



## **Knowledge for Sustainable Mountain Development— Consolidating MRD's Editorial Policy and Practices**

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# Knowledge for Sustainable Mountain Development—Consolidating *MRD*'s Editorial Policy and Practices

Dear Readers,

As announced last November, the year 2011 marks yet another turning point in the journal's history, consolidating its ability to fulfill its mission: MRD now has a reconstituted International Editorial Board (IEB) and an Honorary Board. We invite you to visit our website to become acquainted with our new governance structure: [http://www.mrd-journal.org/about\\_eteam.asp](http://www.mrd-journal.org/about_eteam.asp). Since January 2011, the new members of the IEB have taken over more responsibility: they are helping to shape MRD's editorial policy, solicit contributions, reflect on the journal's orientation and ability to take up emerging mountain themes of worldwide relevance, and generally enhance the network of scientific and development specialists committed to mountains and mountain societies. Collaboration with these internationally renowned scholars and development specialists started in Perth, Scotland, at a side event during the memorable conference on "Global Change and the World's Mountains" hosted by the Centre for Mountain Studies (CMS) in September 2010. We look forward to working with our new Board members, who will serve on the IEB for the next 3 years, with the challenge of maintaining and even increasing the visibility of mountains in Rio +20 in 2012. Our thanks go to all former Regional Editors and members of the International Editorial Advisory Board (MRD 2010) for their commitment to MRD during the last 11 years. Their support and advice proved invaluable for the journal and—by extension—for the broad community of mountain researchers and mountain development specialists who rely on the journal for evidence-based information and innovative ideas.

At the MRD side event in Perth, the Editors had an opportunity to discuss the shape of the now fully peer-reviewed MountainDevelopment section with future IEB members; we also clarified the journal's structure according to the different knowledge types needed for sustainable mountain development—"systems," "transformation," and "target knowledge" (ProClim/CASS 1997). As a result of the feedback from IEB members, the criteria for MountainDevelopment papers were revised, and the corresponding review criteria were adapted (see [http://www.mrd-journal.org/Submission\\_GAauthors\\_1.asp](http://www.mrd-journal.org/Submission_GAauthors_1.asp)). Papers in the MountainDevelopment section focus on "transformation knowledge." Transformation knowledge helps shape the change from a given current state of development, human–nature interactions, institutional arrangements, etc. to a more sustainable form of mountain development. MountainDevelopment papers address a multi-disciplinary community of development-oriented researchers, policy-makers, decision-makers, project planners, and people in educational institutions. The audience is thus a broader one than for a purely academic paper; nevertheless, authors are asked to validate insights into development and policy experiences and explore the transferability of these experiences across mountain contexts, and their papers are assessed by peers who are both scientific and development experts.

Interestingly, the need for addressing different audiences in different ways, and developing different types of knowledge when aiming for sustainable mountain development in the context of global change was repeatedly mentioned during the Perth mountain conference, where the 3 types of knowledge referred to in MRD's structure were evoked by a number of speakers. We would like to refer our readers back to Bruno Messerli and Paul Messerli's outline of the history and regional origin of the differentiation between the 3 knowledge types, within the context of a strong Swiss trend to promote mountain research capable of taking into account complex human–nature interactions (Messerli and Messerli 2008).

To come back to MRD's use of the 3 knowledge types within the context of sustainable development, we would like to comment on how and to what purpose MRD uses these epistemological categories to serve its mission. The journal offers systems and transformation knowledge in 2 sections that address different audiences. However, this does not mean that scientists are and should be interested only in systems knowledge, and development specialists only in transformation knowledge, quite on the contrary. Nor should scientists produce only systems knowledge: transformation knowledge (as well target knowledge) can also be presented for a purely scientific audience, using the rules of scientific writing that allow peers to assess the validity, replicability, and innovativeness of this knowledge. Moreover, development specialists often present valid knowledge about the status and trends of a specific system to their peers, also using rules specific to development communication that will enable readers to understand this knowledge and assess its validity as systems knowledge. The purpose of the 2 sections in MRD is thus not to establish a rigid categorization of knowledge types and readerships, but to offer the different communities the possibility of reading across the fences, so to speak, and ideally produce knowledge together, also developing target knowledge by involving local to global actors. MRD is thus a platform that can trigger dialogue between thought communities and lead to co-production of knowledge for sustainable (mountain) development (Pohl et al 2010). As a peer-reviewed journal positioned within the academic system, MRD arguably has the power to permeate the rather rigid boundaries between communities that usually produce and

read knowledge communicated only according to their own norms and rules, making it difficult for readers from other communities to access this knowledge. MRD's increasing impact factor is a clear signal that we are on the right track—or should we say mountain trail?

In this open issue, 2 MountainDevelopment papers offer good examples of validated transformation knowledge: in the first paper, Stefan Schütte and Hermann Kreuzmann discuss how projects to link relief and development in earthquake-affected areas of Pakistan-administered Kashmir were designed and how effective they were in restoring local livelihoods and economic security. In the second paper in this section, Alessandra Giuliani, Frederik van Oudenhoven, and Shoista Mubaliev describe efforts of a development project and the local population in the remote Tajik Pamirs to assess whether and how agrobiodiverse horticultural crops can help increase both income and food security, in a context where market influences can impact local development in very different ways: can people continue to grow and market locally developed crops under the influence of an increasing trend to introduce exotic, income-generating species? Moreover, how can they do this efficiently and contribute to a more sustainable form of development in this mountain region?

In the MountainResearch section, Nancy Cook and David Butz also address the impact of modernization on people's lives in a remote mountain community: their analysis of narratives of accessibility and social change in Shimshal, Pakistan, offer illuminating insights into the local population's own assessment of the influence of a new road. In a paper assessing the lopping of oaks by Garhwali people in the Indian Himalaya, Yuka Makino presents a systematic analysis of the impact of a changing practice on local forests. Finally, Bo Liu, Eryuan Liang, and Liping Zhu also focus on forests, describing the microclimatic conditions that influence the treeline of *Juniperus saluaria* in the Sygera Mountains on the southeastern Tibetan Plateau.

In the MountainNotes section, Fausto Sarmiento and David Butler present an analysis of disciplinary trends and career development choices among mountain geographers; they propose an agenda for structuring publication activities with a view to establishing "montology"—the science of mountains—as a scientific discipline. This is a timely contribution to a debate that MRD's Editors would like to take up, as it triggers important questions regarding what institutional means should be used to increase attention to, and work on, mountains and mountain development: is a new discipline the panacea? We look forward to readers' informed views on this issue.

To conclude, we do not want to miss the opportunity to thank Dr Theodore Wachs for 12 years of service as MRD's Managing Editor. Ted retired at the end of last year but will luckily remain available to us as a consultant; his managing tasks have been taken over by the Associate Editors and Assistant Editor. Thank you, Ted, for your commitment, editing and managing skills, and patient counsel.

Hans Hurni, Editor-in-Chief

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