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# Personal Remarks<sup>1</sup>

FRANZ SCHMITHÜSEN

Dear Colleagues and Friends

We have partaken in a rich and interesting colloquium, with many facets somehow reflecting themes that have been of concern to me throughout my professional life. I thank those who have been kind enough to contribute as speakers, and to the collaborators who have helped to organize this event. Thanks to you this day has become a reality. I thank those who have joined us today. And I think of those who could not come and have sent their good wishes.

Twenty years at the ETH is both a long and a short period of time. It is a long time period as much as it represents half of my professional life. After having worked almost twenty years in various positions in the State Forest Service of Baden-Württemberg, the time at ETH has been, in fact, a second professional life. It turned out to be much different from the first one.

These 20 years have been an incredible short period of time. Short, because the rhythm of change at ETH as a whole has kept me in constant move. It taught me to adapt my teaching constantly to new knowledge. It gave impetus and new direction to the research which we have undertaken at our forest policy and forest economics chair. Most refreshing and enjoyable has been the contact with the students. 20 years means in fact four student generations, each of them with new thinking, new curiosity and with new perspectives. My last lecture, six weeks ago, was an emotional moment to me. As a retired professor I shall miss the privilege of teaching.

ETH in Zurich is no sunshine enterprise. It is a highly competitive, continuously moving and tough place to work. ETH is fast in introducing new promising research lines. It is merciless in weeding out activities which are judged as not contributing sufficiently to scientific progress, and to economic and social advancement. This particular atmosphere results from 150 years of excellence as a high-level Swiss engineering school. It results from a leading position during the last 20 years as one of the top centres in the world in scientific teaching, research, and technology development. And it is due to the manifest ambitions of the institution to keep its top position and improve it constantly.

The continuing move at ETH has given me the chance to integrate my work into the greater context of landscape, environment and human culture. I have been able to contribute and to promote actively what has been formalized by our school management precisely two days ago. It is the creation of the «School Domain for Earth, Environment and Natural Resources». Its hotly debated acronym is now S-ENETH. I am proud to retire as professor of the Department of Environmental Sciences which forms a cornerstone of this new domain. In the same way I am proud to retire as member of our «Human-Environment-Systems Institute», which we established at the beginning of 2004. Whatever I have been able to accomplish is to a large extent due to the collaborators of the research group which I have formed and regenerated over many years. I cannot name all those who have contributed. But I take the liberty to put one face and to evoke one name to stand for the many. It is Professor Willi Zimmermann with whom I have worked in confidence since I joined ETH. His

critical and analytical mind has challenged me as much as it has helped me to advance in my own thinking. And there are many other colleagues from which I have benefited and who have allowed me a creative exchange of ideas.

But most important is the following: I would not have survived in dignity and happiness at the ETH for 20 years without my beloved wife Françoise and my son Bernhard. They have given me support, steadiness and love. They have been the «*conditio sine qua non*», the indispensable condition, for being able to work at a productive and constant level over many years. I am much thankful to them. And now let us close our colloquium of today, join together, and talk as friends and colleagues.

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<sup>1</sup> These personal remarks were made as formal closure of the Scientific Colloquium on «Forest, Landscape and Society» held at the ETH Zurich on April 8, 2005.