

Soil and land degradation, and monitoring on Soqatra Island

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December 2012

Walking from Hadiboh to Noged and back in 2001 it was obvious – and not just from a scientific point of view – that the island and its inhabitants are facing a lot of problems which concern land degradation. These problems are mainly to changes in many sectors of economy, also due to changing patterns of land-use. Signs of such changes are neglected home gardens, degraded areas due to overgrazing in intra-montane basins such as Homhil, eroded and over-salted top soils in cutover-areas, what leads to a decrease of e.g. flora and soil fauna. The phenomena are specific for a region, and further, one can distinguish between different kinds and degrees of land degradation: from slight to worst damaged areas, relating either to vegetation and/or soil.

Botanical studies carried out over the last decades have shown the interdependence between grazing and the degradation of the natural vegetation, but not the relation between soil, vegetation and land degradation. In general, this appears due to the increase in herd numbers since the 1970ies as well as to the neglect of field terraces. Until 2003, nothing had been done about this permanent damage to the soils, and consequently, about the decrease in bio- and geodiversity.



At the Yemen National Environmental Day in 2007 a “down-to-earth monitoring” in Homhil basin was established. Together with the Soqatra Conservation Development Program (SCDP), the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) sixteen walls in terms of sediments traps had been built in a gully. The monitoring is a long-term project because of the combination of soil monitoring with tree planting. Financially this special activity of tree planting was and is supported by the *Friends of Soqatra* (FOS) in 2011 and in 2013.

[Additional information you can find here](#)

Dana Pietsch and Miranda Morris (2010): Ancient and modern knowledge of conserving soils on Soqatra Island, Yemen. *Land Degradation and Desertification: Assessment, Mitigation and Remediation*, Eds. Zdruli, P., Pagliai, M., Kapur, S., Faz Cano, Springer Books. pp. 375–386. ISBN 978-90-481-8656-3

and in the Tayf Newsletters from 2003 to 2012