

## ***Interactive comment on* “The Entlebuchers: people from the back of beyond?” by U. Müller and N. Backhaus**

**U. Müller and N. Backhaus**

Received and published: 29 November 2006

General remarks: First of all, we would like to express our thanks to the two referees for their helpful and constructive remarks, in particular referee #2 for detailed commenting. We are pleased that both referees suggest the paper to be accepted. In general we agree with the proposed emendations and will revise the paper accordingly.

Response to referee #1: We are aware of the problems coming along with the attempt to bring together theory, methodology and its exemplary application in one article - particularly when dealing with a transdisciplinary topic like the “power of images in sustainable development”. In our view, and we hope you will agree, the journal “Social Geography” should, as well, provide space for both empirically grounded and theoretically roofed “overviews”, that emphasize interrelations on the expense of in-depth explanations. Furthermore, the applied method of image analysis asks for an appropriate de-

piction of both theory and case study information. It is see-sawing reciprocally between theoretical considerations and contextual observations in order to grab the context that is relevant for the meaning of the visual representations. While the importance of considering the socio-cultural and historical context of a visual representation is common in qualitative approaches of image analysis, we aimed for developing a quantitative approach that closes this gap. However, your comments clearly help to strengthen the thread and to avoid misunderstandings (in line with the remarks of referee #2). With regard to the results (“It is not really a surprise that there exist tensions within an outside and an inside view, regarding the image of naturalness or the outstanding character of a certain landscape.”) it is true that the observed tensions between the outside and inside view isn’t a new insight. However, we could show nuances in different publications and changes in the views as well. Since the Biosphere Preserve Entlebuch was a local bottom-up initiative, instead of the common administration-down one, it was of course crucial to address the needs of the locals (and to avoid their fears). By means of analysing the produced information publications, it became possible to see what these needs are. Regarding the inside to outside communication it is surprising that the Entlebuchers involved, at least in the beginning, intentionally chose pictures that were not in accord with the well known values of “outsiders”. If the “image producers” only aim were to attract attention, they would have been more successful in publishing pictures standing in the tradition of wilderness or the picturesque (cf. Dunaway 2005). In doing so a completely different image of sustainable development would have been transported to the wider public. The understanding of the comprehensive concept of sustainable development would have been narrowed down to the ecological dimension. With the omission of depicting and therefore addressing the Entlebuchers’ (alleged) economic and social needs, they would have risked to lose them for their projec. Moreover, they would have presented a limited notion of sustainable development. Such insights in mind, we are convinced that the applied method of image analysis and its results contribute both to the communication and the understanding of sustainable development.

---

Interactive  
Comment

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Discussion Paper

Response to referee #2: As mentioned above we are thankful for the detailed comments. In order to strengthen our argumentation we will gratefully incorporate your suggestions for emendation in the revision of the article. Especially, and in accordance with the review of referee #1, we will clarify the use of the buzzword “sustainable development” by UNESCO. With regard to the “lack of a consideration of the root indeterminacy of the visual image” and the “contingent nature of the categorization process” we will refine our position: Since the “alarm bells that a quantitative analysis of visual representations may ring” are echoing in our minds, we took the development of the context sensitive, “meaningful” categories to heart. Due to the never denied polysemous nature of visual representations the significance of an image is indeed determined by the viewer’s beliefs, values or, finally, her or his position. With regard to the images’ content - in our perspective these are the depicted or suggested interactions with “space” - we included the image context into our analysis. In particular the accompanying text and the consideration of the images’ function (as mostly illustrative) allowed to closely approach the perceived meaning. However, reliability of the results had to be tested in interaction with the subjects of investigation. For this purpose we created an interactive exhibition (<http://www.machtderbilder.ch/>) with public discussions. Yet, an account of the exhibition as a research method would have gone beyond the scope of this article (cf. Backhaus et al. 2006).

#### References:

Backhaus, N., Buschle, M., Gorgus, N., Müller, U. & Moreno, T. (Ed): Kraft der Bilder. Vorstellungen über Nachhaltigkeit - ein Entscheidungsspiel. Schriftenreihe Human-geographie, Vol. 21. Abteilung Humangeographie, Geographisches Institut der Universität Zürich, Zürich, 2006.

Dunaway, F.: Natural visions: The power of images in American Environmental Reform. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005.

---

Interactive comment on Soc. Geogr. Discuss., 2, 87, 2006.