

(講演III)

International Year of Mountains plus 20 – Focus on sustainable mountain development

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The year 2022 is of significant importance for the international mountain community. Half a century ago, the UNESCO initiated the man and the biosphere programme with pioneering section on relevant mountain studies hinting exemplary at these vulnerable landscapes. Thirty years ago the United Nations staged the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, twenty years ago its International Year of Mountains triggered a growing awareness about the crucial interdependence of mountain landscapes with its forelands. All these efforts have purposefully led to a comprehensive approach and combined effort to identify goals for sustainable development. The first target of the Sustainable Development Goals within its Goal 15 “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” explicitly addresses “mountains among the ecosystems to be conserved, restored and sustainably used in line with international agreements” (<https://sdgs.un.org/topics/mountains>). The concentration on conservation, restoration and sustainable use is the attempt to grasp comprehensively the challenges of our time. Previously a long list existed of certain topics that are related to mountain issues: salient sources of water for human consumption and irrigation, high potential for hydraulic energy generation, valuable reserve for biological diversity, area of exploitable resources, such as minerals, forest products and agricultural goods, and a growing source for recreation. Human impact was visible in mining and agricultural activities as well as in infrastructure development and tourism. The present-day challenges posed by global warming and land degradation need to be identified, analysed and embedded in comprehensive adaptation and mitigation strategies. Significant work has been done in this respect and my talk will address some challenges and responses by presenting the overall picture and hinting at some key issues and experiences from Asian and European Mountains.

A prime target of mountain studies have been agricultural practices of crop farming and animal husbandry; in earlier studies these practices were taken to categorize and identify development gaps between Asian and European Mountains. Since regional mountain development has taken various paths, infrastructure development, urbanization and a fast growing tourism industry have posed major pressures on mountain environments and resources. Challenges increase when it comes to defining pathways for sustainable mountain development and coping strategies for climate change effects. Several European countries have acknowledged that cross-boundary cooperation and knowledge exchange is instrumental for a homogeneous and unified strategy in tackling present-day challenges. The Alpine and Carpathian Conventions are examples for these efforts. High Asian Mountains are exposed to a different set of challenges. Agricultural, hydrological and mineral resources are of prime importance for the countries involved. Geopolitical crises, unresolved boundary disputes, domestic tensions and regional separatism are describing part of the challenges that hamper efforts for cooperation and mutually profitable exchange. Outmigration and multi-local income generation contribute to a complex web of interlinkages.

The service industries, primarily driven by tourism, mountaineering and trekking, have been identified as valuable sources of income and attracted significant numbers of holiday-makers leading to the question of how to cope with over-tourism and to recreation-led urbanization. European Mountains are reaching their limit primarily during the winter season while Asian Mountains are facing different challenges such as water scarcity, uncontrolled urban growth, conversion of valuable agricultural resources. My presentation will include case studies from Asia and Europe to highlight chances and constraints.