

Park-labelled products as a tool for innovation and regional development

Florian Knaus

Keywords

label, labelled products, protected area, park, innovation, economic development, conservation, Biosphere Reserve

Summary

Protected areas and their management bodies are increasingly confronted with exigencies that go beyond their traditional scope of activities: Besides nature conservation, they are expected to contribute to social and economic development in their regions (BORRINI-FEYERABEND et al. 2013). This trend drives protected area managements from unifunctional conservation approaches to multifunctional approaches with measures offering intended positive outcomes for nature, society and economy equally. These changing requirements apply to Nature parks and UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in particular, but also to National parks and UNESCO world heritage sites (hereinafter parks).

A traditional, well established and successful approach to foster development in parks is nature-based tourism. Its economic impact is well documented, e.g. for National parks worldwide, the economic impact is estimated at US\$ 600 billion per year (BALMFORD et al. 2015), for UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in Germany, the impact ranges from US\$ 6 to 275 million per year (Job et al. 2013). Tourism can, hence, contribute to the livelihoods of many people in and adjacent to these regions. This development approach has, however, a clear economic focus and is therefore rather unifunctional, i.e. cultural and natural assets being the object but not the subject of the measures implemented.



Figure 1: Park-labelled products originating from the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Entlebuch. © UNESCO Biosphäre Entlebuch and Coop Schweiz.

A different and more recent approach to foster regional development is sought by labelling products originating from a park (Fig. 1). They are sold in- and outside of the park-region to customers that are willing to pay a surcharge for products with known origin and quality. In the park-region, these products can have multiple positive implications:

1. The additional sales volumes achieved through the labelled products lead to an economic added value in the park-region that translates into jobs: For the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Entlebuch (Switzerland), the only available data so far, park-labelled products generate a remarkable gross added value of US\$ 5.8 million in 2014, corresponding to 4% of the jobs in agriculture and forestry or to ca. 1% of all the jobs in the park-region (KNAUS et al. 2017). For the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Rhön (Germany), KRAUS et al. (2014) further found a strengthening of the regional added-value chains induced by park-labelled products, i.e. producers use a higher share and hence increase the demand of intermediate inputs originating from within the park-region.

2. Triggering the demand for intermediate inputs and raw material in the mostly rural park-regions safeguards farms and small forestry businesses that form still an essential part of the rural life and culture. Hence, by stimulating the economy, park-labelled products also adopt a social or cultural function.
3. Producing goods with resources from the park will on one hand side preserve the type of goods being traditionally produced in the park-region and hence safeguard to some extent the cultural heritage. On the other hand side, innovations refining traditional products will smoothly transform them to novel types of products that may be more compatible to current and future customer preferences opening up additional market opportunities.
4. By implementing strict standards in their production (e.g. organic or wildlife-friendly farming), park-labelled products can have a direct influence on land use practices of farmers, foresters, etc., and hence, can contribute to conservation or sustainability goals of the park itself.
5. Persons involved in the production of labelled products develop a close network and solidarity between each other and establish a deep attachment to their products supporting both regional identity and social values (KRAUS et al. 2014).

These various implications show that park-labelled products entail many positive effects for economy, nature, culture and society, and hence, offer the potential for a true multifunctional development approach (KNICKEL & RENTING 2002) as requested above. Establishing successfully park-labelled products is, however, a complex and lengthy task. It requires a continuous process, supported by the park-management, that builds up trust, credibility and identity among the producers and the customers (KNAUS et al. 2017). Furthermore, the products need to be successfully placed on the market, and the consumers need to know and believe in the positive aspects of the product, which requires solid PR and education (KRAUS et al. 2014). Promoting labelled products can have disadvantages as well, i.e. through a higher dependence of producers on local suppliers or through longer transport distances of intermediate inputs that are not available in the right quality in the park-region (KRAUS et al. 2014).

Nevertheless, taking into account the multiple positive impacts of park-labelled products for nature, economy and society, as well as their potential as a positivistic medium for communication with stakeholders inside and outside the park, they can be considered as a truly advantageous tool for parks and their managements.

References

- BALMFORD, A., GREEN, J.M.H., ANDERSEN, M., BERESFORD, J., HUANG, C., NAIDOO, R., WALPOLE, M. & T. MANICA. 2015. Walk on the wild side: Estimating the global magnitudes of visits to protected areas. *PLoS Biology* 13(2): e1002074. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.1002074>.
- BORRINI-FEYERABEND, G., DUDLEY, N., JAEGER, T., LASSEN, B., PATHAK BROOME, N., PHILLIPS, A. & T. SANDWITH. 2013. Governance of Protected Areas: From Understanding to Action. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 20. Gland, Switzerland: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- KNAUS, F., KETTERER BONNELAME, L. & D. SIEGRIST. 2017. The Economic Impact of Labelled Regional Products: The Experience of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Entlebuch. *Mountain Research and Development* 37(1): 121-130.
- KNICKEL, K. & H. RENTING. 2002. Methodological and conceptual issues in the study of multifunctionality and rural development. *Sociologia Ruralis* 40(4): 512-528.
- KRAUS, F., MERLIN, C. & H. JOB. 2014. Biosphere reserves and their contribution to sustainable development. A value-chain analysis in the Rhön Biosphere Reserve, Germany. *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie* 58(2-3): 164-180.
- JOB, H., KRAUS, F., MERLIN, C. & M. WOLTERING. 2013. Wirtschaftliche Effekte des Tourismus in Biosphärenreservaten Deutschlands. *Naturschutz und Biologische Vielfalt* 134. Bonn-Bad Godesberg, Germany: Bundesamt für Naturschutz.

Contact

Florian Knaus
florian.knaus@usys.ethz.ch
 ETH Zürich
 Department of Environmental Systems Science
 Universitätstr. 16, CHN G75.1
 8092 Zürich
 Switzerland