

The Role of Social Scientists in Critical Civic Issues

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Sustaining biological and cultural diversity around the edge of Anthroposphere ('extreme lands'): the remote and marginal human habitats as metaphor for sustainability

Key-terms: Anthroposphere, Civic design, *Ethos*, Extreme Lands, *Genius Loci*, Place-brand, Quality of Context, Sustainability, Upliftment, Vulnerability.

Summary: My focus is on the remote and marginal communities in the 'extreme lands' or the edge of Anthroposphere (highlands, deserts, savannah, jungle, steppes, circumpolar regions...) which are precious reservoirs of biodiversity and ethno-diversity (containing many archaic socio-cultural elements). The extreme lands constitute the ultimate ground where biological and ethno-cultural complexes sustain each other. The historically inhabited extreme lands have served as human-ecological sentinel and buffer between the no-man's-lands and lands overpowered (exploited and exhausted) by the humans. Therefore, a well-informed attention to the extreme lands and marginal communities and an economic strategy with human (socio)-ecological approach are urgently needed in order to sustain human *praesidium*, cultural traditions and biodiversity. The human (socio)-ecological approach is a strategy of 'upliftment' (and not 'development'); it is concerned with improvement in socio-economic conditions and quality of life of communities with a strong commitment to the preservation of human habitat (territories, locales), enhancement of human capital (reducing vulnerabilities, fostering resilience and capabilities) and to the issues of quality of context (place-brand) through the promotion of native ethos and specialities (*genius loci*).

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www.icimod.org (International Centre for Integrated Mountain development)

www.arctic-council.org (The Arctic Council)

www.oss-online.org (Observatory on Sahara and Sahel deserts)

www.lamolina.edu.pe/ciza (Centre of research on arid zones)

www.ansp.org/research/asia/mongolia/IMBES (Mongolian institute for biodiversity and ecological studies)

www.liuc.it/servizi/consulorium/default.asp?codice=10 (Extreme Lands Program of LIUC, founded by Prof. Pant)

Sustaining biological and cultural diversity around the edge of Anthroposphere ('extreme lands'): the remote and marginal human habitats as metaphor for sustainability

The edge of Anthroposphere, the 'extreme lands', and the residing communities play a vital role in preserving ecosystems and hydro-geological equilibrium by maintaining the *presidium* in difficult terrains.

These areas are often reservoirs in which one finds concentrated remnants of biodiversity and archaic cultural traits and treasures. The world can benefit from the native inventory, specialities and ethos regarding local biodiversity and by observing the traditional adaptive strategies and sustainable resources management deployed in these regions.

The communities inhabiting the extreme lands are vulnerable and, if not properly supported, they tend to leave (particularly the younger generations): There are serious concerns as in some cases no one may be left to protect the valuable traditional know-how, native inventory of the local biodiversity and local cultural resources.

Peace and prosperity in these areas are strategically important for national security and stable inter-state relations because these areas usually fall outside the national socio-cultural and political mainstreams, are mostly populated by ethnic minorities, and are often located in the borderlands or shared (claimed) by many different states.

Therefore, a well-informed attention to the extreme lands and marginal communities and an economic strategy with human (socio)-ecological approach are urgently needed in order to promote local well-being, cultural traditions and human *praesidium* (stewardship) for biodiversity.

The essential components of human (socio)-ecological approach to sustainable economy in the extreme lands are:

- preserving the traditional habitat (quality of environmental resources and landscape, non-invasive and minimal infrastructures)
- enhancing the human capital (resilience, capabilities and vulnerabilities)
- empowering the local communities through decentralized governance, local equity and stakeholdership in complex economic activities (e.g. extractive business), appropriate eco/socio-compatible technologies and connectivity (infotech)
- promoting a place-brand through the institutionalization of the 'quality of context' (low human vulnerability and high socio-environmental standards) that can confer special distinction, additional value and competitive advantage to the native specialities and to entire local economy as a special high-value transaction-investment ground and as a special tourism destination.