



Conclusion

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Conclusion

Sylvain RACAUD

The five parts of this book, respectively on general issues of urbanization in East African Mountains, on the changing mountainous landscapes, on rural livelihoods integrating urban resource, on market issues and on new mountainous resources, examine how mountain areas are integrated with globalization through the transformations of the rural-urban interactions. Indeed, a major point of this book is to illustrate how the East African Mountains are included in wider logics, in multiple networks (social, economic, politic) and in wider territories. The 14 chapters illustrate some of these unprecedented conditions of integration, and how the latter are interwoven with the transformations of rural-urban interactions. The book tries to give inputs on the issue of the place of the African Mountains in the so called “development”, taking into account that, firstly, in Africa, at least 100 million of people live in Mountain areas, and secondly, for the last 25 years, there is a growing interest for mountain areas in major political agendas. Mountain areas are considered as “sentinels of change”, meaning that they respond rapidly and intensely to climatic and environmental modifications.

Indeed, since the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)), held in June 1992, Mountain areas have been recognized as essential, as a “global priority”. Therefore, Mountain areas became a specific object of development policies. Actions followed actions (International Year of Mountains in 2002, Rio +20 in 2012, post Rio +20 actions in 2013). Since 2002, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) hosts the Mountain Partnership, “a United Nations voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain peoples and protecting mountain environments around the world”¹. From 2003, the United Nations General Assembly has designated 11 December, from 2003 onwards, as International Mountain Day. These initiatives involve a wider range of actors and of intervention scales. The prevailing view grasps Mountain areas as a normative category for which cultural and ecological specificities have to be preserved from globalization and climate change, and mountainous populations must be better taken into account within this paradigm. It is very common to read that Mountain areas are fragile hotspots of unique biodiversity, providing unique ecosystem services. From a different perspective, this book tries to show that unprecedented network logics reorganize the mountainous system, i.e. its condition of integration with wider logics and with urban-rural relations.

A second objective of this book is to try to address scientific challenges: disciplinary decompartmentalization, mingling of approaches and of bibliographies and comparative approaches. Geographers, anthropologists, researchers in Development Studies and researchers in Environmental Studies have contributed to this collective work. But maybe, a major input of this book is the mingling of approaches and of bibliographies as 8 authors are Francophone and 9 authors are Anglophone. It gives an occasion for scholars and practitioners to benefit from other experiences. Published in English, this collective book gathers Francophone and Anglophone research, this compilation may be relevant in terms of methodology and of bibliography.

¹ Mountain Partnership website, <http://www.mountainpartnership.org/about/en/> (Retrieved August, 10, 2016).

French approaches are well known by their qualitative approach, the latter being complementary with a quantitative approach. If a quantitative approach gives statistical information, the qualitative approach most closely analyses the different and sometimes contradictory, if not conflicting, representations and practices of several types of actors. Therefore, this collective book uses statistics, interviews, long terms observations and mapping, giving rich information for enabling an increase in understanding of contemporary dynamics in the Eastern African Mountains and for fostering the dissemination of knowledge, as it is, for example, the mission of IFRA-Nairobi. Moreover, some chapters use a comparative approach by looking at several mountain areas, enabling the examining of local responses to local and global blockages.

In addition, the combination of scientific culture presents some interests in terms of networking. Networks of researchers beyond disciplinary and beyond geographical areas are paramount for production of knowledge taking into account the local with globalization. Linking Anglophone Africa with Francophone Africa is a major challenge for the African integration of research. This book is also a transgenerational experience as it assembles senior and junior researchers. It is an example of investment in terms of student training. I joined this collective work as a PhD student, a few years later, writing at the desk of IFRA-Nairobi as Deputy Director, I deeply encourage collective experiences.

Inevitably, the book has limitations, it draws some challenges and some perspectives. An integrated research on Mountains should associate Social and Human Science with Hard Science in order to combine environmental and social change, measurements of biophysical elements with analysis of actors' strategies and practices. In addition, an important challenge is to define and to grasp the relevant level and scales of analysis. For example, the chapters have not linked enough what is going on in a farm with the public policies. Factors leading a farmer to uproot their coffee may come from internal and local causes as well as global causes (agricultural policies at national, world market level, climate change, etc.). Then, the relations of the power of the new actors' systems caused by the new conditions of integration with the global economy should be more analysed. Then, especially in East Africa, the issue of Mountain areas should be more associated with the big investments, particularly the projects of transport corridors. Indeed, Kenya and Tanzania have new projects of transport corridors. The corridor's layouts are close to Mountain areas, for example the Mombasa-Rwanda corridor via Malaba would pass close to Mount Kilimanjaro and to Mount Elgon. The Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) reaches the foot of Uporoto Mountains and could transform its condition of economic integration at a national and regional scale.

All these combinations would provide more elements in order to propose an analytic framework of the African Mountains combining actors, places, socio-eco-political infrastructures and environmental issues, which go beyond disciplinary approaches and bibliographic borders. We are naïve enough to believe that this book, through the combination of knowledge from different backgrounds, through is combination of senior and junior researchers, is interesting in terms of promotion of cultural diversity by science.