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MountainNotes Becomes MountainAgenda: *MRD*'s Third Peer-reviewed Section

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to be able to announce a further enhancement of MRD*'s Editorial Policy and format as of this issue: the MountainNotes section has become the MountainAgenda section and is fully peer-reviewed. What is our rationale for this change?*

Change in Editorial Policy

Much debate exists on what kind of knowledge is needed for sustainable development and how it should be produced and communicated (Cash et al 2003; Hessels and van Lente 2008; Van Opstal and Hugé 2013). Among the key insights in this debate are that mere transfer of scientific information will not lead to change; that science cannot produce relevant knowledge if it does not take into account how this knowledge relates to the normative value of sustainability; that scientists and non-scientists need to co-produce knowledge at some stages of the knowledge generation process in order to increase its robustness; and that the conventional scientific review process is not sufficient for ensuring the validity, adequateness, and reliability of knowledge for sustainable development (Hirsch-Hadorn et al 2008).

Part of MRD*'s mission is to bridge the gap between science, development practice, and policy; another part is to ensure the dissemination of highest quality knowledge for sustainable development in mountains.* MRD*'s format and review procedures have been adapted accordingly over the 3 decades of the journal's existence. They reflect the view that sustainable development requires 3 types of knowledge—systems, target, and transformation knowledge (ProClim/CASS 1997)—as well as permeable epistemological boundaries to enable reflexivity and communication among scientists, development practitioners, and policy-makers. As explained on the journal's website, we need* ***systems knowledge*** *describing* ***how current systems work or may work in future.*** *In order to shape sustainable development, we also need* ***target knowledge,*** *ie knowledge about* ***what are the "right" things that need to be achieved*** *when targeting sustainable development; stakeholders negotiate and define this on the basis of systems knowledge. And we also need* ***transformation knowledge,*** *ie knowledge about* ***how to do the "right" things*** *in order to put the vision of sustainable development into practice and to define what corrective action is needed.*

In 2009, MRD*'s Editors decided that papers in the MountainDevelopment section, presenting "transformation knowledge," would henceforth be submitted to a specially tailored form of double-blind peer review (Hurni et al 2009), complementing the traditionally peer-reviewed MountainResearch section offering "systems knowledge." A meeting with* MRD*'s renewed International Editorial Board 2 years later allowed us to discuss experiences with the newly defined MountainDevelopment papers and to slightly amend the review criteria and review process (Hurni et al 2011). Another 2 years have passed and we have now consolidated a review process for papers presenting "target knowledge," as we are convinced that this type of knowledge also requires validation through peers. In fact, as a result of editorial paper selection in the past 4 years,* MRD*'s former MountainNotes section increasingly contained well-founded and extensively documented target knowledge: reviews of the state-of-the-art on a topic of immediate relevance to sustainable development in research, development, or policy, followed by recommendations soundly based on this evidence. But the title of the section for these articles was misleading and the review process not yet standardized. Together with the International Editorial Board, we decided to opt for the new name "MountainAgenda," which clearly indicates that the result of negotiating and defining target knowledge is usually a clear agenda.*

The Editors have formalized this change of Editorial Policy in the following way:

1. *We have made the review criteria and review process for MountainAgenda papers explicit (*http://www.mrd-journal.org/Submission_GAuthors_3.asp*) and we have agreed with the International Editorial Board that they will be reviewing this kind of paper in an open review process. Indeed, in shaping target knowledge, values are explicitly at stake and authors and reviewers should have the possibility, if they so wish, to engage in a discussion about these values.*
2. *We have also decided to move the renamed section ahead of the MountainPlatform section, since MountainAgenda articles should be understood as complementary to the MountainDevelopment and MountainResearch articles: they are a peer-reviewed threesome contributing to knowledge for sustainable mountain development.*
3. *Finally, since the peer-review process entails a number of additional editorial steps to ensure high quality, we have also increased the publication fee for MountainAgenda articles to help meet some of the additional production costs incurred. The base fee for papers published in all 3 peer-reviewed sections is US$ 500 and the waiver policy applies for all in the same way.*

