

Hinweis

Der Artikel „Learning about Landcare“ ist in der Zeitschrift **TasRegions** (herausgegeben vom Department of Primary Industries and Water, Tasmania, Australia) in der Ausgabe vom März 2007 erschienen (Ausgabe 13, Heft 1).

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Die Autorin, Katrin Prager, untersuchte während ihres Forschungsaufenthaltes am Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research an der Universität Tasmanien australische Landcare Gruppen und verglich diese mit den deutschen Landschaftspflegeverbänden. Ein ausführlicherer Artikel zu diesem Thema wird 2008 in der Zeitschrift **Society and Natural Resources** erscheinen.

Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research

The Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) is a joint venture between the Tasmanian Government and the University of Tasmania. It brings together the research and development (R&D) of the two major agricultural R&D providers in the State, the DPIW and the School of Agricultural Science, into an institute within the University of Tasmania.



Big and small producers embrace artisan foods

Apart from its image and reputation for natural beauty and friendly people, Tasmania is increasingly becoming known for its quality food, particularly its artisan or handmade food products.

While 'artisan' often refers to handmade craft goods, such as quality woodwork products, it is a label that is also applied to food products that have a high labour input and embody unique characteristics, such as the identity of the people who made them, the care in the production process, or the natural environment from which the raw product was grown.

These products are value-added products, selling for much higher prices than equivalent factory-made products.

Tasmania has many examples of artisan food, including many cheeses, berry products, and wines.

There are many reasons to embrace and develop the artisan food industry in Tasmania: such as the use of local labour, knowledge and ingredients; local ownership; and the increased likelihood that profits will be retained in the region, further stimulating the economy.

It is, however, this industry's ability to develop and grow whilst retaining its positive qualities that is truly inspiring.

Research undertaken by the Rural Social Research Group in TIAR examined not only the specific characteristics that Tasmanian artisan food products possess, but also the claims by expanded enterprises that they, too, were producing authentic artisan products.

Were these expanded industries really producing artisan food items?

If so, how were they doing it? These were just some of the questions that were considered. The study involved a number of in-depth case studies of small cottage enterprises and those that had grown.

It was found that both small and expanded industries were authentically artisan and had

retained their special qualities.

Many of the characteristics of the small-scale enterprises, which are ultimately expressed in the food product, are still present in the expanded industries, such as: care and time taken during production; the high level of social interaction with the customer; face-to-face relationships; passion; knowledge of the raw agricultural product; and the level of creativity.

There are also a number of other features that remain despite enterprise expansion and add value to the products, such as: low levels of machine use, labour intensiveness, low volume of production, employees hand-processing and involvement with the product from start to finish, owner heavily involved in decision-making; and the owner stills interacts with customers.

As a result, the owners, who are still very much involved in the production of authentic artisan products, can be referred to as 'artisan entrepreneurs'.

The study also uncovered a number of practical considerations that the owner-operators view as having hindered or assisted the success of the industry.

Amongst the factors that were said to have been difficulties are: the lack of knowledge in Tasmania and even Australia regarding how to produce the products; peculiarities of the Wine Equalisation Tax; local market saturation for some products; food safety regulations; the lack of certain types of raw agricultural product in Tasmania; the sourcing of labour; and, access to finance.

Factors that assisted the industry included: gradual planned expansion; selling to a larger processor in the initial stages; other sources of income; working on the business rather than in the business; ability to be flexible; the level of autonomy over the product and quality assurance; obtaining of grants; passion and persistence; and an increasingly sophisticated and demanding consumer base.

The project revealed that the enterprises

studied (small and expanded) are what they claim to be – artisan – and that their special qualities are retained upon expansion.

It showed that there is a place for this type of agrifood development in Tasmania and that it can be successful. The research also demonstrated that there is a very important and beneficial social-cultural component to the value-adding experience.

Learning about Landcare

A German researcher visiting Tasmania for six months is comparing German Landcare with Australian Landcare.

Although Australians think Landcare is an Australian invention, the German Landschaftspflegeverbände (literally: landscape maintenance groups) are the equivalent to Landcare groups in Australia.

