

## ***Public Engagement through Knowledge Co-creation for Environmental Sustainability in the Indian Himalayan Region***

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Ensuring environmental sustainability emerges as a major challenge for the contemporary Global South. India, as the second-most populous country in the world with a significant land area, is confronted with massive environmental sustainability challenges including air, water, land, waste, and energy management. The ecologically fragile and biodiversity-rich (considered a global “hotspot” of biodiversity) Himalayan region in the country is one of the most impacted areas by “unsustainable” developmental activities. A major portion of the Indian Himalayas, for instance, has gradually been threatened by intense ecological burden due to rapid and haphazard urbanization, climate change events, exploitation of the mountains for fulfilling the growing energy demands in the Indian cities, deforestation, unsustainable tourism practices, among others. Unfortunately, environmental sustainability studies in the region are still inadequate to inform major policy decisions. The existing studies in India are concentrated on the more accessible part of the Himalayan mountains in the country while a large scope of research interventions remains in the relatively remote areas.

Accordingly, during my stay at the RCC, I will analyze the public engagement for environmental sustainability in both the Western and Eastern Himalayan region in India. In a first step, I will analyze the existing literature (both global and Indian) on knowledge co-creation and engagement of the local populace with various factors for larger environmental sustainability. As a second step, with the help of literature on knowledge co-creation and public engagement, I will develop a novel analytical framework considering the factors responsible for environmental sustainability in the region with respect to agriculture, waste, energy, and water. The ultimate purpose is to write a successful grant proposal for an in-depth study to be complimented by rigorous field works. I will particularly consider the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the state of Himachal Pradesh as representatives of the Western Himalayas while considering the north-eastern part of the country as representatives of the Eastern Himalayas. The complexities associated with environmental sustainability call for an interdisciplinary research approach. With my background in environmental studies and science policy, diverse disciplinary traditions such as cultural anthropology, political science, and environmental justice will comprehensively inform my study.