

Editorial

The General Assembly of the United Nations designated 2022 the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development to raise awareness of the importance of conserving mountain ecosystems and using them sustainably. In May 2022, the Permanent Mission of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations jointly with the Mountain Partnership Secretariat of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) presented the concept of the *Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions* to the Permanent Missions of the UN's Member States in New York, which is intended as an action plan for the period 2023–2027 and advocated for the establishment of a broad coalition of governments to better promote the visibility of mountain issues at a High-Level Meeting on Sustainable Mountain Development on the eve of the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2022 in New York. Additionally, the UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed has urged for greater climate funding and adaptation support for highland communities. The awareness of questions concerning mountainous regions at the General Assembly of the UN is seen as an opportunity to promote action for mountains.

For 15 years, eco.mont has offered its authors a platform to share knowledge and expertise about protected mountain areas globally, in research as well as in management. Within this issue, we have contributions from the Alps, but also from the Ado-Awaye Mountains in Nigeria and the Sino-Vietnamese Limestone area in China.

In the article by Julia Baumgartner, Elisa Kuntner, Johannes Melchert, Jan Misera, Carlotta Schlosser, Christian Schleyer & Nils Unthan on *Biosphere Reserves as drivers of regional governance? Communication challenges within the UN-ESCO Biosphere Reserves Engiadina Val Müstair (Switzerland) and Schwäbische Alb (Germany)*, the authors present the findings of 22 semi-structured interviews with regional stakeholders, including mayors, local politicians, regional government representatives, managers from both BRs, and external experts, all of whom are playing an active role in shaping governance processes in their respective regions. The authors conclude that the BRs can take on the role of mediators of vested interests within regional governance.

In their paper on *Understanding the mountainscape dynamics and its drivers using geospatial technology and indigenous knowledge in the Ado-Awaye Mountains, Nigeria*, Oluwatobi Emmanuel Olaniyi, Paul Okerinu, Oluwaseun Samuel Oduniyi, Dumsile Cynthia Hlengwa & Oluseun Adesola Akinsorotan identify cultural, natural and technological drivers which have contributed to the transformation and fragmentation of this particular mountainscape. Additionally, they provide recommendations to improve the destination's serenity and mitigate the environmental impacts.

Maria Teresa Pellicer-Chenoll, Karolina Taczanowska, Pilar Serra-Añó, José Luis Toca-Herrera & Luis-Millán González analysed German-language tweets published in 2019 and 2020 on national parks (NPs) and associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. They identified a total of 144,126 tweets which focus mainly on scenic values and clearly prefer mountain NPs. The top three NPs named are Bayerischer Wald NP (Germany), Hohe Tauern NP (Austria) and Yosemite NP (USA). According to the data, there is significant potential to improve communications via social media and to encourage the discussion of priority issues within protected areas.

Birdwatching in mountainous protected areas in China has become increasingly popular. Jiaping Xu, Peihao Yan, Zongyue Liu, Huan Qin & Aiwu Jiang therefore conducted a case study in the Nonggang National Nature Reserve on avitourism as an aspect of sustainable mountain development. 197 local households were interviewed. The results showed that avitourism has improved and diversified mountain people's livelihoods, providing employment opportunities and increasing household incomes. Additionally, it has supported biodiversity conservation by raising mountain people's awareness of sustainability and their willingness to conserve biodiversity.

Marta De Biaggi & Theresa Walter introduce readers to the LIFE WolfAlps EU project, which deals with wolf-human coexistence in the Alps. The challenge in the Alps is the acceptance of the natural return of wolves in human-dominated landscapes. The presence of the species requires actions effective at local level to improve the wolf's coexistence with humans on an international scale. The project is therefore disseminating the tools it has developed to support and involve all stakeholders in the analysis, planning and resource allocation that are essential to balance large carnivore conservation with human activities.

In a short report by Alexander Maringer & Markus Blank on *On-site visitor information – a team effort*, the authors report from the Gesäuse NP on how a newly established project team cooperated in developing not only a corporate design but also a standard operating procedure for creating signs, brochures and any other kind of visitor information. Nevertheless, face-to-face communication remains the most powerful tool to engage visitors.

Within the context of the many initiatives that concern sustainable mountain development which are taking place at the level of the United Nations, and also the numerous national and regional conferences in 2022 (AlpineWeek in Brig in Switzerland, EuroMAB, Nationalpark Austria Symposium, as well as the Internationale Mountain Conference in Austria), we hope with this issue that we have contributed to the many topics relevant for mountain communities.