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Editorial

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Source: Mountain Research and Development, 37(1) : 3-4

Published By: International Mountain Society

URL: https://doi.org/10.1659/0276-4741-37.1.3

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Mountain Research and Development (MRD)
An international, peer-reviewed open access journal
published by the International Mountain Society (IMS)
www.mrd-journal.org

Dear Readers,

This is a special editorial, as it signals an important change in MRD's Editorial Team as of 1 January 2017.

Change and continuity in steering MRD (by Hans Hurni)

After 17 years as Editor-in-Chief of MRD, the 5 last of which together with Dr David Molden, Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), I decided to step down at the end of 2016 and hand over the task to Prof. Dr. Thomas Breu, Director of the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Bern since 2013 and Executive Director of the International Graduate School IGS North-South. It has been a great pleasure for me to see the journal thrive and flourish during my time as an Editor-in-Chief of MRD. For me personally, a big change came in January 2016, when I retired from the University of Bern at the age of 65, a particularity of Swiss bureaucracy. I have kept some former and assumed some new assignments at the international level; but it seemed essential, both to myself and to the team, to ensure that MRD's editorial team in Bern should continue to have an Editor-in-Chief next door, and we were very lucky that Thomas Breu signaled his interest and willingness to serve in this function.

Thomas Breu has a long track record of research for sustainable development in natural resource management and governance of social–ecological systems in Southeast Asia, East Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Central Asia, often with a focus on mountainous areas; he has also published on spatial analysis of global change processes—including large-scale land acquisitions—and has coordinated a number of research projects and long-term programs based on partnerships between the global North and South. With this expertise and his profound understanding of policy and development processes, he is ideally suited to further strengthen MRD's mission.

When I started as an Editor-in-Chief with volume 20, issue 1 in early 2000, I took over from Prof. Dr. Jack Ives—among our best known "mountain men" and mountain scholars—who, together with his wife Pauline Ives, had launched MRD in 1981 and had kept it running as a key mountain journal for nearly 20 years. The year 2000 marked the beginning of a new era, with a new format strengthening the development component, a new editorial team, and a new organizational structure. MRD continued to be printed 4 times a year and mailed to its subscribers by post, in the "old way". This changed as of 2009, when MRD became an online and open access journal, the "new" way of publishing scientific results and making them available to anyone anywhere on our planet, thus significantly increasing its readership. Today, MRD articles are downloaded by researchers, students, and development experts from about 130 countries, and authors' affiliations cover a large share of the world's countries. Without the continuous financial support from our main donor, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), as well as from other major donors and the International Mountain Society (IMS), the journal would not have been able to thrive as it did, nor would it have been able to offer strong editorial support to authors from developing and transition countries. At the same time, with the help of the International Editorial Board, we were able to maintain MRD's high scientific quality and its multithematic and interdisciplinary orientation, and to strengthen the peer review process for all submitted papers.

I should not end my introductory and retrospective words without mentioning those people who actually did most of the work in the past 17 years at the Editorial Office in Bern: Dr Ted Wachs, Managing Editor of MRD from 2000 until his retirement at the end of 2010, was an essential leader and workforce behind the early MRD in Bern. Susanne Wymann von Dach (responsible for the new MountainDevelopment section as of 2000), Dr Anne Zimmermann (editor since 2000 as well), and Dr Sarah-Lan Mathez-Stiefel (since 2016, working remotely from Lima) are MRD's current dedicated Associate Editors. Marlène Thibault (who joined in 2002) has taken over key administrative functions. At a more institutional level, Dr Thomas Kohler has been the Executive Director of the IMS—the institution founded by Jack Ives and his "mountain colleagues" for steering MRD—since 1999. Without Thomas Kohler's wise assistance and continuous support, the journal would not have made it so nicely.

I am confident that the future of MRD will remain bright. The journal is needed; it supports the cause of mountains and mountain people, and it helps share knowledge and advice for sustainable development in all mountain areas on our planet; moreover, it can count on a multitude of reviewers who provide excellent peer feedback.

