite of the fact, that the National Park would be a suitable topic for marketing as it the only German National Parks in the Alps. Obviously there is, in the long-term view, a clear susceptibility towards innovation. Things are different around relatively young Müritz National Park where the susceptibility to change has to be immanent because without it there would be no development of a tourism sector at all. Furthermore, the National Park is a unique selling point and tourism one of the few possibilities to create income and jobs in the region.

For this reason, it has to be mentioned that the locals have noticed the importance of the National Park and its tourism for their economy.

5 Discussion

Trying to explain these sometimes significant differences between Müritz and Berchtesgaden region a foray into the history of both National Park Regions provides some clues: More than 150 year old destination Berchtesgaden has had considerably more time to develop a sound and well-balanced tourist structure compared to relatively young destination Müritz. Although in the accommodation sector higher segments are still hardly represented. It has been only since the German Reunification in 1990 that free market tourism was allowed to evolve in an area formerly subject to socialist tourism planning. It does not come as a surprise then that tourism SMEs offer a projected 2,635 full-time all-season jobs in Berchtesgaden, whereas Müritz falls considerably short of this figure with merely 1,214. Neither is it astonishing that our sample lists only 6 SMEs in Müritz region with a turnover of more than EUR 200,000, compared to 20 of them in Berchtesgaden region.

Yet, what is indeed remarkable is the fact that Müritz region scores better in virtually all enablers for learning regions than does Berchtesgaden region.

Though still at a relatively low level, enterprises in Müritz region tend to integrate and make use of the National Park as a state incentive to promote tourism. They show a higher willingness to accept dependencies and trust other enterprises and are more flexible when it comes to cooperating within the region. It seems as if the *tabula rasa* situation Müritz region started from in the 1990s has expedited the development of pre-conditions for learning regions, while first economic indications of sclerosis in Berchtesgaden region match our findings on learning regions. Still, Berchtesgaden National Park Region remains economically more powerful than Müritz region, although compared at the level of the single business, economic enterprise structure in Müritz region *can* keep up with Berchtesgaden region in terms of average turnover and employees.

But what is the SMEs' contribution to regional economic development in the second round of the Keynesian multiplier? What share of intermediate input is supplied by regional sources? With approximately 80% of supply linkages in our sample situated in the respective regions SMEs indeed prove to live up to their reputation of boosting the regional economy. A similar study conducted in the Swiss Canton Berne ten years ago presents only slightly lower shares of regional input (Rütter *et al.* 1995: 177).

For the two National Park Regions it is thus beyond all question that regionally rooted geographical sourcing system of SMEs contributes in a significant way to increase regional multiplier effects.

As for the theory of learning regions, the tourism sector still represents *terra incognita* to a large extent. In the textbook model the splintered midgets join up to create a (learning) region that is more powerful than only the sum of its parts and can compensate the disadvantages of being small while retaining the advantages. Despite fulfilling the basic criterion of geographical proximity, it might appear as if regional tourism SME in general face extraordinary odds in creating learning regions resulting from:

(a) The distinct owner structure of tourism SMEs characterised by a vast majority of family-owned business which are often found to be largely resistant to change, adaptation or political advice showing a spirit of non-entrepreneurship (Ioannides/Petersen 2003: 428f.; Shaw/Williams 1998: 248; Wanhill 2000: 134f.).

(b) The comparatively small number of skilled employees combined with low labour mobility reducing skilled labour market flows as one of the crucial factors of learning regions (Ioannides/Petersen 2003: 424ff.).

(c) The fact that all SMEs are geographically tied to the National Park Region as their one and only market on which all of them are compelled to compete making same-sector cooperations of enterprises tricky.

These hypotheses are left to inspire and spur further research, which is unquestionably essential to help both SMEs, and National Park tourist destinations representing rural tourism destination of Europe overcome disadvantages in the indirect, though increasingly fierce competition with global players (Smeral 1998).

6 Conclusion

Despite the fact that tourism is largely dominated by SMEs, scientific work on these enterprises is in the fledging stages. What makes them – at least from a regional economic point of view – very important is their geographical sourcing system, which is closely tied to the region, offering job opportunities and income in laggard regions.

On the other hand SME based tourism is likely to fall prey to their non-entrepreneurship, making them to be declining against change and innovation. For example are labels like National Parks not necessarily taken up. Cooperation, which would be possible with such a brand are kept at a very low level of intensity. Therefore, the development of a coherent policy strategy for SMEs in tourism, which promotes cooperation is a challenging task, but is on the other hand of major importance for the SMEs because of weak position in competition.

