

Editorial

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Dear Readers,

Asked whether mountains had special meaning or personal value to them, 80% of responding delegates at the Perth III mountain conference (4–8 October 2015) said yes. This strong personal commitment is significant because it is what has always made a difference ever since a mountain agenda community emerged in the 1970s, leading to the formulation of Chapter 13 in Agenda 21 (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>; see also Bruno Messerli's eulogy of Jack Ives at the end of this issue of MRD). Since then, people's personal attachment to mountains and mountain communities and their knowledge about the global significance of mountains has arguably been the driving factor for keeping mountains on the global agenda.

The Perth conference aimed to explore the Future Earth themes from the perspective of mountains and mountain development. Interestingly, the 3 Future Earth themes express a need for new ways of producing knowledge that is close to MRD's understanding of the 3 forms of knowledge needed for sustainable development – systems, target, and transformation knowledge. In this sense, MRD offers authors and readers a means of anticipating the necessary reflection about how knowledge is produced and what for—an understanding that is essential when working on the Future Earth themes. We are therefore glad to be able to offer papers in each of MRD's 3 peer-reviewed sections, illustrating what it means to design “transformations towards sustainability” in mountains (MountainDevelopment), understand mountain systems in our “dynamic planet” (MountainResearch), and negotiate “global sustainable development” based on sound knowledge of mountain research and policy (MountainAgenda).

In the MountainDevelopment section, Jun He, Myong Hyok Ho, and Jianchu Xu report on a participatory research project in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, where such an approach is rather unique. They show how involving farmers has helped select woody species that are multifunctional and therefore more likely to offer the necessary socioeconomic benefits that will ensure adoption of the proposed species. In their presentation of transformation knowledge, the authors validate a participatory process through which the national objectives of food security and environmental conservation can be enhanced in North Korea.

The first paper in the MountainResearch section, by Zhandong Sun and co-authors, offers an innovative approach to analyzing and modeling the complex systemic relationship between permafrost and land surface temperature in the Central Tien Shan Mountains. In the next article, S Vanonckelen and A Van Rompaey present a spatiotemporal analysis of forest cover change in Romania aiming to understand what political, conservation, development, and biophysical factors have driven this change between 1985 and 2010. The article by NR Khanal, Jin-Ming Hu, and P Mool focuses on glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) risk in a transboundary river basin in the Central Himalayas; after analyzing where glacial lakes are and how they are changing, the authors assess losses due to past GLOFs, risk from potential future GLOFs, and risk reduction initiatives within the watershed.

The next article presents an assessment by Mussie Fessehaye and co-authors of the potential for scaling up a fog collection system in Eritrea, based on village surveys and an analysis of satellite images. BK Pradhan and HK Badola then offer a study of the threats to which a medicinal herb (*Swertia chirayta*) is exposed and what microhabitats and conditions might help conserve this species, provided adequate management measures are applied. CS Negi and co-authors also assess the vulnerability of a commercially valued resource in the Himalayas, *Ophiocordyceps sinensis*, and recommend ways to decrease pressure on this valuable but threatened species. Finally, Zaffar Rais Mir et al present a study of local people's attitudes toward conservation of wildlife in the Kashmir Valley, suggesting how human-wildlife conflicts could be alleviated.

In the MountainAgenda section, SP Singh and R Thadani call for more collaboration among researchers and a greater effort to produce high quality and reliable data in the Himalayas, in order to avoid controversies due to errors as well as increase understanding of the complexities of mountain ecosystems. Their examples focus in particular on glaciers, climate, vegetation cover, and energy production.

In the MountainPlatform section, Thomas Scheurer offers insights developed by the Swiss Interacademic Commission for Alpine Studies (ICAS) into issues that are of particular strategic significance for the Swiss Alps. In a second brief article co-authored by Anna Giorgi, he reports on the main focus of the ForumAlpinum 2014 in Darfo Boario Terme, Italy.

Finally, this issue ends with Bruno Messerli's summary of important moments in his friend's Jack Ives's life—achievements that led to his being awarded the Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal 2015. We congratulate MRD Founding Editor Jack Ives on this honor and thank Bruno Messerli for his very interesting insights into a lifelong commitment to mountain research and development.

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