

Focus Issue: Weaving Together Knowledges— Collaborations in Support of the Wellbeing of Mountain Peoples and Regions

Authors: Mathez-Stiefel, Sarah-Lan, Dubé, Monique, Humphries, Murray, Kassi, Norma, and Olivier, Nicole

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Focus Issue: Weaving Together Knowledges—Collaborations in Support of the Wellbeing of Mountain Peoples and Regions

Dear Readers,

Knowledge collaborations are fundamental for developing effective pathways toward more just and sustainable futures in mountains. Strengthening the resilience and wellbeing of mountain peoples and regions requires that Indigenous and academic ways of knowing contribute meaningfully to informed decisions and interventions at multiple levels. Mountain systems are experiencing increasing threats to their sustainability, including climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, anthropogenic pressures, and increased vulnerability of local livelihoods. Rapid and disruptive changes to mountain systems also foreshadow impacts on the broader landscape. Indigenous Peoples' understanding of relationality positions communities and livelihoods as integral parts of mountain systems and emphasizes interconnectedness of all the elements of these systems. However, historically, Indigenous knowledge and methodologies have been devalued and constrained in an institutional and peer-review context defined by academic traditions. Academic disciplines have developed related concepts and approaches intended to investigate and communicate system interconnectivity, including nature's contribution to people, socioecological systems, and biocultural diversity. Importantly, all of these ways of knowing and doing recognize that people are a key element of mountain systems and that human decisions and actions have unique impacts within them. Innovative models of collaborative knowledge inquiry can enhance our ability to understand and address the impacts of rapid environmental, economic, and social change on the resilience of mountain systems, while empowering, respecting, and, where useful, bringing together Indigenous and academic knowledges and research approaches.

This focus issue of MRD was born from a fruitful partnership with the Canadian Mountain Network (CMN). It focuses on knowledge collaborations by mountain researchers and Indigenous Peoples in support of the wellbeing of mountain people and regions. Articles published in this issue provide examples of knowledge coproduction and application in diverse mountain contexts across the globe. Beyond contributing to the recognition of multiple forms of scientific knowledge inquiry, we hope that this issue will inspire more ethical and meaningful cooperation between academics and Indigenous and local mountain communities, with a view to achieving more sustainable futures and redressing historical injustices.

Indigenous and local knowledge from the Andes and the Himalayas is presented in the MountainViews section. As a result of an innovative peer-review process that acknowledges place-based forms of knowledge production, the 2 articles published in this section were reviewed by a Peer Advisory Circle composed of members of the CMN and an MRD Editor. The first article, by Julio C. Postigo and Sonia Laura Valdez, explores Aymara soil knowledge and classification in the Bolivian Altiplano, and shows how this knowledge is directly related to sustainable land management. The second article, by Phanchung and colleagues, covers an important knowledge gap by documenting agricultural ritual practices that are currently performed by mountain communities across Bhutan, but that are at risk of being lost due to processes of socioeconomic change.

In the MountainDevelopment section, Cristina Dalla Torre and coauthors report on 2 community-based tourism interventions in Northern Italy. Using a transdisciplinary approach, their work exemplifies how knowledge cocreation by local stakeholders (eg community members, producers, entrepreneurs, technicians, civil society organizations) and researchers can support the revitalization of collective resources in a context of global change. The second article in this section focuses on the issue of rangeland degradation in Eastern Bhutan. In this contribution, Tayan R. Gurlung and colleagues illustrate how participatory modeling and simulation, using computer-assisted role plays, can be used to foster knowledge collaborations and mitigate conflict related to mountain pasture management.

The MountainResearch section features 2 pieces. In their study in the Yasin Valley of Northern Pakistan, Muhammad A. Aziz and coauthors found that there was a lack of intergenerational transmission of local ecological knowledge, particularly wild food plant knowledge. Together with local communities, students, and teachers, they identified strategies for the revitalization of wild food plant knowledge in schools. The second article takes us to Canada's Northwest Territories, where Glen MacKay and colleagues conducted collaborative research on an ancestral caribou hunting site in the homeland of the Shúhtagot'ine. Their work illustrates nicely how archaeological and Indigenous knowledge can be brought together to contribute to the preservation of cultural landscapes.

The MountainAgenda section includes an article coauthored by academics and Indigenous scholars and practitioners. From a decolonial perspective, and based on a historical review of park management in Canada and Aotearoa/New Zealand, Courtney W. Mason and colleagues highlight bottom-up Indigenous-led protected area management practices and how they are integrated into conservation policies. The insights from this study, particularly its recommendations for policymakers and park managers, were also featured in MRD Talk #02 on "Engaging with Indigenous and local knowledge for the conservation of mountain landscapes" (MRD 2022), alongside experiences from Morocco and Uganda.

The CMN's experience in supporting the weaving of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems is shared in the MountainPlatform section. Norma Kassi and colleagues present this unique network—the first Canadian Network of Centres of Excellence to recognize Indigenous governments as partner organizations—and discuss its ethical principles, history, approaches, activities, lessons learned, and envisaged future.

Finally, in the MountainMedia section, Ariane Ballmer reviews a book recently edited by Smyer Yü and de Maaker on environmental humanities in the Himalayas. The book draws on case studies from across the region, many of them conducted by authors from Indigenous Himalayan communities. It examines the relationships between the region's natural characteristics and its contemporary cultures and cosmovisions.

We close this editorial on a very sad note, as we inform our readers of the death of Pauline Ives (1931–2022), who served MRD as editor alongside Jack D. Ives from the journal's founding in 1980 to 1997. Pauline was vital to the journal during those decades, editing manuscripts, preparing them for production, and ensuring their timely publication. Without her immense dedication, MRD would never have thrived the way it has. Our heartfelt condolences go out to her husband Jack D. Ives, founding editor of MRD, as well as their family and their many friends around the world.

Sarah-Lan Mathez-Stiefel^{1*}, Associate Editor

Monique Dubé², Murray Humphries^{2,3}, Norma Kassi², and Nicole Olivier², Guest Editors

* Corresponding author: sarah-lan.mathez@unibe.ch

¹ Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), University of Bern, Mittelstrasse 43, 3012 Bern, Switzerland

² Canadian Mountain Network, CW-405 Biological Sciences Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada T6G 2E9

³ Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment, McGill University, Ste Anne de Bellevue, QC, Canada H9X 3V9

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