

Mountain Research and Development (MRD): Call for Papers, Vol 41, No 4

Pastoralism and rangelands in mountains

Deadline: Submission of full papers by **15 February 2021**

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Mountains and high-elevation plateaus, including alpine grasslands and forests, have been used for centuries by people for livestock grazing, hunting, and harvesting of plants. Also known as mountain rangelands, these areas comprise open grasslands, mixed forest meadows, closed forests, as well as alpine lakes and wetlands. Mountain rangelands play a vital role in water supply for lowland areas and watershed health, carbon sequestration and storage, fire regulation, aesthetics, and the conservation of mountain species and habitats, including endemic species and habitats exclusive to mountains. Many of these ecological systems require management in order to maintain species diversity and productivity as well as the supply of a broad range of high-quality ecosystem services. On the other hand, these systems provide livelihood support for a large number of rural mountain communities across the globe.

Pastoralism in mountains is a unique cultural way of life and production system. It encompasses diverse herding practices that link natural and social systems at several scales. People often move their livestock seasonally to respond to ecological variability and take advantage of new pastures, a practice known as transhumant pastoralism. Transhumant pastoral systems can be complex and frequently rely on traditional knowledge and management of the mountain environment, including specific, often gender-based sharing of labor. They may also involve sophisticated emerging technology and innovative management practices aimed at better understanding feeding patterns and strategies, tracking animal location and movement, implementing rotational grazing systems, or preventing attacks from large carnivores.

Pastoral systems in mountains are changing rapidly. In some parts of the world this is due to overgrazing, overharvesting, intensification of livestock production related to growing populations and market demands, competing land uses encroaching on pastoral territories and resources, or new borders restricting the movement of transhumant populations. In other regions, depopulation, abandonment, and undergrazing lead to new land uses and landscapes, favoring the spread of alien invasive species, causing biodiversity loss, and altering fire regimes. Coupled with climate change and other drivers and disturbances, changes in mountain pastoral social–ecological systems can lead to degradation, thereby reducing the supply of ecosystem services, causing loss of livelihoods, and, most importantly, threatening the maintenance of these systems. Changing markets and demand for sustainable products in other, interlinked, world regions, as well as new forms of communication can have negative or positive impacts on pastoralists' lives.

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹, the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)², and the proposal for an International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists to be celebrated in 2026³ all emphasize the importance of pastoral systems and the need to find knowledge-based solutions to tackle increasing degradation and poverty in these systems. For this purpose, the science community, governments, and policymakers should be aware of the historical and present interactions of social and ecological components of pastoral systems in mountain areas, as well as their interlinkages with other regions (eg supply of and demand for ecosystem services and mountain products). They should also better understand the drivers of change in mountain pastoral social–ecological systems—especially climate change—as well as the interactions among drivers and their impacts. Equally relevant are pressure–response dynamics, particularly at the community level, including innovative adaptive measures.

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/>

² <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/>

³ <https://iyrp.info/>

With this focus issue, MRD aims to contribute to a better understanding of pastoralism and rangelands in mountains, the factors affecting pastoral social–ecological systems, responses from society, and how innovative solutions can effectively help respond to environmental, socioeconomic, and political changes. This call invites empirical and conceptual papers, both case studies and syntheses, on a wide range of subjects and scales related to pastoralism and rangelands in mountains and high-elevation landscapes. We welcome transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary contributions that address the transformation processes affecting pastoralists and rangelands, their interactions with other systems, and the answers local communities, policymakers, and scientists can provide. Accordingly, MRD invites contributions from scholars and development specialists for its 3 peer-reviewed sections:

MountainDevelopment (transformation knowledge): Papers should present systematically assessed practical experiences of and research insights into shaping pathways that promote sustainability and resilience of mountain pastoral social–ecological systems while avoiding degradation and loss of ecosystem services essential for sustainable development in mountains. Papers can present findings based on a systematic evaluation of innovative policies, development approaches and interventions, or of community-led innovations.

MountainResearch (systems knowledge): Papers should present empirical findings on the structure, functioning, and dynamics of rangelands and pastoral social–ecological systems in mountains, interactions between these and other systems in mountains and elsewhere, and interactions and feedback loops among drivers, pressures, impacts, conditions, and responses of these systems. Papers should also discuss well-substantiated implications of observed and foreseen changes for sustainable mountain development.

MountainAgenda (target knowledge): Papers should provide well-referenced, up-to-date, and systematic reviews of the state of the art on pastoralism and rangelands in mountains, in particular the topics covered above. Papers should conclude with agendas for future research, development interventions, or policy. Comparative studies of policies addressing rangelands and pastoral social–ecological systems as well as the implications of these policies for rural development in mountains are highly welcome, as are reviews of work on the integration of issues related to mountain pastoral systems into national or regional policies and strategies.

Submission details

- **Submit your full paper by 15 February 2021** using MRD's online submission platform.
- A short **notice of intent** can be submitted to mrd-journal@cde.unibe.ch: we will provide advice if needed or requested.
- The issue is scheduled for publication in November 2021.
- Guidelines for authors are available at <https://www.mrd-journal.org/for-authors/>. See **NEW guidelines** for MountainDevelopment papers: <https://www.mrd-journal.org/for-authors/mountaindevelopment>.
- For more information on the journal, see <http://www.mrd-journal.org>.
- As a not-for-profit open access journal, MRD charges authors a publication fee to offset part of its production costs: <https://www.mrd-journal.org/about/publication-fee-policy/>.

João Carlos Azevedo, V. Ralph Clark, Joanne Millar, Geoffrey Mukwada, Julio C. Postigo, and Maria Wurzinger, guest editors, in collaboration with MRD's Editorial Office, October 2020