

Welcome statement

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Mountains under global change conditions: where should competent mountain research on a large scale take place if not in Innsbruck? High mountain regions and uplands as well as their foothills are particularly affected by global change including climate change. In the economically and culturally more segregated alpine regions, globalization with its effects on culture, economy and politics competes with a situation characterized by a traditional regional lifestyle based on more locally oriented decisions and economy. Alpine habitats are not yet adequately prepared to cope with the challenges of the global market and politics. Consequently, strategies have to be developed and explored for down-scaling the global dimension to regional requirements. Mountain research aims at analysing the processes and effects of global change and at designing scientifically based modes of adaptation and lasting regional development and prosperity.

Surprisingly, for a rather long time mountain research found its place only within a single scientific discipline. However, in view of the importance and complexity of the issue, the Austrian Academy of Sciences founded an “Institute of Mountain Research: Man and Environment” in 2006 with the aim of initiating a systematic and interdisciplinary approach based on the endogenous potential and characteristics of the alpine regions. Together with the implementation of the research focus “Alpine Region” at the University of Innsbruck in 2009 and the competence centre for climate change adaptation technologies in 2010, a cluster of excellence was created in Innsbruck, closely linking basic research with development and application of strategies and technologies in order to cope with the challenges of global change conditions in alpine regions.

The present volume deals with the achievements of mountain research, concentrating on studies carried out by the Institute of Mountain Research. The Austrian Academy of Sciences is proud of the results presented and of their impetus to mountain research in Austria and abroad and congratulates the scientists involved.

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