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Eberswalde
Hochschule für nachhaltige Entwicklung

Strategy Paper

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Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development
University of Applied Sciences

1. STARTING POSITION AND BACKGROUND

Biosphere reserves (BR) are model regions and learning places for the sustainable development of mankind, both with and as part of nature. The global network of UNESCO biosphere reserves and the Man and the Biosphere program offer great potential for the idea of sustainability.

At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the need for sustainable development was brought to political and public awareness worldwide and numerous political and implementation processes were initiated. However, the global ecosystem is still subject to profound and rapid change, even a quarter of a century later. Forest destruction and desertification, loss of biodiversity, climate change, acidification and littering the oceans and global chemical contamination are some of the most serious, human-induced, and partially irreversible changes on our planet. However, not only the biosphere is subject to rapid and lasting changes, but also political systems and many societies are shaken by crises and experience transformation processes with an uncertain outcome.

The demand for sustainable and ecosystem-based development is now more urgent than ever before. The decision on the „transformation of our world: the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development“ (Sustainable Development Goals), adopted by the UNO2015 General Assembly in 2015, is of paramount importance. In particular, target 15 „Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of land ecosystems ...“ underlines the modern understanding of nature conservation as a protection of the natural basis of life on an ecosystem basis.

The protection category „Biosphere Reserve“ was established as a central implementation tool of the UNESCO program „Man and the Biosphere“

(MAB) in 1971. The biosphere reserves were given the task of applying the complex human-environment relationships and investigating them interdisciplinarily, as well as to apply the findings for a meaningful and sustainable use of resources. The Seville Strategy of 1995 declared model regions of sustainable development. The protection of biological diversity as well as the use of natural resources are to be reconciled as competing objectives through spatial zoning as well as the development and testing of sustainability innovations. Important elements of the biosphere reserve idea also appertain the appreciation and integration of local knowledge, cooperation and corresponding participation.

The Lima Action Plan, adopted in March 2016, at the World Congress of Biosphere Reserves in Peru, will promote via the development of the MAB program for the coming years (2016-2025) among others the following focus areas:

- Biosphere reserves as effective model regions for sustainable development,
- Biosphere reserves as models that contribute to the implementation of sustainable development goals and other multilateral environmental agreements,
- Research and practical learning offers that support the management and sustainable development of biosphere reserves (including partnerships with research facilities, identification and dissemination of good practices, participatory research, and ultimately the integration of research results into management plans),
- Global and regional training programs,
- Interdisciplinary network of actors working in and with biosphere reserves and international exchanges.

2. IDEA AND VISION OF A NEW CENTER FOR BIOSPHERE RESERVES

2.1 ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES AND DEMANDS

The claim to be a model region of sustainable development and the actual management of the biosphere reserves and their impact are often far apart. Many of the early biosphere reserves are managed as national parks or strictly protected areas, or are pure „paper parks“. Frequent designation under different national and international categories of protection presents a particular challenge to policy and practical implementation and development. The aim of the MAB program is, therefore, no longer to declare the widest possible number of new biosphere reserves. The challenge is rather to support existing biosphere reserves in implementing the concept effectively. Accordingly, compliance with quality criteria is more strictly observed. It is also important to promote existing biosphere reserves in appropriate zoning, active participation of the population, as well as cooperation mechanisms and concepts for sustainable land use and regional development. In 2013, the International Coordination Council of the UNESCO's „Man and the Biosphere“ program decided that biosphere reserves of insufficient quality should be removed from the world network by means of an „exit strategy“. This affects around 100 biosphere reserves worldwide which have so far withdrawn from the reporting requirements, as well as about 30 biosphere reserves which do not meet the criteria sufficiently. This results in acute pressure on many biosphere reserves to develop and to increase the need for consultation in order to increase quality and effectiveness.

Education and (applied) research play a central role in raising awareness and providing appropriate decision-making for sustainable development. Applied research accompanies change, documents successes and failures, and can thus identify ways of adapting ecosystem-compatible land use adapted to natural potential and environmental change. Currently, there is often a lack of meaningful, effective combination of science and practice for the promotion and development of biosphere reserves. Indeed, to date, no science-based and practice-oriented institution exists that is systematically and comprehensively devoted to the the special challenges of biosphere reserves, prepares corresponding relevant infor-

mation, networks stakeholders and built on this, trains practitioners and advises decision-makers.

