



Mt. Makiling - Sustainable Rainforest Protection; Making a Conservation Project in the Philippines more attractive

Abstract der Masterarbeit von ANDREAS MÜLLER-SCHICK

Februar 1996

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Abstract

In the Philippines and like in many other parts of the humid tropics, expropriation of forest resources has caused serious problems. One example is Mount Makiling, where since 1910 a Forest Reserve (MFR) of 4,244 hectare is located, circa 65 km south of Manila. It is the nearest rainforest to the capital and habitat of many rare tropical animals and plants, some do not exist elsewhere. The reserve fulfils very important ecological functions and is a gene pool of biological diversity, a watersource providing irrigation, industrial and domestic water supply. Moreover, it protects from erosion and provides resources for recreation, education and research. Mount Makiling is home to a number of Filipinos.

The University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) has the sole jurisdiction over the MFR. Through inaccurate administration and protection of the MFR, the Reserve has conservation difficulties that are very complex and not restricted to the protection of the forest and wildlife. As a consequence the ecological system has experienced an aggravating change. They are all endangering MFR's usefulness, as a resource for the present and future generations. Already 50% of the original forest cover is lost. Until now, juridical and administrative solutions to protect the environment have failed. One of the reasons are the stakeholders inside and outside the reserve with many partly divergent interests. Through inconsistent control against misusing of MFR and a lack in participation of concerned and legitimate sectors (administration, tourism, locals, communities), no basin for a realistic protection is developed. The budget to manage and keep the MFR, is insufficient. The risk of loosing the rest of the habitat in the near future is not unrealistic.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to search for alternative ways for a successful preservation concept of the MFR. To stop the degradation, the socio-economic frame in the MFR needs to be improved. This includes the creation of an environmental awareness of the direct and indirect users. They have to be convinced that the existence and survival of the forest reserve as

an important culture-object is essential. It is necessary that the stakeholders have as well positive ecological functions and economic benefits. This is possible if they will receive an alternative source of sustainable income as compensation of not using the MFR.

The SWOT analysis showed that the accessibility, natural and scenic features of the forested areas of the MFR and the high potential of visitors (already 188,000 visitor/year) make it an ideal tourism venue. Therefore the promotion of an environmental- and socially-friendly tourism is recommended to generate sustainable financial resources to maintain the forest. In order to conserve the biodiversity of the Mt. Makiling and at the same time to receive revenues of tourism and recreation development, only a small part of the MFR should be supported and developed for attractive recreational activities. A (small) management team would be responsible for a balanced tourism development. Its tasks will be to solve short and long term ecological, social and economic problem issues and at the same time ensure the sustainable existence of the MFR. In this study, the problems of the MFR, the touristic potential, the administrative, socio-economic and ecological situation have been analysed. In relation, the services and facilities for tourism in the MFR have been evaluated, in-depth interviews among the stakeholders were concluded and a visitor study conducted.

The study demonstrate that the typical visitor is not the so called "eco-tourist", but a "nature-tourist" with typical recreational activities. The visitor has a limited action-radius because of his short stay and has clear preferences of his destinations. Therefore it is not necessary to develop the total MFR, as is suggested in the DRAFT MASTER PLAN (1995) for ecotourism. That could also lead to loose ecosystems or threatened habitats.

Based on the results, suggestions for a holistic management approach and a marketing strategy are formulated, for the direct promotion of tourism. The stakeholders as partner of the success would be involved in preservation and development. The next steps in the MFR should be a study of the economic value which calculate the investment and the profitableness in short- and long-term, both for the full protection and development area.

To increase environmental awareness and financial resources available, the possibilities of forestry in the "man-made" forests and the tool of eco-sponsoring are described. The public will be more informed about the positive effects and benefits of the MFR. Besides this, it generates the solid basis of a balanced environment for the greater good and benefit of the Filipinos today and the generations to come.