This issue's contents (by the current editors)

MRD 37.1 offers 14 peer-reviewed articles focusing on issues related to water, energy, land use change, biodiversity, vegetation ecology, ethnobotany, economic opportunities, mobility, and glacier monitoring. This broad and often integrative thematic coverage is relevant in the context of the newly adopted resolution 71/234 on "Sustainable Mountain Development" (UNGA 2017). In the MountainResearch section of this issue, the first article—by Jeremy Bricker and co-authors—analyzes the performance of models for flash flood warning and hazard assessment in the context of postseismic landslides in Nepal and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of 1- and 2-dimensional models. In the next paper, Erica Matta et al present a novel approach to monitoring water color in Himalayan glacial lakes as a proxy of suspended solid load, based on analysis of satellite and in-situ reflectance data. The following article focuses on gendered responses to drought in China: Yufang Su and co-authors show that although women and men perceive, are vulnerable to, and adapt to climate change in different ways, gender is not taken into consideration by Chinese policy aiming to alleviate the impacts of drought; consequently, they argue for a better integration of gender in such policies. Water as a resource is also the central concern in the next paper, by Durga Poudel and Timothey Duex: based on a documentation of farmers' perceptions of and adaptations to climate change impacts in

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Nepal and a triangulation with historical precipitation data, they propose that comprehensive research on springs and groundwater hydrology, a spring rejuvenation program, and community capacity-building be supported in the region.

After these papers focusing on water themes, the next article, by Silu Bhochhibhoya et al, presents a life-cycle analysis of the global-warming potential of materials used to construct different types of buildings in Nepal; they conclude that a combination of modern insulation and use of local materials—including wood—provides the best results in the long term if all energy-related elements are considered. The next paper assesses unintended side effects of Chinese conservation measures in an important national nature reserve: Amanda Schmidt and co-authors show that grassland biodiversity at certain elevations is at risk following restrictions on pastureland use, and that relocation of the population to lower areas is exposing them to higher landslide risk. Marlena Kycko et al also focus on the dynamics of alpine meadows in a protected area: their analysis of the condition of swards in trampled and untrampled areas in a national park in Poland relies on a hyperspectral remote sensing approach that could be applied in other regions affected by anthropogenic impacts. The next article presents the results of a further vegetation ecology assessment, based on air photography and a combined dendrochronological, temperature, and precipitation analysis: Li Dai and co-authors conclude that upslope migration of Pinus mugo *krummholz in the Italian Apennines will continue, but less as a result of climate change than as a legacy of summer pastoralism and the species' dispersal limitations. The final paper focusing on vegetation in this issue explores leaf litterfall and decomposition of the endemic* Polylepis reticulata *in the Ecuadorian* páramo*: based on their experimental calculations, Juan Pinos et al conclude that the leaf lifespan is nearly 2 years—a factor that needs to be taken into account when assessing carbon fluxes in these very-high-altitude natural forests.*

The following paper presents results of a combined participatory and remote sensing study of the use of forest products and state of forests in a protected area in Nepal: Sushma Shrestha and Kimberley Medley show that the local population know nearly all of the 155 woody species found there and use most of them—thus making the local people adequate partners for conservation planning in this biodiversity hotspot. In another participatory study, Timothy McLellan and Madeline Brown found that wild mushroom collection and cash cropping can both improve livelihoods in mountainous Thailand, that concerns about overcollection of mushrooms exist alongside practices to protect them, and that mushrooming is now emerging as a leisure activity in their study area. The next paper is an economic study of regional labeling in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Switzerland: Florian Knaus and co-authors show that the gross added value of such products is surprisingly high after a phase of building credibility, identity, and innovations in such products; they recommend them as a valuable option for protected areas in similar socioeconomic contexts. In the final MountainResearch article, Elisa Ravazzoli et al analyze the spatiotemporal effects of planned high-speed railway lines in the European Alps, using time-based maps; they conclude that this tool is useful in supporting aspects of cross-border planning in an age of increasing mobility.

In the MountainAgenda section, Samuel Nussbaumer et al review the state of the art on glacier monitoring within the framework of the Global Terrestrial Network for Glaciers and analyze their experience with capacity building for glacier monitoring in Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Kyrgyzstan. They underline the crucial role of establishing durable institutions, providing continuous training, promoting knowledge sharing, and strengthening regional cooperation to ensure continuity of glacier monitoring in the global network.

In the MountainPlatform section, Francisco Cuesta presents the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion's (CONDESAN's) program to develop and assess restoration practices in Andean ecosystems, mentioning the various tools used at the landscape scale and emphasizing the importance of monitoring. The issue closes with 6 interesting book reviews solicited by MRD's MountainMedia Editor, Martin Price.

MRD's Editorial Team hopes that the contents of the present issue will interest a broad audience committed to mountains and mountain development worldwide. The Team looks forward to working in its new constellation and expresses its deepest thanks for Hans Hurni's long-term and visionary guidance of MRD.

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