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# Scientific Colloquium on Forest, Landscape and Society

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The Scientific Colloquium on the occasion of the retirement of Professor Dr. FRANZ SCHMITHÜSEN was held on April 8, 2005 with contributions by speakers from various European countries and the United States of America. The colourful interior of the Semper-Aula of the ETH main building was hosting an audience of about 120 people, invited guests and the general public, attending the presentations of this one day meeting. Professor Dr. KLAUS SEELAND of the Human-Environment-Systems Institute, ETHZ introduced to the colloquium's program. He stressed that landscapes are a representation of social change over thousands of years and a hologram of the social and physical history of a region. Forests are a significant dimension in this hologram. The dynamics of natural growth and social change, of new policies and perceptions transform what is commonly taken as eternal and everlasting. New developments in society and economy cause changes in forests and landscapes. But society never has the opportunity to create them from the beginning. Landscapes are essentially a heritage of the past and can only be transformed in the present in view of what today seems to make sense in the future. Moreover, a society has no chance not to transform the landscapes it lives in. The human-environment-systems interaction, or rather in-action, because humans are always part and parcel of their environment, was highlighted as one of the salient features of human existence.

The first invited speaker of the morning was Professor Dr. NIELS ELMERS KOCH, Director of the Danish Centre for Forest, Landscape and Planning at the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University in Copenhagen and Co-ordinator of IUFRO Division VI. He gave an overview on three phases in the development of forestry and foresters' actions in the European context. The first one was generally perceived in a technical and commercial perspective and focused on wood and timber production. The second phase was characterized by a broadening scope of decision making and emphasized forest protection and forest conservation. Non-governmental organizations and citizens' groups entered the forest scene and enlarged the political arena. In the present third phase different interests of social stake-holder groups claim more rights to participate in the decision making processes. Forests have become a multifunctional amalgam in which ecological, economical, political and socio-cultural objectives and values are to be met. He ended with a plea for a concise forest policy for the mid European countries.

Professor Dr. BASTIAN KAISER, Rector of the University of Applied Forestry in Rottenburg (Germany), took up the phenomenon of change and transition, this time in the field of timber market developments over the recent decades. Whereas the post-war period was dominated by a supply policy, the present economic situation is characterized by a selective demand in timber products. Rapid technological and economical changes during the last 30 years that have had a tremendous impact on the timber market were not adequately and timely reflected in the chain of custody, and, by and large, even ignored by forestry. Today, the dynamic changes in the forest sector are initiated by powerful industrial groups of the wood processing industry and increasingly specialized demands of the end-

markets for processed products. The Push-phenomenon, i.e. supply driven market trends that prevailed after World War II, has been replaced by Pull-strategies that are clearly determined by more and more specialized and sophisticated demands from the processing and consumer's side. The speaker stated that the present economic difficulties of Central European forest owners can only be overcome by improving the productivity of labour, by implementing the latest technological innovations, by new and more complex logistic systems and by introducing better business management techniques, and foremost by more flexible marketing strategies. All these changes have an enormous impact on scientific teaching and research, and lead to a reorientation of the forest faculties.

The third contributor, Professor (emeritus) Dr. DENNIS C. LE MASTER of Purdue University, United States, defined four decades of post war socio-political developments at a global scale. Newly evolving research technologies (GIS and advanced computer technology), international institutions (UNCED) with a set of international treaties and multi-level networks, the acceptance of the principle of sustainability and the strengthening of new disciplines such as landscape ecology have changed and partly reshaped forest and society in Europe and North America. His major concern was about transforming environmental laws and ethics into landscape management by the enactment of a sound and sustainable forest policy. Such policies must meet well defined qualitative and quantitative goals based on criteria that are accepted by relevant stakeholder groups. And they must have a sound ethical foundation that is consistent with the needs and values of our societies.

