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National Natural Landscapes

Communication project boosts biosphere reserves

In 2005 EUROPARC Deutschland, the umbrella organisation of the German protected areas initiated the project 'innovative communication strategies for protected areas'. As a result, the umbrella brand 'National Natural Landscapes' was introduced. It gives a new and common profile to the German national parks, biosphere reserves and nature parks in order to heighten the awareness of the public.

The German press usually refers to national parks when actually biosphere reserves are meant. This is always annoying for the administration, whose time-consuming PR efforts simply appear to be in vain. The general public in Germany hardly ever actually uses the word biosphere reserve or does not pronounce it properly. A 'biosphere reserve' is for many just a cluster of letters.

EUROPARC Deutschland had commissioned a survey at the beginning of the project 'innovative communication strategies', which was carried out by the prestigious company Emnid. According to this survey, 88 percent of the German population consider protected areas to be important. 83 percent would even be prepared to make a financial contribution to them in the form of a nature tax. 71 percent would like to spend their vacation in one of these regions. However, only 6 percent are aware of the differences between a national park, a biosphere reserve and a nature park. Most people do not know where these protected areas are situated. Although the German protected areas advertise using a range of well-designed information materials, more often than not they do not get through to the public. The many different logos confuse and hardly give the impression of a network.

Because of these precise facts EUROPARC Deutschland, as the largest association of protected areas in Germany, initiated the above mentioned communication project. The aim was to develop an easily recognisable, modern umbrella brand for national parks, biosphere reserves and nature parks. Many successful examples have been around for a long time abroad. Whether 'National Park Service' in the USA or 'Parcs Nationaux de France' in France



The biosphere reserve Schorfheide Chorin

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or the 'National Trust' in England, all of them communicate their protected areas worldwide under a well-known logo – representing different protection categories in parallel. Similarly, the most spectacular German landscapes, the core of the national natural heritage, should appear under a joint umbrella brand.

A first workshop in Berlin resulted in an agreement on the following basic principles for the umbrella brand:

- Using a lively picture language, the authenticity and the fascination of the landscapes should be underlined.
- Presenting harmony of nature, the materials produced with the umbrella brand should be inspiring for the beholder.

- The colour palette of the umbrella brand should re-emphasize the verbal message.

Involved in the discussions about the umbrella brand were the Federal Ministry for the Environment, ministries of the federal states, heads of the protected areas, nature conservation associations, sponsoring agencies, foundations and the association of German nature reserves. Already in this first workshop, it was resolved that the umbrella brand was to be called 'National Natural Landscapes'.

To the point: The logo

The logo of the National Natural Landscapes consists of two design elements: a dot with three differently coloured

Nationale Naturlandschaften



The brand-new exposition on the German UNESCO biosphere reserves sponsored by EUROPARC Deutschland is already using the new Corporate Design. The exhibition with around 30 panels was displayed for the first time in June 2007 at the occasion of the 67th General Assembly of the German Commission for UNESCO.

Photo © EUROPARC

rings, allowing for various associations such as the arrival point on a map, a globe or the human eye. The second design element is a symbolic path to entice the viewer into the natural environment on the photograph behind it. Both elements combined with friendly, light colours help give National Natural Landscapes an inviting touch.

Despite the necessary uniformity of certain design elements, equally important was that each area should have its own PR appearance. This is achieved by the multiplicity of possible colour combinations of the three-coloured dot, which indicate the diversity of nature. To assign an individual dot for each German conservation reserve was the goal. Today, over 100 dots have already been assigned; almost every German protected area has its own.

Thus nature has a new name in the medial landscape and a visual identity which is easy to communicate. It only took a short time for the umbrella brand to be accepted and applied by most of the federal states. Within a year it was used for all types of promotional media from large posters to stickers. A first study carried out at the end of 2006 showed that more than 4 million publications with the new design elements were on the market. The umbrella brand was attracting a great deal of attention: While during 2005 only 6 percent of the population were aware of the differences between the different categories of protected areas, a recent survey showed that already over 30 percent knew about the umbrella brand National Natural Landscapes.

Together into the future

The degree of awareness has been successfully increased, at least in a first step. The German parliament has decided to support this subject: Following a positive cross-party debate, a decision was made to generally support

the National Natural Landscapes. The umbrella brand is to become a quality attribute for the German tourism industry and establish itself in Germany's presentation to the rest of the world.

