

Call for Papers

Research Workshop

Melting Mountains: Society and the Vertical Climate Frontier in the Mountainous Peripheries

November 6-8, 2025

Location: Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich, Germany

Deadline: June 15, 2025

Organizers: Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) & Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society

Conveners: Andrei Vinogradov, Julia Herzberg, Christof Mauch



Ruins of the Aktal village (Altai Republic, Russia) destroyed by melting permafrost in 1985. Photo by Kirill Ustinov, Arctic Design School, 2021

Climate change challenges in mountain regions have long attracted the attention of researchers from natural, social, and human sciences. This interest is driven by two main reasons. First, vertical zonation creates a unique diversity of ecosystems and cultures that is rarely found in lowland areas. Second, this diversity is particularly vulnerable to climate change, which tends to manifest more rapidly and intensely in mountainous regions. However, climate-induced

crises and disasters in mountain areas often receive insufficient attention due to their peripheral nature: high-altitude regions are generally remote and frequently situated along national borders.

By bringing together scholars from various fields, our workshop aims for a comprehensive, interdisciplinary exploration of the complex interactions between society and the environment in the context of changing climate in high-altitude regions worldwide. Existing research in this field has often focused on topics such as adaptation strategies, risk perceptions, scientific and indigenous knowledge. Building on these established research directions, we aim to conceptualize the understanding of the profound economic, political, and infrastructural transformations the highland regions undergo due to climate change. We propose to approach these changes through the concept of a *vertical climate frontier* – the climate change-induced emergence of new forms of economic interaction and increased state regulation in previously isolated and remote high-mountain regions, leading to transformations in both the environment and the traditional way of life of local populations.

The described approach places particular emphasis on contributions focused on mountain systems of the Global South and those employing a (post-)colonial perspective. The center-periphery dichotomy in relation to high-altitude regions will also provide valuable insights for the workshop discussions.

The discussions during the workshop will be focused on (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Historical and anthropological aspects of climate change adaptation in the highland territories,
- Scientific knowledge, traditional beliefs and 'peripheral science' in comprehending climate change,
- Relations between mountain communities, the government and experts, and the center and vertical peripheries in the changing climate,
- Climate change and transformation of traditional economy in the mountainous regions,
- 'Disaster colonialism', 'climate colonialism' and 'economics of disaster': governmental and economic responses to climate-induced catastrophes in the mountains,
- Governmental and international politics on adaptation to climate in the mountainous regions.

To participate in the workshop, please send the title, abstract (up to 300 words) of your talk and a short CV (1-2 pages) to conferences@rcc.lmu.de before **June 15, 2025** (please include "*Melting Mountains' Workshop Submission*" in the subject line of your email). Organizers have limited funding to cover participants' travel and accommodation costs. If you wish to be considered for a refund, please indicate this in your submission. Conveners plan to publish an edited volume based on selected workshop contributions.

The workshop is organized within the project "*Melting Mountains: Society, Environment and Vertical Climate Frontier in the Greater Altai (1950-2020)*", supported by the Leibniz Foundation for 2024-2029.