The Michael Succow Foundation, the University of Sustainable Development Eberswalde and EUROPARC Germany e. V. decided to establish an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary competence center for biosphere reserves on the basis of their extensive experience with research, teaching and counseling in biosphere reserves and their strategic orientation. Internal and external objectives are pursued.

2.2 GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF PARTNERSHIP

The guiding principle of the strategic partnership is to set up and operate a competence center. The Center aims to:

1. Generate, collect, bundle, provide and actively disseminate knowledge on biosphere reserves and the results of their implementation, including sustainability research;
2. Promote the practical implementation of the MAB program internationally and stimulate and initiate innovative approaches to land use, regional development, landscape management and nature conservation in biosphere reserves;
 - To increase the effectiveness of research for sustainability in biosphere reserves and to support the transfer of results from biosphere reserves to other regions; inter alia by strengthening monitoring and documentation;
 - Encouraging the co-operation and participation of the population in shaping biosphere reserves in different cultural contexts;
 - Anchoring a culture of innovation for sustainability in biosphere reserves;
 - To educate people about issues of sustainable development;
 - To promote the concept of biosphere reserves;
 - Policy advice, nationally and internationally, on the promotion of the MAB approach.

2.3 EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE

a) Significance for MAB global

The biosphere.center is available as a service unit which has directly committed itself to the current agenda of the Lima action plan. This applies to, inter alia, consulting and the provision of training and education services.

b) Importance for Germany

The biosphere.center has direct relevance to the implementation of the national sustainability and biodiversity requirements. In addition, the Center is at the disposal of the German MAB Committee and the Permanent Working Group of Biosphere Reserves in Germany as consultants and service providers. In addition, the competence center contributes to broadening knowledge about sustainability through its educational work.

c) Importance for individual BRs

The biosphere.center is available to the German biosphere reserves as a companion for continuous improvement and further development in order to meet the requirements for exemplary areas of sustainable development. Biosphere reserves are to serve as a framework for the introduction of concepts for sustainable development.

d) Significance for the partners in the center of excellence

The biosphere.center aims to bundle and manage its own projects and initiatives and to make the best possible use of synergies and complementary qualities of partners. It aims to raise awareness among students, and aims to orient the existing teaching modules even more closely to the concerns of the biosphere reserves. The research activities of the university can be reinforced and strengthened by connecting and combining the demands of the biosphere reserves as a spatial and conceptual model framework for sustainable development. With this step, the Foundation intends to focus more strategically and focus its own work on advising on the further development, governance and management of biosphere reserves. The task of transferring innovative model solutions into practice is expected from the collaboration with the university.

2.4 COMPETENCE AREAS

Consulting and Development

- Improvement of the participation of local actors
- Introduction of sustainable land use forms
- Conception and management planning of cross-border biosphere reserves
- Feasibility and development studies and support for new designations
- Improvement of zoning
- Development and implementation of visitor control concepts

Research

- Adaptive management
- Networking strategies and assessment of expansion potential
- Protection area management and support
- Integrative monitoring
- Sustainable management of recreation / tourism

Teaching and Further Education

- International education programs in cooperation with partner-biosphere reserves
- Train-the-Trainer programs
- Workshops and summer schools for different biosphere reserve stakeholder
- Creation of a national Junior-Ranger-Network
- Organization and development of Junior-Ranger-programs

3. PARTNERS

3.1 MICHAEL SUCCOW FOUNDATION (MSS)

The Michael Succow Foundation is an operational foundation for nature conservation and sustainable development. The purpose of the foundation is the practical promotion of nature and environmental protection as well as of science, research and education. The Foundation's goals are implemented primarily by:

- Development and promotion of protected areas, especially UNESCO World Heritage sites and national parks at national and international level,
- Development and promotion of model areas of sustainable development, primarily UNESCO biosphere reserves,
- Promotion of international relations in nature conservation and ecology,
- Conservation-oriented science and research,
- Promotion of natural and socially acceptable land use.

The founder has played a decisive role in the German MAB National Committee for 25 years and is the co-initiator of numerous biosphere reserves in Germany.

