Sustainability in hunting systems: A comparison between Japan, South Korea and Austria

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Hunting systems in Japan and South Korea are known as licensed hunting systems, whereas the hunting system in Austria is called a hunting ground system. This binds hunting to specific hunting districts, where the land owners either possess the right to hunt or may lease their hunting rights to other persons. When hunting rights are controlled by a state / country and anyone can purchase a hunting license, hunt certain species of game in certain areas, one speaks of a hunting license or patent system. Each of these hunting systems is different and involves a series of closely related legal, environmental, economic, biological and cultural factors. This study will compare the different management strategies that control access and rights of use in these three hunting economies. It shall examine to what extent institutional and legal frameworks are in line with sustainable development, international ecological policy and resource management. The aim is to compare the sustainability of hunting use and management to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the different hunting systems, and to develop possible future strategies of sustainability.

Adaptive management strategies are subject to federal and state laws, the conservation of biodiversity and species conservation agreements, MEAs (Multilateral Environmental Agreements), scientific symposia, hunting club meetings, hunting concepts and the practical part of planning hunting activities.

The methodological background is primarily based on the forestry model in examining the sustainability of the hunting system proposed by Haraki, Heckl, Forstner, Lexer and Reilmser. This principle is understood as a flexible, integrated into overall sustainability strategies, modified, and it is applied to small and large units. A simple evaluation method consisting of 45 categories and subcategories of ecological, economic and socio-cultural levels has been created to analyze and compare the hunting systems in Austria, East Asia or any other possible country of choice. The selected categories provide a detailed overview of the comparable objective to analyze the sustainability in hunting systems. These will be analyzed in a comparatively comprehensive study of legal sources, reports by local hunting actors, scientific and journalistic articles, television reports, documentation, material from hunting associations and expert knowledge from email surveys.

70 percent of Japanese territory is used for hunting over the winter. Nevertheless, venison trade can be considered as a niche product. Most venison is consumed privately by hunters and their relatives. The hunting population has decreased rapidly since 1979, and the rate of young hunters has stayed low ever since. The annual game damage is consistently high and is mainly caused by sika deer and wild boar. Due to the country’s long history of efficient urban management, a strong social bond between rural culture and hunting societies still remains which regulates hunting activities by informal ethical norms. These arise mainly from the mystified relationship between man, nature and the gods of nature. Superstition, old Matagi-traditions and rituals influence the behaviour towards animals and management practices of natural resources that can’t be found in formal laws. Most hunting grounds in Japan are privately owned by peasant families and financially supported by the state (for example: game damage reduction). The highest decision- and policymaker is represented by the environmental, forestry and agriculture ministry which defines laws and hunting conditions. The individual prefectures set specific rules for each prefecture, coordinate projects and data collection and keep close contact with local hunting associations (yoyukai).

In South Korea on the other hand, only 10 percent of the total area is used for hunting. Hunting is primarily an expensive sport for well-off amateur hunters, rather than a legacy of county’s culture of maintaining and preserving natural resources. The local rural population is not only driven away and insufficiently supported by the government, it is also under pressure from often poorly qualified recreational hunters from urban areas. Despite the increased establishment of hunting fields in 2010 and the increasing interest of the population in recent years there are still not enough hunting areas in South Korea. Even if the principle of cyclically changing hunting grounds were adapted to maximum capacity (for which the small habitats in South Korea would be very suitable), it still wouldn’t work due to the lack of a feedback function to ecological changes and the lack of credibility of irregularly collected data. Hunting resources have little economic importance in South Korea, since the four-month hunting-season mainly serves hunting license owners and hunting tourists. The primarily economic orientation of the private and public hunting grounds has resulted in massive overuse and development syndromes; the main victims being South Korea’s ecosystems and rural population. Thanks to increasing environmental awareness certain improvements have been made, such as the strengthening of the Wildlife Protection Act of 2004. Byun and Yoon speak of a “hunting system in the early stages”.

Austria’s hunting ground system serves as an example of a more bottom-up organized hunting system, well integrated into rural culture and scientific research activities.

The hunting license hunting systems and economies of Japan and South Korea still have many obstacles to overcome in order to sustainably manage their hunting resources. While Japan’s hunting system primarily suffers from demographic and environmental problems, South Korea’s main challenge is the establishment of an efficient hunting system to control and sanction game damage, poaching and wildlife trade. Management by rural communities has been weakened in the wake of industrialization, urbanization and fragmentations of landscapes due to transport networks. Austria however, shows an intact hunting economy with a more decentralized structure in which, in addition to formal standards or laws, informal ethical standards for environmental issues and the protection of species also exist. These are reflected in local customs, festivals and hunting methods which primarily correspond with sustainable approaches. Territorial hunting systems provide a more efficient and long-term way to manage small, rugged hunting grounds and resources sustainably than a hunting licence system in which access for recreational hunters is less regulated or controlled. The negative effects of the hunting licence system are the exploitation of game populations by unauthorized users, overtaxing by authorities and weak local communities with little economic incentive resulting in a low eco-ethical commitment to manage wildlife sustainably in the long-term.

References
With reference to the full bibliography: https://www.dropbox.com/sf/tbhnxrxtb%c2bivMA.pdf

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