

EDITORIAL

Although great advances in the recognition, prediction and mitigation of landslides have been made in the last few years, major events especially in Alpine regions still claim a high social and economical tribute. Especially through extreme weather conditions, as e.g. the intense rainfall in August 2005 in the Alpine regions of Austria, Switzerland and Bavaria, unstable slopes can be activated and endanger people, settlements and goods in its surrounding. Currently an increase of this problem caused by the global climate change can be observed.

Recent landslides thus demonstrate the need for a deeper understanding of the geological and physical processes, which can lead to a spontaneous failure of a natural slope. Major rockslides as Vajont (1963, Italy) or Randa (1991, Switzerland) and recent minor events as Sibratsgfäll (1999, Austria) or the Gschlifgraben (2007) prove the destructive potential of these mass movements and the need to investigate the mechanics of such processes more deeply. Progress in the assessment of the land slide risk will only be achieved if the triggering processes and the kinematics of the movements are better understood.

In this issue, there will be a focus on landslides, their geological and geomorphological controls, investigation and monitoring methods as well as numerical modelling and mitigation measures.

To make advances in these areas, field laboratories need to be created, such that the long-term behavior of natural slopes can be established. Once the characteristics of the slope have been collected, the underlying processes can be developed, using geological considerations and, very often, numerical modeling.

In this issue, eight contributions have been submitted, emphasising characterisation methodologies, monitoring systems & frameworks, geotechnical analysis & numerical modeling as well as risk analysis & evaluation leading to mitigation measures. It is clear from these submissions that the scientifically fascinating subject of rock slopes continues to evolve and that their socio-economic impact grows.

Kurosch Thuro

(Guest-editor for AJES landslide contributions)
Munich, December 2009

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Zeitschrift/Journal: [Austrian Journal of Earth Sciences](#)

Jahr/Year: 2009

Band/Volume: [102_2](#)

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Artikel/Article: [Editorial. 3](#)