These groups began in 1986, the same time as Landcare in Victoria. Landcare did not become a national phenomenon until 1989. While there are over 4,000 Landcare groups in Australia, partly because of its smaller size, there are only some 140 Landcare groups in Germany.

Dr Katrin Prager is talking to and interviewing people involved in Landcare and natural resource management (NRM) across Tasmania.

Her first observation is that there is a much greater diversity of Landcare groups in Australia than in Germany.

For example, the Tasmanian Landcare Association, the peak body for Landcare-type groups in Tasmania, produces the Directory of Tasmanian Bushcare, Coastcare, 'Friends of', Landcare and Waterwatch Groups.

Landcare Australia Ltd also considers that all the 'care' groups out there are Landcare groups. This broader understanding of what Landcare is may also account for the disparity in numbers of groups between Germany and Australia.

If the whole range of environmental groups in Germany were included, the total number would be many times greater.

Having all the care groups under one umbrella indicates an effort to support all the various voluntary, community-based groups interested in looking after local environments and the sustainable management of natural resources.

However, there have been efforts to 'refocus' Landcare back to the original 'brown' elements of sustainable production.

Several times, a concern was voiced about the lack of cohesion and confusion about the goals of Landcare.

There was also the observation that the ethos of Landcare had moved from farmer-driven origins to more 'environmental', non-farmer approaches.

Members of Coastcare or Rivercare groups might have difficulty relating to Landcare and seeing themselves as landcarers because they undertake different activities, which might focus on seabirds or water quality.

This shows that Landcare means different things to different people.

In speaking about 'Landcare', one person might refer to all the 'care' groups, while another might have only farmer-based groups in mind.

These different meanings lead to the general impression that Landcare has become very diffused, heterogeneous and varied.

The diversity is partly caused by the various funding programs.

A problem with an all-encompassing approach is that the groups differ in the

issues they deal with, in the support they require, and in their opinion about how the environment should be managed.

The number of groups does not reflect the level of activity or stage in group formation.

In Germany, there is no specific Landcare funding program.

Groups generally have budgets with mixed sources ranging from European programs to state and local funding.

An obvious parallel between German and Tasmanian groups is the temptation for groups to rely on funding when it is plentiful and easily available.

This is a risk factor for groups, when funding ceases it may lead to groups becoming inactive or disbanded.

The definition of Landcare is not an issue in Germany because the Landcare Association has guidelines as to what characterises a Landcare group.

These groups have landscape conservation with sustainable regional development as their primary purpose.

To achieve this, the Board of each group is structured to comprise equal numbers of farmers, conservationists and local politicians.

By involving these categories of stakeholders, the Groups establish broad-based understanding, trust, and develop shared goals which they have the power to implement.

Other observations are:

- There are new groups being formed across

Tasmania even in 2006! The majority of these new groups are urban, peri-urban and coastal groups with a strong focus on environmental protection and often working on public land, some sharing in the local council's responsibility to look after coastal strips, public reserves or community assets.

- Farmer-based groups continue to survive but are perhaps less active than the new community groups. This is partly because they have reached a natural equilibrium of activity, and/or because original goals and objectives have been accomplished. For farmers, there may no longer be a need to belong to a group since many grants can be accessed by individuals.
- The majority of groups have either very young members (School Landcare) or are made up of older, retired residents. For people in their 20s to 40s, Landcare is not a priority.
- Some groups are considered 'dormant' because members are too exhausted to continue work on landcare projects at the moment. However, the members may still be friends and meet socially, and it seems they could become active again once they are re-invigorated.
- Consultants and other organisations are playing an increasing role in work that was previously done by community groups. Furthermore, some issues identified as a priority in the NRM Strategy for a region might simply be too comprehensive for a group to undertake so contractors are needed. There is a possibility that this undermines the volunteer ethic of Landcare and endangers the ownership of projects.

The overall conclusion is that the Landcare movement in Australia is broader than Landschaftspflege in Germany.

But the question must be asked: How many community 'care' groups can fit under the Landcare umbrella without overstretching it?



Oysters in the bay.



Landcare rejuvenation of the track.