Development of biosphere reserves as model regions for sustainable management plays an essential role in the work of the Succow Foundation. The range of activities includes potential analyzes and feasibility studies for biosphere reserves, the creation of nomination documents and the preparation and monitoring of new establishment biosphere reserves- as well as advice on better implementation of the MAB concept in existing and cross-border biosphere reserves and the organization of international exchange and study tours for biosphere practitioners.

The foundation brings together expertise and experience that has been used not only in Germany, but also in the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, Central and Central Asia, Iran, Myanmar and Ethiopia, leading to the establishment of dozens of biosphere reserves. The Board of Trustees, with its internationally renowned experts in the field of Man and the Biosphere, plays a decisive role.

See also www.succow-stiftung.de

3.2 THE UNIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EBERSWALDE (HNEE)

Since its founding in 1992, the University of Sustainable Development (Eberswalde) has been committed to the concept of „Nature with Man“. As documented in the 2013 principles for the sustainable development of the university, sustainable development is understood as an integrative concept: Man is part of the global ecosystem and its functional integrity is the basic prerequisite for all human life and economic activity. These principles are consistent with the MAB program priorities identified in the MAB Strategy 2015-2025.

The university consists of four disciplines:

- Forest and environment,
- Landscape use and conservation,
- Wood engineering,
- Sustainable economy.

The team of colleagues from the four disciplines unites competence providers on almost every facet of sustainable development processes¹. A focus in teaching and research lies on the sustainable development of rural areas and regions, which however can only be understood in the complex context of globalized material and energy flows as well as corresponding socioeconomic processes. Biosphere reserves as model regions for modern nature conservation and sustainable (rural) value creation have been the focus since the foundation of the HNEE. The spatial proximity to prominent biosphere reserves in Germany was and is also very conducive. The university takes a prominent place within the framework of the monitoring of biosphere reserves.

¹ See also website or transfer catalog (www.hnee.de; www.hnee.de/Transferzentrum)

See also www.hnee.de



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3.3 EUROPARC Deutschland e. V.

The non-profit organization EUROPARC Deutschland e. V. was founded in 1991 by protected areas from the old and new federal states in order to coordinate and harmonise the work of these areas beyond national boundaries.

Over 25 years of work have resulted in a broad expert knowledge on all questions relating to National Natural Landscapes and their management. The aim of EUROPARC Deutschland e. V. is to bring together experts and interested parties from national parks, nature parks, biosphere reserves, wilderness areas and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to coordinate positions and to realize projects for the benefit of the National Natural Landscapes and could be further expanded and strengthened.

Thus, the umbrella organization lends a common voice to the national parks, biosphere reserves, nature parks and wilderness areas and strengthens their awareness. The association formulates standards for quality management requirements, provides services for protected areas and citizens, and also serves as a forum for exchanges with policy makers, environmental associations and the media.

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EUROPARC Deutschland e. V. is active in the following fields:

- Information, education and public relations,
- Funding of international relations in nature protection and ecology,
- Project development,
- Organization development capacity building,
- Research and monitoring,
- Policy consulting,
- Preparation of expert opinions, surveys, publications and exhibitions.

Range of fields of professional concrete activity:

- The training and qualification of regional administrators in the federal state,
- The implementation and further development of the umbrella brand National Nature Landscapes,
- The cooperation with state and federal authorities as well as nature conservation organizations with regard to special development and management questions,
- The organization and moderation of meetings, workshops and parliamentary evenings.

See also www.europarc-deutschland.de



4. EXPERIENCES OF PARTNERS: TEACHINGS, RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION ON BIOSPHERE RESERVES

4.1 TEACHING WITH RESPECT TO BIOSPHERE RESERVES

In teaching at HNEE, aspects of nature conservation management (Zone 1 + 2) as well as the applied implementation of model projects of sustainable land use in the development zones of biosphere reserves will be conveyed. It is concerned with future-oriented solutions both in the theoretical teaching context of numerous modules as well as in excursions and project work.

Within the framework of various courses, partnerships have already been established for years with BR. These and others are selected as study objects and results are analyzed, discussed and made available.

