

Mountain Research and Development Embarks on Its Fifth Decade

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Mountain Research and Development Embarks on Its Fifth Decade

Dear Readers,

The year 2021 marks this journal's entry into a fifth decade of commitment to publishing high-quality, development-relevant scientific articles on mountain systems and mountain societies. In 2020, we engaged in a number of strategic activities in collaboration with members of the International Mountain Society (IMS), with a view to further advancing MRD's scientific and societal impact in this new decade. MRD has always actively promoted the key role that science plays in transformation toward sustainability in mountains (Zimmermann et al 2018). With its new strategy, MRD aims to increase its outreach and communication activities to enable dialogue and learning among mountain stakeholders. At the same time, MRD will maintain its core function of publishing high-quality disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research as well as practice-based insights, and thus promote and enhance transformative knowledge (Hall et al 2014; Urmetzer et al 2020) for sustainable mountain development.

Part of MRD's mission is to review books that focus on mountain systems and communities, a service provided since the journal's inception in 1981. In this particular year, 2021, we officially say goodbye to MRD MountainMedia Editor Martin Price, who retired from his professorship at the Centre for Mountain Studies at Perth College, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland, in January. From 1994 to 2020, Martin succeeded in soliciting and editing close to 500 reviews of books written by renowned scholars from numerous institutions worldwide. Nowhere else is such an overview of scholarship on mountains and mountain development available, with such a broad array of disciplines included and such a broad community of scientists and development practitioners represented. Martin also guest-edited 3 Special Issues of MRD that emerged from the international mountain conferences that he hosted in Perth. Martin has handed over his MRD Editorial duties to Carolina Adler, Executive Director of the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI). Carolina has led the MRI's Coordination Office since 2017 and has established a wide network among mountain scientists, not least through her work as a Lead Author of several chapters of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports. The Editorial Team extends heartfelt thanks to Martin for his excellent contribution to mountain scholarship and looks forward to working with Carolina as the new MountainMedia Editor.

Papers in this open issue underline the pertinent role of science in sustainable mountain development. Suraj Mal et al analyzed 4418 glacial lakes in the Indian Himalayan Region and 636 transboundary lakes to assess the risk of glacial lake outbursts. The results indicate that Jammu and Kashmir potentially faces the highest risk, followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. The authors also identified 13 lakes that need to be urgently prioritized to reduce potential risks. In her paper, Neelakshi Joshi takes another perspective on disaster risk reduction. She investigates the current risk knowledge among formal and informal actors involved in the very dynamic urban development processes in the state of Uttarakhand, in the Indian Himalaya. Formal knowledge, expressed in building bylaws and land use plans, does not sufficiently address the multiple hazard risks, nor are insights from such documents adopted by households, who largely depend on informal building professionals. These professionals lack the training and skills to take into account risks in their construction work. On a positive note and on another continent, Thomas Rudel has identified a shift in sustainability dynamics. He describes how Indigenous Peoples have gained more control over the land they inhabit and how they have assumed pivotal roles in sustainability initiatives in the Tropical Andes of Ecuador. Similar positive changes can be observed in other upland regions and suggest that Indigenous-driven conservation efforts could make a substantial contribution to the global conservation of biodiversity. Another potential for biodiversity conservation can be found in the wetlands of Dianchi Lake, on the Yunnan–Guizhou Plateau, China. These wetlands could provide habitats for more than 60,000 individual birds of 105 species, provided conservation measures and wetland park construction consider their specific habitat requirements. This is shown in the paper by Wang and Yang.

In their MountainAgenda paper, Sumit Vij and co-authors present the findings of their systematic mapping of English-language academic peer-reviewed work on climate change adaptation in European mountain systems. The mapping reveals a geographical focus on western and southern European mountains and a strong bias toward techno-managerial options. Only a few of the identified papers analyze governance aspects of adaptation. The authors recommend conducting "an extensive systematic literature review, including credible gray literature, to bridge science–policy gaps on adaptation of the mountain regions of Europe" (p A5).

In the MountainPlatform section, the article by the Forum Landscape, Alps, Parks (FoLAP) of the Swiss Academy of Sciences emphasizes the pivotal role of science-based decision-making in finding sustainable solutions for landscape development. By explicitly adopting and living a landscape approach, the Forum aims to produce better long-term solutions for Swiss mountain regions by bringing together actors from science, practice, and policy, and supporting the integration of practical experience and scientific understanding.

This is an objective that is also at the heart of MRD and its strengthened efforts in outreach and communication in its fifth decade. The Editorial Team looks forward to continuing its collaboration with authors and reviewers from around the world, as well as with all the committed members of the IMS, MRD's publisher, who make MRD a strong, independent, nonprofit, and society-based journal.

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