

Multifunktionale Waldwirtschaft und Nutzungskonflikte in der Geschichte der österreichischen Gebirgsregionen

Multiple Use Forestry and Utilisation Conflicts in the History of the Mountainous Region of Austria

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Summary:

The mountain region has to be considered historically as a memorial to the ability of human beings to extend their natural limited living space as much as possible by various cultural activities and techniques. These, for example, include the clearing of woodland for farming purposes, the building of traffic routes in very high regions and the developing of technologies for the operation of the mining industry (gold, silver, iron, salt) under extreme conditions. The alpine forest area of today is the visible sign of this historical process and gives evidence of the multiple anthropogenic influences (Baumann, 1981).

By means of the historical analysis of the forest utilization in the Austrian Alps, summing up one can draw the conclusion, that the exploitative utilization of fuel wood in the form of allocation of licenses for cutting and/or the temporary or permanent agricultural use of the forest area (mainly grazing and litter harvesting) have decisively contributed to the degradation of the forest stands. Forest laws could not prevent forest degradation unless the necessities of living conditions for the population were secured simultaneously. In Austria, the principles of sustained forestry were adopted in practise ultimately only when the social awareness of catastrophic ravages (torrents, avalanches) related to the abundance of the forest area increased not only regionally but also on the national level. However, foresters were blamed being representatives of the urban population only. Therefore, rather new ways concerning methods to deal with the crisis were required. Hence, the participation of the population relating to re-forestation measures and the visible, and

perceptible improvement in living conditions caused by the increase of the forest area, were more effective than the publication of a new Forest Law and a severe supervision (Johann 2001). Today, the character of the former close relationship and interdependencies between agriculture, forests and its use has changed fundamentally. Autonomy stepped in the place of the dependence of forestry on agriculture and its needs. At present time, agriculture and forestry are autonomous branches of land utilization, which although totally different in their structure, are nevertheless, combined with each other in various respects (Hasel, 1968).