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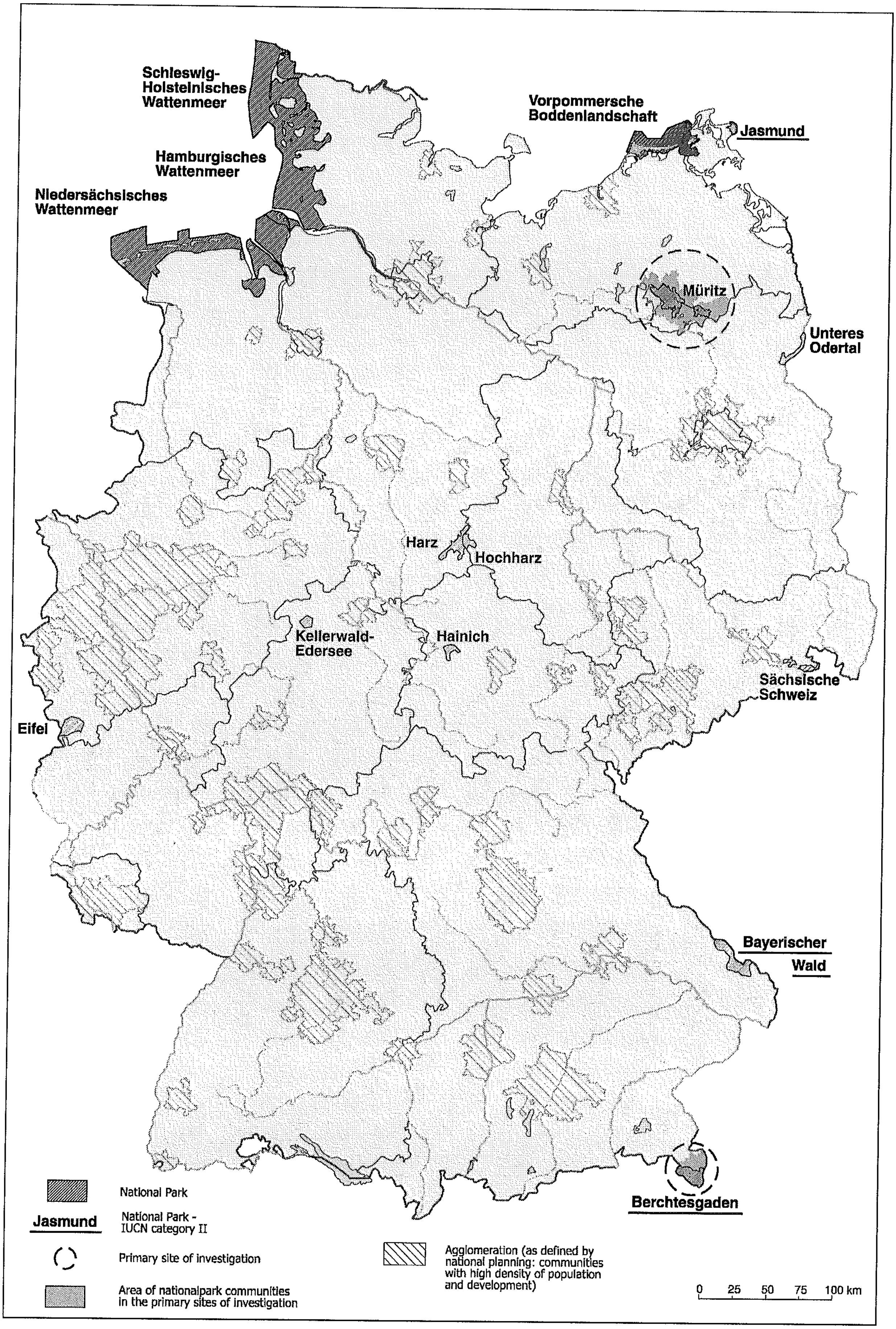
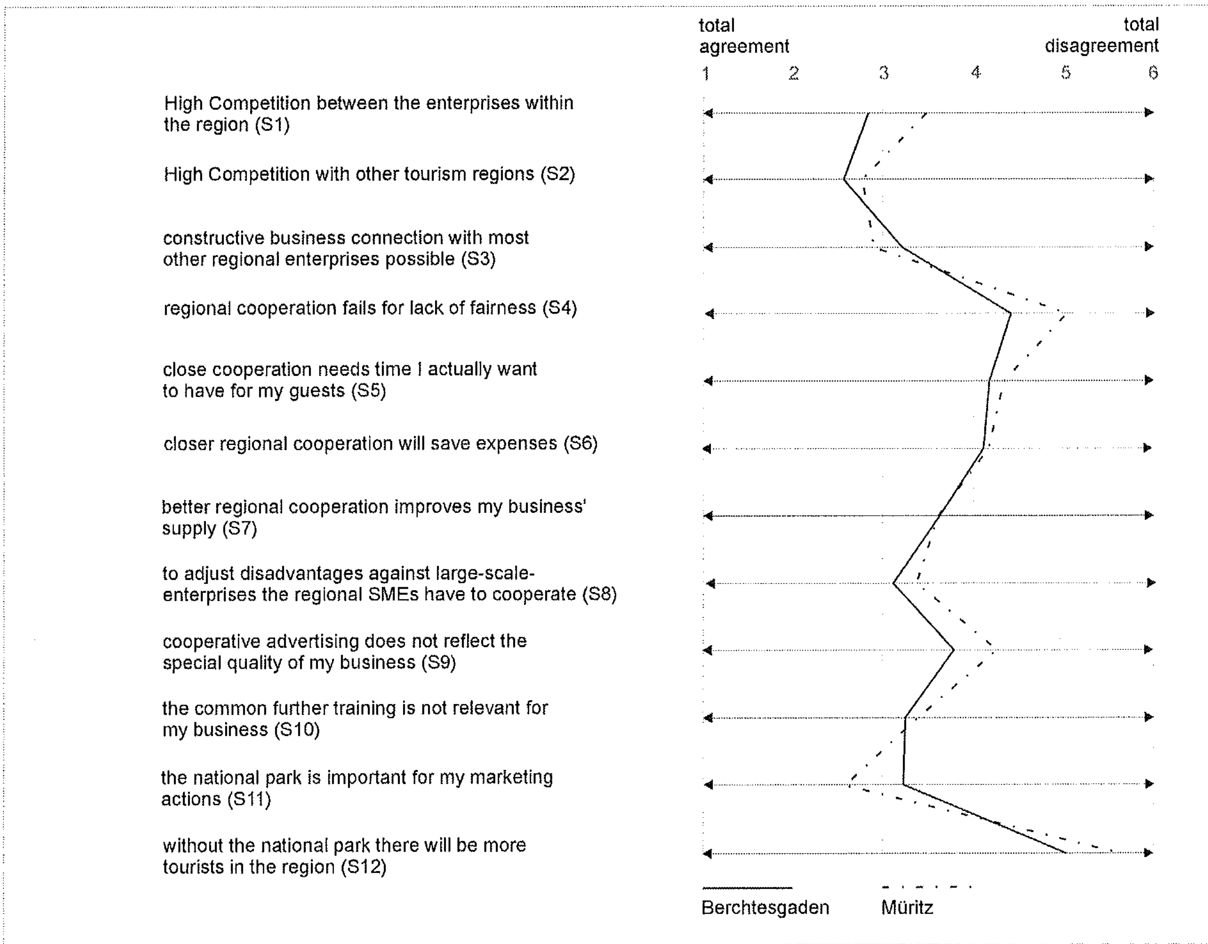