In this issue of MRD*, we are happy to have 4 articles in the new MountainAgenda section. As required by the section policy (*http://www.mrd-journal.org/about_edpol.asp*), these articles offer* ***well-referenced overviews of the state of the art*** *in mountain research or mountain policy and conclude with* ***agendas for future research or policy*** *in the field reviewed ("target knowledge"). Moreover, these agendas are* ***guided explicitly by the values of sustainable development****.*

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This issue of MRD

This Open Issue begins with a single article in the MountainDevelopment section, entitled "Constructing roads—Constructing risks? Settlement decisions in view of landslide risk and economic opportunities in western Nepal". Author Thomas Lennartz explores people's rationales for moving to hazard-prone zones along a newly constructed rural road. Based on insights into people's perceptions of risk and their reasoning from a livelihood perspective, he elaborates suggestions for a more risk-sensitive approach to rural road construction that takes into consideration people's livelihood strategies and supports proactive settlement planning.

The first paper in the MountainResearch section is also concerned with the impact of landslide hazards on people's lives and habits: N. Cook and D. Butz discuss the consequences of the January 2010 Atta Abad landslide on everyday mobility in Gojal (northern Pakistan) and the sociodevelopmental implications of the sudden destruction of the Karakoram Highway. The next paper turns to a very different concern—the productivity of land in Nepal: A. Giri and K. Katzensteiner analyze carbon and nitrogen flows in the traditional land use system and conclude that where populations are isolated, traditional agricultural practices, including the use of composted human excreta, are best suited to maintain soil productivity. In the next paper, J. Aguilera and co-authors focus on the impacts of cultivation and fallow length on soil carbon and nitrogen availability at 2 different altitudes in the Bolivian highlands and show that altitude is a relevant factor due to differences in soil properties, climate, and land management. The next 2 papers present research on Vietnam, a country that has received very little attention in MRD *until now. In the first of these, Bui Tan Yen and co-authors analyze how poverty, low agricultural productivity, land degradation, and other factors affect agricultural production in the multi-ethnic northern uplands of Vietnam, and call for participatory approaches. In the second, Van Le and co-authors explore how the rental market for farmland is performing in the country's mountainous north central coast region and make suggestions for improving the efficiency of this market. In the final paper in the MountainResearch section, Shi-Guang Xu and colleagues present an estimation method combining several others to assess summer precipitation over the data-scarce Tibetan Plateau.*

In the MountainAgenda section, Isabel C. Barrio and 16 co-authors present an agenda for future research on alpine ecology in the Iberian Peninsula based on a systematized state of the art jointly developed at a recent conference. Chad Dear and colleagues use the Global Land Project analytical framework to structure their overview of research on sustainable land management in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and suggest that targeted, application-focused, multistakeholder work would now be necessary to improve the relevance of this research. A.I. Singh and A.K. Pothula make policy recommendations for increasing the efficiency of postharvest processing of large cardamom in the Eastern Himalaya after reviewing a number of attempts in Nepal, India, and Bhutan to improve production of this niche crop. Finally, Heather Purdie presents a review of recent scientific insights on glacier retreat in New Zealand and analyzes how future research could help glacier tourism in the area.

The MountainPlatform section features 2 articles: the first presents the Mountain Research Initiative's (MRI's) plan to break new ground in the second decade of its existence, while the second paper, written for the Swiss Interacademic Commission for Alpine Studies (ICAS), summarizes conclusions from the 2013 Mittersill meeting of the Swiss-Austrian alliance for mountain research.

We hope that readers will find insights and suggestions of use to their work in this issue of MRD. *And we welcome comments on the change of format of the MountainAgenda section—formerly MountainNotes—and on the underlying understanding of the types of knowledge needed for sustainable development. Unfortunately, we must end this Editorial on a sad note: MRD Honorary Board member Dr. Jane Pratt, a highly dedicated advocate for mountains and mountain communities, passed away on 12 August 2013. We are grateful for her long-term commitment to* MRD.

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