

Editorial

Dear readers!

Famous last words – the title of the final album recorded by the rock band Supertramp with the original lineup would be a fitting title for this editorial. After 15 years, initially as founding editor (together with my friend and colleague Axel Borsdorf), it is now time for me to retire from the editorial team of *eco.mont* and say goodbye to you.

I still remember very well the strenuous negotiations Axel and I had with the presidency of the Austrian Academy of Sciences at the time. It was not easy to convince people of our idea of founding an international journal on research in alpine protected areas, but after persistent discussions, we finally succeeded in obtaining funding from the Academy. Together with our congenial colleagues at the IGF, namely Valerie Braun and Brigitte Scott, who were later both accepted into the editorial team, we began to set up the journal with great enthusiasm. At this point, I would like to mention two colleagues who strongly supported *eco.mont* from the very beginning, namely my long-standing professional counterpart at the Swiss Academy of Sciences, Thomas Scheurer, and the then head of the ÖAW publishing house, Herwig Stöger.

The path from founding the journal from nothing to becoming a renowned publication was initially very rocky: as the journal was of course completely unknown in the scientific community, it was hard work to acquire contributions. At the time, we attended practically every relevant conference to approach scientists and protected area managers to persuade them to publish in *eco.mont*. Then as now, publications in journals that were highly rated were of fundamental importance for a successful university career, and it took a lot of persuasion and a great deal of charm to get colleagues to submit an article to *eco.mont*. It was only when the journal was included in the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), which happened relatively quickly, and thus given an impact factor, that the work became somewhat easier and paved the way for the journal to become established.

In addition to my main job as coordinator of the international ÖAW research programmes, the associated intensive international networking and, last but not least, my scientific work as an Arctic researcher, the work as editor was a considerable commitment for me. However, the wonderful, amicable and professional co-operation with the entire team always made my work a pleasure.

The editorship was also a welcome opportunity for me to realize my desire to make scientific findings accessible to a wider scientific community. As editor, I have had the opportunity to be the first to read and publish a number of fascinating articles that have not only advanced the scientific discourse, but also provided practical solutions and new approaches to protected area management and the conservation of our valuable mountain ecosystems. It has been an honour to work with so many talented and dedicated scientists, researchers and practitioners and to bring their work to a wider audience.

If I had one wish for the future of *eco.mont*, it would perhaps be for protected area managers to feel much more of an urge to showcase their region's specificities, achievements, scientific results and best practice to a wider audience through articles in the journal. This would help other protected area managers to build on the knowledge and experience of others to inform their own work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow editors, the members of the Editorial Board, as well as all the authors, reviewers and you, dear readers. You have all made *eco.mont* what it is today: a recognized and valued platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience on the sustainable development and protection of mountain regions worldwide.

I would also like to emphasize that I see the future of *eco.mont* in very good hands. I am convinced that my successor will bring fresh ideas and new energy to the journal, and that the editorial team will maintain and further develop the high quality and scientific standards that characterize *eco.mont*.

Finally, I can assure you that my commitment to the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions will not end with my official retirement. I will continue to dedicate myself to these important issues, particularly through my work for the UNESCO World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves (WNMBR), and I look forward to following the continuing development of the journal and of the vital research that it publishes from a new perspective.

Thank you all for the wonderful time and the many inspiring encounters. Stay curious, committed and critical – our mountain regions need us.

Kind regards
Günter Köck