

>> SYNTHESIZE MOUNTAINS OF KNOWLEDGE <<

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

Interventions aimed at balancing sustainable management of mountain resources and human well-being need a sound scientific basis; this is the rationale behind the establishment of long-term monitoring sites that monitor environmental change. In the Anthropocene - or rather, the Capitalocene - physicochemical and biophysical changes of the earth's systems cannot be understood as independent from human systems, so influential are they on one another.

Accordingly, in the early 2000s, a growing recognition of the human dimensions of ecological change inspired the integration of the human dimensions in LTER - which, in some new and previously existing sites - became LTSER: Long Term Socio-Ecological Research. LTSER strives for not only multi- and interdisciplinarity but importantly also transdisciplinarity, that is, the transcendence of disciplinary boundaries through the integration of non-scientific stakeholders throughout the scientific process. Long-term monitoring that considers both socioeconomic and biophysical variables is increasingly common, but the adoption of transdisciplinary methods requires a paradigmatic shift in the ways of doing science. Several studies have reflected on the challenges of conducting truly interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary long-term monitoring, and their results are synthesised in this poster presentation. However, research is lacking on the challenges to inter- and transdisciplinarity in long-term monitoring in mountain regions specifically. Such research could inform strategies to rethink scientific practices and integrate non-scientific stakeholders in long-term monitoring of mountains.

Considering the existing research and guidance on inter- and transdisciplinarity, my research seeks to identify mountain-specific challenges and opportunities for integrated long-term in-situ monitoring. Based on literature review and seven semi-structured interviews with managers from mountain sites (in Austria, Israel, Italy, southern Africa and UK), I seek to understand the extent to which the social science concepts and methods are, have been, or have tried to be incorporated into environmental monitoring activities in mountains, and what barriers have been encountered in inter- and transdisciplinary processes.

This poster presents preliminary results which suggest that challenges identified in previous studies that affect lowland monitoring are more prominent in mountains, and different challenges exist that relate to mountain specificities (e.g. remoteness, heterogeneity in ethnic and linguistic groups, frequent natural hazards). The results provide the basis for reflections and recommendations for a more meaningful integration of social science concepts and methods in long term monitoring research and will contribute directly to the design of a new transboundary LTSER to be established in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains in South Africa and Lesotho.