

Editorial

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Dear Readers,

With this double issue of MRD in print, we would like to announce that the journal is completing a phase of transition towards a forward-looking online and open access format, as explained below.

Pollution is an increasing concern for mountain populations and environments—even in very remote areas of the world. While climate change and land use changes have dominated the headlines in recent years as the most important factors endangering the multiple functions of mountain ecosystems, jeopardizing many mountain people's livelihoods, to date little attention has been given to air, soil, and water pollution in mountains. Worldwide, development trends both in the highlands and lowlands exacerbate the problem of pollution, impacting mountain ecosystems: rapid economic development has boosted mining activities, coal-fired power plants have regained importance, intensification of agriculture has continued, etc: the benefits of such development are partly offset by emissions and other waste products that do not remain where they were produced. Research has been trying to provide the necessary data and analysis for national and international policy decisions. For example, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has revealed that the impact of pollution on biodiversity is increasing very rapidly; and a study by Israeli and Chinese researchers (D. Rosenfeld et al 2007) has shown that airborne particulate pollution is seriously reducing rainfall in hilly areas of China and will have dire consequences for water resources.

In this issue's Development section, authors have heeded these signals. They have taken a close look at how their research findings on pollution in mountain areas are being taken up by policy and decisions-makers, and how these insights are being translated into coping strategies to deal with pollution. Bebbington and Williams suggest a co-defined communication and monitoring plan for mining sites in Peru, in order to rebuild trust among communities and mitigate pollution. Roa García et al. report on water resource research and a cross-boundary education programme conducted in Columbia and Bolivia with local mountain youth. Nafees et al. investigate the impact of pesticides on people and water resources in the Swat valley, Pakistan, and suggest remedial measures. Allison presents a plan to manage new, non-biodegradable waste in Bhutan. Helliwell et al. and Šrámek et al. deduce policy recommendations from the results of their research on the impacts of nitrogen enrichment in Scotland, and of acid rain in the Czech Republic, while Pecci presents a simple and cost-effective methodology developed in the Italian Alps for monitoring air-borne pollution in snow cover.

The focus in the Research section is not on pollution; papers cover a broad range of topics and many levels of analysis and possible practical or policy implications—revealing the breadth of issues that can and ought to be dealt with when aiming for sustainable mountain development. Papers focus on development and multi-stakeholder participation in the European Alps, the importance of institutions for market access in the Moroccan Atlas, migration strategies developed by Nepalese men in the Indian Himalaya, the sustainability of tree-pole harvest by herders in Nepal, the history and current significance of changes on the high frontier in Guatemala, the impact of summer farming on timberline changes in the Ukraine, the status and dynamics of thufur and turf exfoliation on Mt Halla, Jeju Island, Korea, the hydrological effects of forests in the Spanish Pyrenees, strategies to achieve sustainable water resource management in Yunnan, China, analysis of options for snowmaking in Austria in the light of climate change, integrated assessment of vulnerability to glacial hazards in Peru, assessing and simulating glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) in China, and modelling precipitation in China's Daqing Mountains.

MRD: online and open access as of 2009

For MRD, 2008 has been a year of transition, trying to keep pace with authors' and readers' changing expectations, current advances in information and communication technology and in journal publishing procedures, and dealing with substantial budget cuts. This double issue of MRD is the final one that will appear in print: as of the February 2009 issue (Vol 29 No 1), all MRD articles

will be available online and remain indexed in key academic and other databases; moreover, the journal will be “open access”, ie all articles can be downloaded free of charge. After consultation with the International Mountain Society (IMS) and the Editorial Board, this appears to us to be the best way to increase the journal’s relevance, distribution, and impact factor, and make its store of knowledge available to everyone—even beyond the mountain research and development community that has so far subscribed to MRD. This will give mountain issues an even greater visibility on the global sustainability agenda. Open access is also a means of reaching an ever-increasing community of authors and readers in the South.

The change of format will also allow us to save costs as well as increase the speed of the process from submission of papers to their publication. Authors will be able to submit their papers online, using an interface that will guide them through the submission and revision process. Reviewers will use the online facility to enter their comments and recommendations directly. The Editorial Office at the Centre for Development and Environment, University of Berne, will continue to operate in collaboration with its Editorial Board members, the IMS, and the numerous reviewers whose services have guaranteed the high quality and international relevance of articles in MRD to date.

In addition to this major change of format, there will be an adaptation of the contents of MRD. All papers will now be peer-reviewed. Articles in the Development section will now be submitted to external peer review as well, using a procedure that will continue to guarantee and even increase their relevance to and readability for a broader, multi-disciplinary community of development-oriented researchers, policy-makers, decision-makers, project planners, and people in educational institutions. The MountainNotes section will be dropped, as there are other, internationally well-established Internet platforms for circulation of the kind of information that appeared in this section of MRD until now—in particular Mountain Forum (MF), IndoAndina, the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), and the Mountain Partnership.

The loss of income from subscriptions and downloads will only be partly offset by author fees per published article. This is why we appeal to all our current subscribers to continue their support of MRD in another manner and to help us gain new “Friends of MRD” by drawing attention to the possibility of donations and membership through vehicles to be announced on the MRD website.

We are convinced that the new, forward-looking format will help MRD continue to fulfil its not-for-profit mission. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those individuals and institutions who remained faithful readers and supporters of MRD and the cause of mountains and mountain people since Jack Ives founded the journal in 1981, with support from the United Nations University and inspiration from the Mountain Agenda group. We would also like to thank authors and reviewers for their work to date, and the IMS’s institutional members for their support, dedicated explicitly to making the journal available in the South and offering special editing services to authors from developing countries. Our thanks also go to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), which has generously provided core funding for MRD since 1999. We are confident that financial and in-kind support from all these sources will continue for the new online and open access MRD.

The Editorial Team wishes you an interesting time with the articles presented in this issue and look forward to publishing the next articles of MRD online and open access.

Hans Hurni, Editor-in-Chief

Theodore Wachs (Managing Editor), Anne Zimmermann and Susanne Wymann von Dach (Associate Editors), Marlène Thibault (Editorial Assistant), Monika Iseli-Felder (former Editorial Assistant)

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