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Authors: Molden, David, Breu, Thomas, von Dach, Susanne Wymann, Zimmermann, Anne B., and Mathez-Stiefel, Sarah-Lan

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Editorial

Focus Issue: Implications of Out- and In-Migration for Sustainable Development in Mountains

Dear Readers,

Today, about 1 billion people worldwide are international or internal migrants (IOM–GMDAC 2016:5) and migration is taken into account in several targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (IOM 2017). Migration is also greatly affecting mountain societies and mountain ecosystems, with direct negative and positive implications for their development. Migration processes are very diverse, context-specific, highly complex, and often poorly understood. Although general data on population changes exist, they often fail to reveal dynamic local out- and in-migration patterns and do not account for migration within mountain areas, for example from rural to urban areas. Nor do demographic data reveal the reasons for people's migration choices, the types of migration, and the social, economic, cultural, institutional, and ecological negative and positive impacts of migratory processes on both places of origin and destination areas.

The papers in this Focus Issue offer a rich exploration of such details in several mountain regions of the world and contribute to improving our understanding of the outcomes of in- and outmigration for sustainable development in mountains. In the MountainDevelopment section, Marcher et al analyze how asylum seekers are being integrated socially and economically in 2 mountain villages in Italy, where all regions have been asked to take more responsibility in hosting migrants; they conclude that strong relations between actors are beneficial for labor and social integration. In the next paper, Gretter et al compare research conducted in 3 mountain areas where in-migration has increased: the inflow came from young people in the Italian village, from amenity migrants in Romania, and from asylum seekers in Austria. The authors conclude that a supportive social environment, engaged local actors brokering between groups, and meeting spaces can help build a welcoming culture.

In the first paper of the MountainResearch section, Marchant asks whether migrants from different nations to an agreeable mountain environment in Chile establish lifestyles that are promoting sustainable local development. The next paper, by Kohler et al, turns to a rarely studied country, Georgia, and provides new data on a significant trend of outmigration and aging in a representative mountain municipality between 1989 and 2016. Aging of mountain populations as a demographic trend is also a main focus in the paper by Speck: she explores how the remittance economy in Nepalese mountain communities is making the lives of the elderly very challenging. Next, Gautam asks whether climate change is influencing the rate of seasonal migration in a very remote region of Nepal; he shows that structural poverty is the root cause of outmigration, in an attempt to escape the poverty trap that is now exacerbated by climate change. Bhawana KC and co-authors explore another form of migration in Nepal—in-migration to valley floors and semiurban and urban areas, leading to different impacts on forest cover depending on elevation, as well as to changes in resource management.

The paper by Sagynbekova examines the impact of labor migration and remittances on rural livelihoods and the environment in central Kyrgyzstan, where vulnerability to climate change impacts and market shocks is increased by reduced income-generating options. We move to China with Jianzhong Yan and colleagues, who explore what impact the government's ecological migration policy has had in an environmentally sensitive region in Tibet; they show that the transition to off-farm employment of former pastoralists has been very moderately successful. Kefelegn Getahun et al analyze the impact of resettlement programs in Ethiopia on forest cover and show that demographic and socioeconomic change, agricultural changes introduced by migrants, lack of regulations, and other factors have led to continued deforestation in the study area from 1957 to 2007. In the final 2 articles, we move away from the focus on migration: first, Shaheen and colleagues offer an analysis of the distribution pattern, community structure, and ecosystem services provided by Juniperus*-dominated vegetation in a remote valley in Pakistan. And the last paper, by Walsh et al, presents an anthropological study of fire lookout staff's weather awareness in the large mountain forest tracts in Alberta, Canada; being on the lookout for wildfires has been an effective means of reducing risks and controlling fire hazard in this area.*

In the MountainPlatform section, 2 International Mountain Society members present recent achievements in research and development. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) describes its activities in advancing regional and transboundary cooperation in the conflict-prone Hindu Kush–Himalaya, while the Institute of Mountain Hazards and Environment (IMHE) offers an overview of its Key Laboratory of Mountain Surface Processes and Ecological Regulation. This is followed by a paper in the MountainViews section, by Nüsser, summarizing the genealogy of a new focus on the nexus of human–water relations termed "socio-hydrology."

We hope that the articles in this issue will spur further research on migration and sustainable development in mountains.

David Molden[1] and Thomas Breu[2], Editors-in-Chief
Susanne Wymann von Dach[2], Anne B. Zimmermann[2], and Sarah-Lan Mathez-Stiefel[2], Associate Editors

[1] International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu, Nepal
[2] Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), University of Bern, Switzerland

mrd-journal@cde.unibe.ch

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