

Editorial

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Dear Readers,

In the past issue of MRD focusing on “Food Security and Sustainable Development in Mountains” (MRD 38.4), we announced that additional papers on the topic would follow. Indeed, the discussion is rich and many-faceted. The present issue of MRD starts with 2 articles on food systems. The first one, by Jacobi and co-authors, presents a participatory research tool that helps to map food systems in rural areas, taking into account 4 subsystems (operational, political, information and services, and natural resources) and providing participants with a systemic view of issues. An additional outcome of this food system mapping, which was tested in Kenya and Bolivia, is that it helped achieve a greater degree of relevance and coordination among the players involved. In the next paper, Barreau and colleagues compare past and current food production and consumption patterns in southern Andean Mapuche communities. This detailed ethnographic research reveals that the Mapuche food system is facing a process of biocultural homogenization that leads to nutrition-related chronic diseases. The authors recommend rethinking the national food support program for schools to ensure that children have access to healthier, local foods.

The following paper also addresses food issues but puts them into a broader context. The paper is based on the results of interdisciplinary research on the water–energy–food nexus in the Solu-Khumbu region in Nepal, which includes the Sagarmatha National Park. Aubriot and co-authors describe major changes that have taken place in the nexus due to increasing tourism, socio-economic, institutional and technologic changes: importing of consumer foods; higher use of water due to hydro-power generation, irrigation, and commodification; and shifts in energy sources away from firewood. Economic benefits are obvious and positive for local communities involved in tourism, but environmental pressure is shifting from one resource (forests, protected by a wood-cutting ban) to another (water). In the next paper, Warchalska-Troll explores whether, where, and why economic opportunities offered by national parks in Poland affect social perceptions of these parks. Interestingly, the farther away the municipalities were from the park, the better the relationships were between park authorities and local communities, even if closer communities had more business relationships with the park. This challenges the simple equation that offering more business opportunities will lead to greater acceptance of conservation. The following paper, by Michel and Bruggmann, also demonstrates the untenability of this equation: the authors apply a linguistic analysis of conflicting discourses on park benefits in the context of negotiations for a suggested new national park in Switzerland, and show that discursive gaps within and between neoliberal understandings of conservation and local discourses led to distrust among the population and ultimately to failure of negotiations. As a result, a majority of the municipalities concerned voted against creation of a new national park in the planned conservation area.

We then turn to a paper that investigates whether perceived crowding by visitors leads backcountry recreationists in winter landscapes in the Swiss Alps to behavior change: based on a study of perceptions and responses with a large number of participants, Ruf and colleagues show that perceived crowding does influence the choice of route or recreation day in most cases, with adverse effects on both wildlife and human security. The final paper in the MountainResearch section presents an analysis of tree species composition and carbon stock of tree cover after a large-scale windstorm in 2004 in the Tatra National Park, northern Slovakia. Konôpka and his co-authors compared results of their postdisturbance study covering the years 2007, 2010, and 2016 at 2 elevational zones. They found that tree diversity was greater in the foothills than in the mountain zone; carbon stock increased more rapidly as well in the foothills; and carbon stock was higher among broadleaved species than among conifers, but had reached only about a tenth of what it was overall before the calamity.

In the MountainPlatform section the Research Center for Digital Mountain and Remote Sensing Application at the Institute of Mountain Hazards and Environment (IMHE)—an International Mountain Society member—presents its recent achievements in monitoring environmental, hazard-related, and development-related issues, using a wide range of innovative and combined observation and calculation methods.

We close this issue of MRD on a sad note: Bruno Messerli, emeritus professor at the Institute of Geography, University of Bern, affectionately described as a member of “the mountain mafia” by his colleague and close friend Jack Ives—MRD’s founding editor—passed away on 4 February. Jack sent MRD an obituary published in this issue. We also received an obituary from Thomas Kohler, International Mountain Society Managing Director from 2000 to 2018, and former MRD Editor-in-Chief Hans Hurni, to whom Jack handed over the journal in 2000. Bruno Messerli was also a key figure in the creation and continuous development of both the Centre for Development (CDE) at the University of Bern and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). ICIMOD’s eulogy for Bruno Messerli closes this issue of MRD in the Mountain Views section.

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