Now it is the task of the individual protected areas to continue developing their own profiles under the umbrella brand and to work out and portray the specific aspects of the respective categories (national park, biosphere reserve and nature park) through quality projects. Across the categories, EUROPARC Deutschland makes an important contribution with projects like 'Volunteers in Parks', the 'Junior Rangers' or the 'Internship for the environment', which is funded by the company Commerzbank. An additional task for each region is to work towards making the National Natural Landscapes, the particular category of protection and also specific local features an experience on-site, both for inhabitants and for visitors.

Model regions with a global reputation

The biosphere reserves have taken up the challenge successfully, for example with a new touring exhibition in the design of the National Natural Landscapes. The Potsdam Climate Conference on 8 November 2006, partnering with Honda Europe North was also a good and expandable example for raising awareness of the meaning of biosphere reserves and their capacities as model regions. The Potsdam Climate Conference will be followed up by similar conferences in future (the 2007 conference taking place on November 15). In the current discussion on measures for avoiding climate change, the German biosphere reserves are able to make a significant contribution. Whether environmentally friendly land-use methods, regional marketing or regional alternatives of renewable energy production – these are all activities of the German biosphere reserves which

directly relate to climate protection. A successful communication strategy highlights these activities, backs them up with examples thus sharpening their profile – and the reference to the National Natural Landscapes boosts the umbrella brand. The current topical status of climate change in politics is a productive challenge for the biosphere reserves.

The marketing strategy of the umbrella brand is, inter alia, focussed on tourism. In many biosphere reserves, environmentally friendly tourism is an everyday issue. Defining environmentally friendly and regionally adapted forms of tourism, create attractive offers to be implemented with the regional tourism industry. Thus another relationship to the National Natural Landscapes can be forged; the qualities of biosphere reserves can be highlighted and consequently the category biosphere reserves strengthens

the National Natural Landscapes which in turn becomes easier to grasp for citizens.

The subject of regional marketing plays a special role in some German biosphere reserves. Some particularly advanced examples are Schorfheide-Chorin, Rhön and Schaalsee having sustainable networks of primary producers, processors, marketing companies and tourist service providers. It could be assumed that a regional approach using regional brands and the brand National Natural Landscapes contradict each other. Actually, the opposite is the case; these initiatives can be interpreted as being good examples for sustainable economics in the National Natural Landscapes and used for the characterisation of the category biosphere reserves.

Biosphere reserves are places for learning sustainability. Their multifaceted

educational activities for sustainable development are a significant contribution to the National Natural Landscapes. Biosphere reserves can be examples for delivering the qualities of the National Natural Landscapes. The umbrella brand helps to heighten the awareness for biosphere reserves and makes them easier to appreciate. At the same time, the biosphere reserves boost the National Natural Landscapes in Germany with their specific profile.

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UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Schorfheide-Chorin

Schorfheide-Chorin, designated by UNESCO in 1990 is situated 75 km northeast of Berlin and spans an area of 1,292 km². The biosphere reserve has a richly structured landscape; habitats are ice age moraines, outwash plains, forests, wealds, fens and lakes. There are few settlements so that numerous species of animals and plants are provided with a habitat. Organic farming preserves threatened agricultural crops such as old grain, potato, vegetable and fruit varieties and the produce is marketed in the region.

A regional brand, today developed onwards into the 'quality mark' of the biosphere reserve, is the result of a research project to reinforce regional economic processes. In 1998 it was developed as a regional certificate of origin for guaranteed healthy and sustainably produced products and services. It supports the regional value added and the nature conservation goals of the biosphere reserve, using the slogan 'Natur setzt Zeichen' ('nature sending a signal').

Awarding the quality mark is based on criteria such as regional origin, meeting quality standards and an environmentally friendly production. Among the 85 users

of the quality marks are farmers, food processing plants, caterers, hoteliers and retailers. 'Living off the land': the unique landscape is in this way associated with attractive tourist offers and the regional product palette. This makes up the core of the marketing strategy for products

and services from the region under the quality mark with the logo of the reserve.

Further information:
<http://www.schorfheide-chorin.de>

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