

ABSTRACTS

Silk Roads in the Mountains of Central Asia

Ancient Routes & Modern Challenges in Times of Global Change

Keynote talks

Wu Ning, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

Hermann Kreutzmann, Freie University Berlin

Yuri Badenkov, Russian Academy of Sciences

Troy Sternberg, University of Oxford

Other presentations

Long Ruijun, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

Jonathan Demenge, University of Sussex

Aziz Ali Dad, AKRSP Pakistan

Babar Aman, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan

Jerome Mayaud, University of Oxford

Tatyana Yashina, Altai University

Alexander Dunets, Altai University

Panel session (no abstract; thoughts arising from the workshop)

Tatjana Yashina, Altai University

Talantbek Aldashev, AKF Kyrgyzstan

Kishwar Abdulalishoev, MSDSP Tajikistan

Aziz Ali Dad, AKRSP Pakistan

Wu Ning, ICIMOD

Keynote by Wu Ning

Building Mountain Resilience through Transboundary Management of Ecosystem Services

Wu Ning, Yi Shaoliang (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development)

Ecological and community resilience concept considers building or reverting back after shocks and moving forward to adapt in the changing conditions. This approach combines economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development with climate change adaptation, sustainable management of ecosystems, and preparedness for future risks towards an integrated development in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). Using the resilience concept and transboundary approach International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is working on management and conservation of a few transboundary landscapes in order to achieving adaptation goals and Resilient Mountain Solutions. This paper presents drivers of change faced by the people and ecosystems in the Hindu Kush Himalaya. The theoretical concepts of transboundary approach, context and practical experiences in ecosystem management, ecosystem based adaptation are used for identifying resilient outcomes and developing solution packages. Examples of ICIMOD's experiences in responding to resilient outcomes and solutions for transboundary management will be shared.

Keynote by Hermann Kreutzmann

Pamirian Crossroads and the New Silk Road Initiative

The Pamirian Crossroads have been a thoroughfare for pilgrims, refugees, traders and nomads over long periods of time. The harsh environment has provided home for mountain farmers and pastoralists. Nevertheless, the Pamirian Crossroads were a contested arena during the Great Game and functioned as a buffer during the Cold War. In recent years the new Silk Road initiative, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Chinese 'One belt, one road' policy for Eurasian exchange has drawn a renewed attention towards a strategically located mountain region. The presentation will draw attention to the transformation of external interests and their effects on the Pamirian Crossroads.

Памирский перекрёсток и новая инициатива Шёлкового пути

Памирские перекрёстки долгое время являлись проходом для паломников, беженцев, торговцев и кочевников. Строгие естественные условия предоставляли родину для горных земледельцев и животноводов. Тем не менее, Памир так же и был ареной соперничества во время Большой Игры и являлся буферной зоной во время Холодной Войны. В настоящее время новая инициатива Шёлкового пути, Шанхайская организация сотрудничества и Китайская стратегия „Один пояс и один путь“ для торговли и обмена в Евразии возобновили внимание стратегический расположенному горному региону. Презентация уделяет внимание изменению внешних интересов в регионе и их эффектов на Памирские перекрёстки.

Keynote by Yuri Badenkov

The Silk Road in High Asia: Geography, Environment & Sustainability in Altai

Introductory notes

- Great Mountain Arc of Asia – ending of the Middle Kingdom (China). Central Asia and key mountain massifs on routes of ancient Silk Road. What is Central Asia? World Center of Enlightenment at VII – XI Centuries (Dr. F. Starr). Definitions. Historical, cultural and geopolitical issues.
- What is new in ancient Silk Road concept in XXI Century (Chinese approach)?
- Challenge for science, policy and business. New research paradigm and development approach – participatory and transdisciplinary.

Altai mountain knot

- Altai as geographical, ecological and cultural crossroad in the center of Asian continent
- Transboundary Altai's paradox: "Economic periphery vis-à-vis Ecological Center"
- Indigenous people and newcomers: Sacredness, Spirituality and Development. Nicolas Roerich "Altai – Himalaya spiritual Bridge". Shambala? Mapping of Sacred Landscapes (Dutch initiative, Arita Bajens, Bas Pedrolli)
- Climate Change and Altai-Sayan biodiversity conservation. Connectivity conservation approach for Altai-Sayan mountain mega-corridor. Cooperation with ICIMOD and IUCN (Nakul Chettri, Graem Worboys. 2010 – 2013).

