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Editorial

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Mountain Research and Development (MRD)
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Dear Readers,

The scientific community is progressing in its efforts to organize development of the Sixth Assessment Report *(AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC; www.ipcc.ch), a United Nations body with 195 member countries. Will this process and outcome be of any relevance to sustainable development in mountains? Yes, if sufficient researchers and development specialists with expertise in mountains are able to make their voices and messages heard for the AR6. Efforts started in December 2015 already, when an international consortium under the lead of Switzerland submitted a proposal for a* Special Report on Climate Change and Mountains *to the IPCC. Regrettably this proposal was not accepted, but continued efforts led to one chapter on "High Mountains" being included in the line-up of the* Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate *(SROCC). A call for nominations of scientists was disseminated by mountain networks—eg the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI)—in order not to miss the opportunity to ensure that mountains and mountain people are duly taken into account in all 3 special reports for the IPCC: the* Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C *(SR1.5), the* Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate *(SROCC), and the* Special Report on Climate Change and Land *(SRCCL). Indeed, mountain concerns and realities are relevant to the issues addressed in all 3 reports. But what kind of knowledge should be reviewed and fed into the 3 special reports, at what scale, from what perspective, and with what kind of orientation? We hope that articles published in* MRD *will be taken into account in this review of the state of the art, and we certainly encourage past, current, and future authors to disseminate their work actively among relevant networks.*

Indeed, a number of questions need to be assessed critically when reflecting on the impacts of climate change in mountain regions. As illustrated in the first article in this Open Issue, the larger debates taking place at the global level of the IPCC and elsewhere influence the orientation of development interventions in mountains. Jawad Ali, Arjumand Nizami, and Paul Hebinck show that it is necessary to deal with the global narrative of climate change impacts very carefully, as this narrative may lead to policies and action that overlook the real causes of a problem in mountains. In their analysis of landslips in a remote mountain district in Pakistan, the authors show that generalized conclusions drawn from the global and national climate change discourses have disregarded important political dimensions of water management at the local level, leading to new problems in the area. On the other hand, the global perspective can also help to systematically assess whether similar patterns of climate change impacts can be identified in various mountain regions around the world, and make it possible to see where context-specificities need to be taken into account in research: in his review of research inquiring into climate change impacts on ecosystem services in high mountains, Ignacio Palomo succeeds in unravelling some of the contextualities in existing research.

The other papers in this issue of MRD *tackle further sustainability topics. Jon Hellin, Rachael Cox, and Santiago López-Ridaura explore the relationship between maize diversity, market access, and poverty reduction in Guatemala in a quantitative and qualitative study, showing that low maize production in the study area is caused by lack of land and marginal land quality. They conclude that market development and price premiums for indigenous crops are not the right solution for addressing the severe maize deficiency, contrary to what works in neighboring Mexico. In the next paper, Tsutomu Yamanaka and Yuki Yamada propose an isoscape approach for regional assessments of the recharge elevation of tap water sources in Japan, thus taking into account a highland–lowland perspective on clarifying and managing water provision. The following paper, by Ram P. Sharma, Shes K. Bhandari, and Ram Bahadur BK offers a model to measure bark biomass and thus improve production and management of a significant source of income in Nepal—the bark of* Daphne bholua*, used for han-made paper production. The final peer-reviewed paper assesses the habitat ecology of caterpillar fungus (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) in Western Nepal. Shalik R. Sigdel, Maan B. Rokaya, Zuzana Münzbergová, and Eryuan Liang contribute to improved knowledge about this important natural resource by describing the ecological niche it occupies. Their careful study shows that 33 plant species are frequently associated with caterpillar fungus and that it is therefore essential to protect this habitat in order to protect the endemic species.*

In the MountainPlatform section of this issue, ARCOS Network—a new institutional member of the International Mountain Society (IMS)—presents its activities. We are very happy to welcome a new member from Africa, as this is a region where research on mountains is lacking. In the second MountainPlatform article, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) presents an update of its aims and activities since 2015.

We would like to close this Editorial by announcing that MRD has renewed its International Editorial Board, taking this opportunity to invite some new experts to join forces with the rest of this crucial sounding board. We would like to thank all former and current International Editorial Board members, as well as the Reviewers, whose invaluable work contributes in an essential way to the quality of the work published in MRD.

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