Professor Dr. ANDRÉE CORVOL, research director of the «Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)» and member of the Institute of Modern and Contemporary History at the «Ecole Normale Supérieure» in Paris, presented a fascinating review of the history of the forest of Soignes, close to Brussels, during the first half of the 20th century. The enthusiasm with which social and political events connected to it were received and had an impact on Belgian society over decades and under changing political conditions is an outstanding example of public concern over the manifold socio-cultural meanings of forests. Her historical analysis showed the growing difference between forest and agricultural land as well as the regression of peri-urban forest areas which had lost their primary economic function in the course of the late 19th century. She also demonstrated the increasing and forcefully articulated demand of citizens to use forests as a complementary green space to the expanding urban development, and the power of urban elites in determining new forest policies.

Professor Dr. VITTORIO MAGNAGO LAMPUGNANI, Chair of History of Urban Architecture at ETHZ followed with a contribution on the history of New York's Central Park that was supported by impressing colour slides. After an introduction to the role of theories of nature and wilderness based on Emerson and Thoreau in early 19th century America, he elaborated on garden design in Massachusetts and New York State around 1850. The construction of an artificial, but civilized and highly aesthetic nature was realised in the Central Park that was meant



mainly for the recreation of the upper class. However, only 10 years after Central Park had been opened (1868) it became obvious that the original objectives for which the park had been designed and created diverted much from the actual uses that were shaped by its visitors. It became rapidly a vital green space for leisure and relaxation and was ultimately converted to a park for the urban masses. On the whole, Central Park was not only an experiment for structuring modern cities, but became and has remained until today a constituting element of the city community. With its creation, the park movement reached a first culmination point in providing green space for the growing demands of the expanding American cities as well as a powerful symbol for the community they were intended to represent.

The contribution of Professor Dr. ROLAND W. SCHOLZ, Chair of Environmental Sciences: Natural and Social Science Interface and head of the Human-Environment-Systems (HES) Institute, ETHZ dealt with forests and landscape in human-environment research. He commented on the merger of the Department of Forestry and the Department of Environmental Sciences that has become effective in January 2004 and the most recent decision of the ETHZ Board to create the School Domain of Earth, Environment and Natural Resources with 13 core research fields. Amongst those, the Human-Environment-Systems Institute focuses on a broad inter- and trans-disciplinary research approach based on natural and social sciences' methodologies. These comprise, among others, system analysis with experiential case encounter, formative scenario analysis, multi-attribute utility theory and area negotiations. At the same time the newly established bachelor and master curricula are a reflection of contemporary needs and challenges in our environment to be met by a sustainable development of society (sustainability learning). Trans-disciplinary case studies tackle complex systems with problems that become visible as relevant societal phenomena at the interface of nature, forest, and landscape. The transformation of a forestry perspec-

tive into a landscape management paradigm marks an important change in ETH education and research policy.

Professor Dr. WILLI ZIMMERMANN was the last speaker of the day and presented the ongoing integration of the subsystem forest, landscape and society into an embedded system with numerous interactions and overlaps. This integration is strongly connected to the principle of sustainability on the one hand and to a multi-, trans- and interdisciplinary approach on the other hand. He traced the expansion of the scientific perspective from forest policy and landscape to an integral trans-disciplinary approach to deal with human and environmental systems that has been initiated under the guidance of Professor Schmithüsen during the last years. It focuses on institutional aspects such as cultural values and norms, legal and political regulations, market rules, and the impacts which they have on land owners and land users. The creation of the Human-Environment-Systems Institute has been a strong impulse to continue with the expansion of scientific research and teaching in forest and landscape policy in a broader framework. In his final statements the speaker thanked Professor Schmithüsen on behalf of present and former staff members for his work, guidance and initiatives as well as for his inspiring relationships with collaborators characterised by trust, fairness, respect and humanity.

To conclude one may say that the colloquium has shed some light on forest, landscape and society in a widening perspective of multi- and interdisciplinary scientific research perspectives, raised new questions and ascertains present and future challenges. It may also have provided some innovative answers to societal problems in forest and landscape research.