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Editorial

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Mountain Research and Development (MRD)
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Dear Readers,

On 8 January 2014, during the 7th session of the United Nation General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a side event took place on "Building resilience to climate change in mountain areas," with the aim of drawing attention to the importance of mountain regions not only for local populations but also for all regions in the lowlands linked to mountain regions. The side event was organized by the Mountain Partnership, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), continuing the lobbying for mountains initiated by a few clear-sighted and committed actors at the international level of the United Nations and related conventions (Messerli 2012). Indeed, in mountains, all the environmental, sociocultural, and economic themes that are currently under discussion within the SDG debate are highly relevant (see the Open Working Group's schedule of work for 2013–2014 at http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549). At the same time, it is essential to provide the sound evidence needed to inform mountain development debates and policies. And it is just as important to monitor progress towards greater sustainability. Articles published in MRD *have always contributed—and will continue to contribute—to this effort of building a sound knowledge base for sustainable mountain development.*

The 6 papers in this issue of MRD *are good examples of this effort: they contribute to "systems knowledge" on issues ranging from governance to human–nature interaction and assessments of biophysical dynamics in mountains. In the first paper, Dusan Djordjevic uses the analytical framework of scaling and framing to explore how international initiatives and agreements focusing on mountains, mainly from an environmental perspective, have helped shape region-building in South East Europe (SEE) after a period of conflict and reconstitution of national borders. The concern for preserving natural resources can be a driver of development, eg in the form of ecotourism. However, tourism development can also lead to new challenges, as underlined by the next paper in this issue: Agustina Barros and Catherine Marina Pickering assess how non-native plants have been spreading in Aconcagua Park, Argentina, through unintentional introduction of seeds on vehicles, clothing, and in the dung of pack animals, and make corresponding recommendations.*

The next 3 papers also address the issue of human–nature interactions in mountain regions, focusing on soil and water conservation (SWC). Prabuddh Kumar Mishra and Suresh Chand Rai present a cost–benefit analysis of SWC measures that were developed by local communities long ago in Sikkim and confirm that these practices have a positive net present value. Qiuwen Zhou, Shengtian Yang, Changsen Zhao, Mingyong Cai, and Luo Ya provide a soil erosion assessment of the Upper Mekong River in Yunnan, using a combination of established tools such as the Universal Soil Loss Equation and remote sensing and showing that soil erosion is most frequent in the study region in the mean-elevation and mean-slope zone but that dams on the upper reaches are threatened by the presence of sediment. Julio César Calvo-Alvarado, César Dionisio Jiménez-Rodríguez, and Vladimir Jiménez-Salazar present a practical approach to determine rainfall erosivity for a whole country (Costa Rica): if combined with soil and land use maps and digital elevation models, the proposed regression equations, working with simple and readily available precipitation data, make it possible to estimate soil erosion on a watershed scale.

The final paper in the MountainResearch section describes variations in glacier area for the period 1992–2006 in the Fedchenko glacier system, a basin situated in Tajikistan that features the longest glacier outside of the polar areas (77 km). The authors show that this Central Asian glacier system is relatively stable and argue that increasing precipitation since 1990 probably caused the slight increase in glacier area.

In the MountainPlatform section, the FAO presents a summary of its work in the field of sustainable mountain development and watershed management in various mountain regions of the Global South. Finally, the MountainMedia section offers reviewers of 6 recent books on topics ranging from peace parks to Tibetan traditional knowledge and biodiversity conservation, sustainable land use in Southeast Asia, amenity migration, and the stunning social and natural environment of the Himalayas.

We hope that this issue of MRD *will provide readers with evidence, methods, insights, and stories that will help them in their work.*

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