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Einladung



**MACH MIT.**



## Connect the dots: Promoting sustainable development beyond project work

In 2010, “Connect the dots” became the new strapline of Mesopartner. During the last 10 years we have tried through our support to create linkages between human beings, support organizations and government bodies responsible for and interested in economic development. We are convinced that we can contribute with this work to more sustainable local development. In our opinion, it is not possible to totally separate our work from our private lives. Frequently we see systems that are disconnected, notice unintended consequences and observe inconsistent development efforts. What we are also trying to do is to “walk the talk”, which means trying to apply our principle of zooming out and looking at the bigger picture and stimulating societal change in areas that are not immediately work related. For instance, it is important for us to support small bottom-up change initiatives in our living environment, which we are doing in different ways.

Ulrich collaborates in his city Chascomús, Argentina, with the local culture movement, La Usina, or the grassroots project, Basura Cero, for waste selection and recycling. He tries to use his contacts with leading academic institutions to stimulate mutual learning between the local community he lives in and academia. His collaboration with the research centre INTECH, a subsidiary of the Universidad



San Martín (UNSAM) and the National Research Council (CONICET), is an attempt to make academic knowledge useful for its host town. He also uses his blog to document stories and insights from his town to promote the place and illustrate his learnings regarding LED.

Shawn and Annelien live in Pretoria, South Africa. They started a recycling initiative in their neighborhood. Shawn regularly participates in public and policy events, contributing his economic development experience to important discussions without charging for his time. He frequently lectures at universities and participates in various think tanks on economic development. He is also active on several boards and advisory committees where he provides advice without compensation.

In Germany many rural villages are losing their attractiveness. Although it is nice to live in the countryside, young people often move out of the

villages, fewer people are born in them and the number of old people is increasing. Several years ago Frank moved back from the city to his home village. With a core group of active people who were born or live in the village, he started with a village conference and several future workshops to find ways of making the location more attractive for the young and old inhabitants, as well as attracting possible new families and tourists. Several cultural, infrastructure and social initiatives have begun to be implemented. Learning from each other and from others is an important principle in this respect. This is an experience from our work: in small towns you also find many innovative and creative young and old people. Building on this knowledge is important, as is looking for new ideas from outside. Facilitating such a progress as a 'local inhabitant' is exciting. Our contacts with other dynamic, innovative and creative small German towns in the surrounding area often help to create bridges and new ideas among the local people.



Due to our project activities, we need to fly frequently and thus contribute to the increase of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. To take environmental responsibility and support the mitigation efforts, partners like Christian are used to buy CO<sub>2</sub> certificates to at least partly offset the damage done to the environment.

Overall, “walking the talk” in private life is not always easy when travelling regularly and when also having other private duties and interests. Nonetheless, it is always exciting to find opportunities to use our work experience to contribute to the communities and the environment that we live in. And what makes it really exciting is that we use the learning again in our professional lives.

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