



Workshop

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

Munich, November 6–8, 2025

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

The workshop examines how climate change transforms high-altitude regions. It explores historical and contemporary adaptation strategies, local and scientific knowledge, socio-economic and infrastructural changes, and the interactions between communities, states, and the environment. A central concept is the vertical climate frontier, which highlights new forms of economic interaction and governance emerging due to climate change in previously autonomous highland areas. The program includes the keynote lecture and panel discussions on glaciers, vertical migration, extraction and infrastructure, and local cosmologies and adaptation. The workshop will focus on high-altitude regions worldwide, with particular attention to the Greater Altai, the Himalayas, the Western Carpathians, and other mountain systems in Europe and in the Global South. The event spans November 6–8, 2025, featuring a guided museum tour, panels chaired by international scholars, and concluding discussions synthesizing the insights of the workshop.

Image credits:

Front Image: Alexei Litvinov

1: Andrei Vinogradov

2: Alexei Litvinov



Thursday, Nov 6, 2025

9:30–11:00

Guided tour: »The Future of the Alps. Global Warming«

Location: Alpine Museum, Praterinsel 5

12:30–14:00 Keynote

Ruth Gamble. *Scaling the Great Gorge: how Territorialization, Extraction, and Climate Change are Moving Life in the Far Eastern Himalaya*

Keynote at the RCC Lunchtime Colloquium.

Location: Catholic University Community, Leopoldstraße 11, Hall, 1st floor

14:00–14:30 – Coffee break

14:30–14:45

Julia Herzberg, Christof Mauch, Andrei Vinogradov:

Opening Remarks

Location: Rachel Carson Center, Leopoldstraße 11a, conference room, 4th floor

14:45–16:15

Society, Environment and the Vertical Climate Frontier in the Greater Altai

Chair: Martin Saxer

1. Andrei Vinogradov. *»The White Birch Grew, and the White Tsar Came«: Economy, Power, and Climate Change in the Greater Altai*
2. Julia Herzberg. *Verticality and Climate: Alexander von Humboldt's Journey to the Altai (1829)*
3. Xue Li. *Agrarianisation and Settlement: Climatic Adaptation of Nomadic Pastoralists in the Altai Mountains of China (1950–2020)*



Friday, Nov 7, 2025

09:30–11:00

Glaciers and Climate: Science and Local Perspectives

Chair: Daniel Dumas

1. Katja Doose. *Melting Empire: Soviet Glacier Science and the Emergence of Climate Concerns in Central Asia, 1960–1980s*
2. Tatiana Saburova. *Mountain Time: Glaciers and Science on the Edges of the Russian Empire*
3. Anna-Maria Walter. *Cryotopias – Local Efforts to Increase Glacier Ice*

11:00–11:30 – Coffee break

11:30–13:00

Views from Below: Science, Exploration and Knowledge-Making

Chair: Amanda Wooden

1. Alexei Litvinov. *Glass Altai: 130 Years of Greater Altai Exploration Through the Photographs of Vasily Sapozhnikov*
2. Pedro Mota Tavares. *Vertical Frontiers: Land, Governance, and Environmental Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Portugal*
3. Tracie Wilson. *Climate Change, Inland Water Systems, and Competing Agendas in the Western Carpathians*

13:00–14:00 – Lunch

14:00–15:30

Displacement and Vertical Migration

Chair: Anna-Maria Walter

1. Mayinu Shanatibieke. *Disaster Brings Opportunities: a Case Study of a Resettlement Program in Lastay Village, Xinjiang*
2. Daoerjaa Fuerwa. *From Mountains to Farmlands: The Spatial and Cosmological Displacement of Mongolian Herders in Xinjiang*
3. Ruyu Lin. *Disrupted Belonging: Monpa Pastoralism, Climate Change, and Spiritual Displacement in the Eastern Himalayas*

15:30–17:00 – Coffee Break

17:00–18:30

Extraction, Infrastructures and Ecological Transformation

Chair: Thomas Heyd

1. Mariia Koskina. *Soviet Infrastructures, Big Almaty Lake, and the Politics of Water in the High Mountains*
2. Amanda Wooden. *Extracting Glaciers & Provoking the Mountain's Soul: Political Cultures of Kyrgyz and Canadian Gold Mining in the Global Economy*
3. Karuna Sah. *Sacred Ice: Indigenous Cosmologies and Climate Adaptation in Ladakh, India*

19:00

Welcoming dinner at Georgenhof

Location: Friedrichstraße 1

Saturday, Nov 8, 2025

10:00–11:30

Views from Above: Local Traditional Knowledge, Cosmologies, and Adaptation

Chair: Christof Mauch

1. Andrea Zinzani. *Climate Change and Mountain Communities' Socio-Ecological Transformations in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan*
2. Sophie Elixhauser. *Changing Livelihoods, Last Chance Tourism and Climate Research. Climate Change Perceptions and Impacts in Greenlandic Communities*
3. Pardeep Singh, Anwesha Borthakur. *Mountains in Transition: Climate Change, Cultural Heritage and Environmental Futures in India's Western Himalaya*

11:30–12:00 – Coffee break

12:00–13:00

Julia Lajus, Andrei Vinogradov, Julia Herzberg:

Concluding remarks and final discussion

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The workshop is organized as part of the project »Melting Mountains: Environment, Society and the Vertical Climate Frontier in the Greater Altai (1950–2020)« funded by the Leibniz Foundation for 2024–2029, with financial and organizational support from the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society.



Project's website:
<https://www.leibniz-gwzo.de/en/node/1408>

Venue

Rachel Carson Center, Munich
Leopoldstraße 11a, 80802 Munich

Conveners

Andrei Vinogradov, Julia Herzberg, Christof Mauch

Guest and Event Management (GWZO)

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ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

This measure is co-financed by tax revenues as set out in the adopted budget of the Landtag of Saxony.

