

EDITORIAL

Understanding Human–Environment Interactions Using Multiple Dimensions

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Welcome to another issue of *Ecology, Economy and Society* (EES) that covers a rich and diverse set of interdisciplinary topics in the broader social-ecological and environmental fields of interest to scholars, policy makers, practitioners, activists and citizens. Through a variety of formats and templates such as research articles, commentaries, insights from the field, book reviews, and a thematic essay, the current issue of EES covers an impressive range of studies and practice work. The topics include climate change adaptation, forest management, mining, livelihoods and forests, social-ecological history, energy efficiency, solid waste management, grasslands, urban wildlife, and the food and nutrition of children. The breadth and depth of work covers extensive ground from Indonesia to many parts of India.

We are still in the grip of a severe heat wave in India that has taken a terrible toll. How the monsoons will play out this year is not clear, although urban flooding has already reared its head. The new government will have to take a fresh look at climate change adaptation strategies across cities and farms. Mehta's paper deals with how farmers dependent on rain-fed agriculture in semi-arid areas rely on their observations of climate hazards rather than perceived changes in climatic patterns. It highlights the need for improved credit and access to supporting institutions.

Forest diversion to non-forest uses continues to stay in the news, from a safari park and real estate development in the Aravalli to infrastructure projects in the Himalayas and the Nicobar Islands. Underpinning these

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concerns is the controversial Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, which amends the original Forest Conservation Act, 1980. Those worried about how the new law will or will not impact the rights of forest dwellers will find Rajesh Ramakrishnan's commentary illuminating and insightful. Conservationists and activists will continue to track how the new legislation will affect both forests and forest-dependent communities in the future.

Unique ecosystems, which can also release a lot of carbon due to degradation and contribute to global warming, receive significant attention within climate change science. One such ecosystem is the peat swamps and peatlands of SE Asia. Their social-ecological dynamics are best understood using a multidimensional and environmental history lens. The open-access book, *Vulnerability and Transformation of Indonesian Peatlands*, edited by Mizuno, Kozan, and Gunawan, is reviewed by Mohammad Yunus. Its various chapters capture the dynamics, complexity, and tipping points in the community's use of resources, ecosystem services, and biodiversity in relation to many transformations, including the threat of oil palm across many decades, as well as the potential for restoration after degradation, an urgent priority in the coming decades.

On the continuing theme of distinct social-ecological systems and ecosystems, grasslands in India have generally lost ground to land-use and land-cover transformations, and they are neglected and less valued compared to tree-dominant ecosystems like forests. Bhardwaj et al explore the little-known grasslands of central Nicobar Island using vegetation, soils, and ethnographic lenses and investigate how they are threatened. We hope that through more such scholarship and awareness, we can raise the profile of grasslands and pasturelands throughout India.

Woods, Mines and Minds: Politics of Survival in Jalpaiguri and the Jungle Mahals (1860–1970), a monograph by Sahara Ahmed reviewed by Anju O.M. Toppo, is another compelling social-environmental history of how communities' access to resources and livelihoods was impacted by state-sponsored mining and forestry across the colonial and postcolonial periods in parts of what is now West Bengal. The review acknowledges the wealth of diverse archival materials that Ahmed has drawn from and crafted her scholarship.

Food and nutrition will shape the health of future generations. Insights from the field by Gupta and Singh show how the food habits and nutrition of school-going children in pastoral and rural communities in Jammu and Kashmir are impacted by changes in early morning schedules due to schooling. This clashes with the traditional lifestyles and livelihoods of their parents, and this constrains their ability to provide home-cooked food to

children before they leave for school. An awareness of these challenges may hopefully lead to meaningful interventions.

This EES issue also grapples with opportunities and hope for sustainability amidst the threat of global environmental change. The review by Singh and Bahinipati explores how household investments in energy-saving devices in developing economies are informed by implicit discount rates as well as how energy efficiency is labelled and conveyed to consumers. Kiran *et al.* tackle the issue of mountains of accumulated solid waste in our cities and towns and the potential of biomining for its remediation and reuse. Gonji *et al.* write about the persistence and effective adaptation of Golden Jackals in Delhi's urban forest, which cope with feral dogs and other urban challenges. This reminds us of how neglected urban ecology is as a field of study in India and how cities need to become part of India's conservation strategy.

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