Altai and the Silk Road

- preSilk Road history. Part of the Great Scythian Steppe Belt – active migration and trade (from Black Sea plains up to Altai mountains). Ukock Plateau – Sacred center of Altai?
- Altai was northern periphery poorly involved in Silk Road Belt issues

First Chinese call for OBOR in 1996

- Development of huge East Central Asia Economic Region and Continental Bridge initiative (Eastern Kazakhstan, Western Mongolia, Xinjiang and Siberia. "In the mid of XXI Century this region would be one of the global development centers".
- Reaction from Russian side on Chinese "Continental Bridge through Altai Sacred mountains" initiative: 1) concept of Altai Convention was proposed as transboundary interstate legal Agreement for cooperation and development; 2) UBESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve "Altai" creation as territory of cooperation in nature protection and development issues; 3) International Coordinating Council (Our common home Altai" was established in 2003 as platform for cooperation of scientists, policymakers and NGOs. Urumqi Conference for Strategic Development of Central Asia (1998)
- Concept of Continental Bridge (transport-economic corridor) was transformed in Gas pipe-line infrastructure (doesn't realized, yet)

New Chinese "One Belt. One Road" initiative (2013) in Altai context

- Uncertainties
- Regional scientific cooperation and exchanges

- First (in Asia) UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve “Great Altai” (Russia – Kazakhstan) was established at 2017. (Tatyana Yashina)
- Transboundary tourism is under negotiations and research (Dr. Alexander Dunets)

Perspectives

- Cooperation with International Space Station (Remote sensing and monitoring, Glaciers, Natural Hazards) through Institute of Geography RAS / RS Group (Dr. Lev Desinov)

Invitation for discussions

Expected outcomes/outputs:

- Proposals for cooperation in research, education, practice
- UNESCO Mountain Biosphere reserves and World Heritage sites - “Silk Road network’ development
- Plan of activities (draft)?
- Interim international Working Group “Silk Road-21&mountains” creation?
- Publications in International and Russian Language academic journals

Keynote by Troy Sternberg

The role of landscape and politics of infrastructure for China’s New Silk Road programme in Central Asia

China’s \$1 trillion One Belt, One Road (OBOR) infrastructure project has significant landscape, socio-economic and political implications in recipient countries. To date investigation has focused on Chinese motivation and plans rather than OBOR impact in host nations. This paper examines the programme from the perspective of two Central Asian states - Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – that are at the heart of OBOR. We identify geographical factors that constrain infrastructure, recognise geopolitical contestation between Russia and China, address historical and cultural factors and consider issues of institutional capacity and marginality that may be impediments to China’s initiative. The discussion then focuses on how OBOR may play out in Central Asian landscapes and suggests how to conceive and address the unprecedented transformation in the region’s built environment. Critical issues are that OBOR has not been grounded in the physical geography, practical understanding of OBOR’s impacts is missing and the state-citizen-China nexus remains unexplored. As pivot nations OBOR implementation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan will showcase the Chinese programme’s strengths and highlight its weaknesses.

Presentation by Long Ruijun

OBOR scientific cooperation: from perspective of cooperation between Gansu, China, and Central Asian countries

[abstract forthcoming]

Presentation by Jonathan Demenge

Beyond the Karakoram Range: looking at six decades of road development in Ladakh and their impacts on mountain environment and societies

Jonathan Demenge, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

Situated North of the Himalayas and South of the Karakoram, Ladakh was one linked to Kashgar, Yarkand and to the rest of the Silk Road and played a part in the Great Game. It was then considered a “crossroad of High Asia” and the gateway between Central and South Asia for some, or an impassable barrier for others. Today, clustered behind closed and contested “borders” with Pakistan and China, Ladakh is more regarded as a remote and isolated corner of India. From 1947 – when the first stretch of road up to Ladakh was built – until the present times, the development of the *roadscape* has had deep, complex, sometimes unpredictable and often contradictory impacts on the people, their livelihoods and their environment.

Located within the interdisciplinary field of political ecology, dwelling on an itinerant ethnography and a wide array of methods, the presentation will highlight some of the key findings of my research undertaken between 2003 and 2011. Grounded in the realities of Ladakh it will try to expose the complex and inherently political dimension of infrastructure development in a contested region. The presentation will identify some of the patterns of change linked to infrastructure development, and show how the road often works in association with other factors to spur socio-economic and environmental transformations that are sometimes resisted, often non-linear and always unequally distributed. Based on the geographically and historically situated case of Ladakh, it is hoped the presentation will provide some useful hints and a basis of comparison to questions raised during the workshop on the anticipated impacts of OBOR, in Central Asia and beyond...

