



Thursday, 1 August 2019, 18.30h – 20.00h

The Mountains Belong to Everybody? Conflicts about Recreational Forest use in Austria and Japan

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Recreational outdoor sports, such as hiking, mountain biking, and trail running are enjoying increased popularity in Japan and worldwide. Proponents argue that these activities contribute to physical and mental health on the one hand and bring about economic and social benefits for rural areas on the other. At the same time there are concerns of over-use and environmental degradation. Focusing on mountain biking, Prof. Yuichiro Hirano and Prof. Wolfram Manzenreiter will be comparing the current situation in Austria and Japan and try to line out possible futures for sustainable outdoor tourism that benefits rural areas and protect the environment equally.

In Austria many regions have actively supported the establishment of trails and parks. Tourism program developers want to thrive from the appeal of mountain biking but new technological developments are hampered by legal restrictions, as the Austrian Forest Act does not permit the usage of forest roads. This has resulted in a concentration of tourists in hotspots, while local mountain bikers find it difficult to find trails in their vicinity.

In Japan several rural areas are only right now beginning to tap into mountain biking as a tourist attraction. Here as well access to forests and mountains is restricted. Land owners are concerned about liability for accidents, while walkers and hikers are scared by faster moving trail users. To solve conflicts and to ensure sustainable forest use, mountain bikers in Japan have recently formed organizations in order to maintain trails and good relations with the local community.

Yuichiro Hirano is chief scientist at the Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute and associate professor at the Graduate School of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Japan. His main research interests are social mechanisms related to diverse stakeholders' interests on forests. He has conducted field research in China, USA, UK, New Zealand, and Japan.

Wolfram Manzenreiter is Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Vienna. His research is concerned with social and anthropological aspects of sports, emotions, work and migration in a globalising world. Book publications of note include *Sport and Body Politics in Japan* (Routledge 2014) and the co-edited volumes on *Happiness and the Good Life in Japan* (Routledge 2017) and *Life course, Happiness and Well-being in Japan* (Routledge 2017, both with Barbara Holthus).

Following the talks and comments, the floor will be opened for a Q&A session. The event will be held in English. It will be followed by a small reception. Admission is free, registration is required at forum@dijtokyo.org or via our website.