Schleswig-Holsteinisches Wattenmeer
Hamburgisches Wattenmeer
Niedersächsisches Wattenmeer
Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft
Jasmund
Müritz
Unteres Odertal
Harz
Hochharz
Kellerwald-Edersee
Hainich
Sächsische Schweiz
Eifel
Bayerischer Wald
Berchtesgaden
National Park
Jasmund
National Park - IUCN category II
Primary site of investigation
Area of nationalpark communities in the primary sites of investigation
Agglomeration (as defined by national planning: communities with high density of population and development)
0 25 50 75 100 km



total agreement
total disagreement
1
2
3
4
5
6
High Competition between the enterprises within the region (S1)
High Competition with other tourism regions (S2)
constructive business connection with most other regional enterprises possible (S3)
regional cooperation fails for lack of fairness (S4)
close cooperation needs time I actually want to have for my guests (S5)
closer regional cooperation will save expenses (S6)
better regional cooperation improves my business' supply (S7)
to adjust disadvantages against large-scale-enterprises the regional SMEs have to cooperate (S8)
cooperative advertising does not reflect the special quality of my business (S9)
the common further training is not relevant for my business (S10)
the national park is important for my marketing actions (S11)
without the national park there will be more tourists in the region (S12)
Berchtesgaden
Müritz

Vol.
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Publication of the AIEST
International Association of
Scientific Experts in Tourism

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