4.2 RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION IN AND FOR BIOSPHERE RESERVES WORLDWIDE

On an international level, the partners regularly deal with the implementation and promotion of biosphere reserves, in particular scientific approaches and tools are developed and tested. The specialist areas Nature Conservation (Prof. Ibsch) and Sustainable Tourism (Prof. Rein) at the HNEE have developed academic centers that have defined the Biosphere Reserve idea as a focus of their work:

The Center for Economics and Ecosystem Management was established in 2011 as a cooperation between HNEE and Writtle College (UK) (www.centreforeconomics.org). The main international consulting activities (among others for the Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ / Association for International Cooperation) is the adaptive management of risks and vulnerability; the so-called MARISCO methodology was developed (www.marisco.training). In the context of the consultancy activities, GIZ projects and on-site biosphere reserve ideas were promoted and recommendations made (for example, Jianxi / China, Kakheti / Georgia, Kalahari / Namibia). The same applies, inter alia, for consulting activities and training courses on the subject of cross-border, peace-keeping nature protection in the Balkans (Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo). It is based on experience in the Balkans, the Carpathians, and others.

In the Altai, there was also a long-term initiative to establish a dialogue between the actors of the biosphere reserves on the Korean peninsula.

To this end, part-sessions and training courses were held in cooperation with the Michael Succow Foundation and with the support of DBU and the FAO. An ongoing project is currently being carried out, with implementation activities in a biosphere reserve in North Korea.

The Center for Sustainable Tourism (ZENAT) was founded in 2013 (www.zenat-tourismus.de) and is dedicated to the research, testing and dissemination of new insights into sustainable tourism management. This is done within a broad network of science, education, counseling and practice. Current topics include a project with Korea as well as initiatives on cooperation with the Michael Succow Foundation to develop a transnational biosphere reserve Rominterheide (Russia, Poland, Lithuania). This was followed by a feasibility study, a zoning and visitor management concept and a micro-credits competition.

4.3 RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION IN AND FOR BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN GERMANY

The advisory activities of the MSS are primarily the result of the long-standing membership of the German MAB committee, as well as the many years of experience of foundations and members of the Michael Succow Foundation. Michael Succow has been involved in the evaluation processes of most German biosphere reserves for over 20 years.

Advising political decision-makers is, among other things, on the ways of the Land Nature Conservation Advisory Board Brandenburg at the MLUL (Chair and Membership) whose focus has been directed to large-scale protected areas, especially biosphere reserves, in recent years. In addition there is a continuous cooperation in the curatoria of the BR Schorfheide-Chorin and the BR Spreewald, in the scientific advisory board of the BR Spreewald and in district councilors.

In close co-operation with the large conservation areas, HNEE worked on research areas in the BR of Brandenburg in the 1990s. A large number of

5. WAY FORWARD

qualification work has been carried out in the biosphere reserve area with the background of the common goal as, for example, dissertations by Dreger (2002), Goldschmidt (2000) Harter (1999) and a considerable number of diploma, master and bachelor theses.

4.4 FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING BIOSPHERE RESERVES

Through long-term partnership with existing biosphere reserves it is possible to observe and accompany processes and developments. The introduction and testing of adaptive protection area management and sustainable tourism concepts led to many improvements in existing BRs.

4.5 NEW DESIGNATIONS OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES

Through the financing of DBU, GIZ, BMUB and BfN, the partners have been able to apply their knowledge in an international context. You can find information via the internet portals of the initiators about the spatial distribution and the year of the designation, on which they have played an important role.

To adapt our land use to the sustainability of the planet and to react to changing climate conditions of the future is an urgent task for mankind. Biosphere reserves can and should be suitable model areas for this purpose, but they do not fulfill this function to a large extent today. There is an urgent need for a central body that supports the biosphere reserves and increases the capacities of the relevant actors.

The following activities are planned as initial steps:

- Innovative drafts for providing information for practice and science
- Creation of a networking platform for biosphere reserve actors
- Creation of a global open database
- Establishing an international educational network with allied training center
- Development of tools for:
 - More efficient integration of local knowledge
 - Better possibilities for participation
 - Sustainable financing
 - Better fulfillment of reporting obligations and the elimination of integration barriers



The **biosphere center** is dedicated to the systematic and comprehensive development and support of biosphere reserves worldwide .

biosphere.center

Contact us here:

info@biosphere.center

More information concerning actual projects you can find on our website:

www.biosphere.center

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