Presentation by Aziz Ali Dad

Report by AKRSP in Gilgit, Pakistan on CPEC

[abstract forthcoming]

Presentation by Babar Aman

Locational Advantage of Gilgit-Baltistan: Special Economic Zones

[abstract forthcoming]

Presentation by Jerome Maynaud

The ViSTA model: A new tool for predicting the impact of land use change in high-altitude deserts

Jerome Maynaud, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford

Desert regions are characterised by patchy vegetation and wind erosion. Such extreme dynamics are common throughout the mountainous regions of Central Asia. China's 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) initiative has the potential to alter the natural physical dynamics of these high-altitude deserts. It is therefore crucial to understand how changes in land use (especially those linked to infrastructure construction) could shape desert landscape evolution, and how potential negative impacts may be mitigated.

In this paper, I present the new, coupled cellular automaton Vegetation and Sediment TrAnsport model (ViSTA). ViSTA is designed to simulate the development of desert landscapes in a simple, grid-based format. It can account for changes in farming practices (e.g. grazing, fire), as well as road or railway construction. Here, the technical aspects of ViSTA are described, and its performance is compared to data collected in the Skeleton Coast Desert of Namibia. Then, I explore the potential to apply ViSTA to the Central Asian mountain deserts, particularly in the context of the OBOR initiative.

The versatility of the ViSTA model means it could be used to predict threshold-related transitions across the diverse range of desert environments that occur along the proposed OBOR routes.

Presentation by Tatyana Yashina

Great Altai: First Transboundary Biosphere Reserve in Asia And a Model of Transboundary Socio-Ecological System

Tatjana Yashina, Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve, Russian Federation

Firstly the idea of transboundary cooperation in the field of conservation and sustainable development in the Altai Mountains shared by Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China, was announced in 1998. After 6 years it resulted in bilateral field-level cooperation of Katunskiy Biosphere Reserve in Russian and Katon-Karagaiskity National Park in Kazakhstan. In 2017 this area was officially designated as the UNESCO's Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (TBR) "Great Altai".

The presentation describes the ecological and socio-economic context as well as managerial approach to TBR "Great Altai" It is based on the outcomes of the interdisciplinary study resulted in the management strategy of this transboundary area. Special attention will be given to the basic goals of the TBR: conservation of natural and cultural values, fostering sustainable development of local communities and monitoring of threats, targeted to provide relevant managerial responses.

This bilateral cooperation of Russia and Kazakhstan could be considered as a first practical step towards the International Altai Convention involving all four countries of the region and appealing to sustainable future of this transboundary area with its unique natural and cultural values.

Presentation by Alexander Dunets

Development of tourism in the transboundary Altai: influence of the project «One belt, one way»

Alexander Dunets, Altai state university

Modern trends in tourism in the Altai region. Principle types of tourism. The experience of cooperation of Chinese and Russian scientists for research of tourism resources and tourism in the Altai region. The project "One belt, one way" and the main changes which will have taken place in tourism in the Altai region.

The Altai region is located directly at the centre of the Eurasian landmass, where the borders of four countries meet – Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and the People's Republic of China. At different times in history it's been a melting pot for interaction between different ethnic groups and cultures. Yet despite present-day global conditions which act to determine the social development and organisation of a modern region, areas of traditional landscape and landscape have been preserved in the Region up to present times – almost untouched by human influence. The life of nomadic peoples in the area is a considerable pull for tourists visiting these enormous steppes, and their almost-inaccessible mountain hamlets in the taiga peak areas.

For a considerable distance, the borders of this gigantic landlocked region form a natural buffer zone. The weak cross-border interactivity is influenced by the natural features - such as the high mountain ranges, where the state borders run. There is also the level of socio-economic development, the poorly-developed transport and logistics network, and a broad range of ethnic and religious differences. Even so, there is a noticeable weakening taking place in the function of the border as a barrier – largely due to the processes of globalisation and the project "One Belt, One Road". The activities of State authorities in the areas close to the border permit the formation of a cross-border economic zone in the Altai region. There is a gradual perception within the region by local communities that these bordering territories share a common ethnic, cultural, natural and historic space. For example, the traditional way of life of the Tuvans is strongly connected with their location at the junction of the borders of Russia, Mongolia and China. While Kazakhs are to be found living in all four political states of the Altai region.

The tourism and leisure economy is dependent in many respects on the social sphere and the economics of the region. From the moment of market reforms in Russia in the tourism industry, there have been far-reaching changes in the region.