



Silk Roads in the Mountains of Central Asia

Ancient Routes and Modern Challenges in Times of Global Change



Announcement & Invitation for Submissions

International Workshop

Dushanbe Tajikistan, 3-4 October 2017

Central Asia has been a crossroads for global economic trade and the exchange of ideas and innovations for centuries. China's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative, launched in 2013, now seeks to revive the routes that to a large extent were closed for much of the twentieth century. Spanning over 60 countries from Asia to Europe, the land and sea routes envisaged by China are likely to impact, and could even radically transform, local and regional socio-economic, ecological and cultural systems. Further study of the possible outworking of the OBOR initiative in Central Asian countries such as Tajikistan, highly dependent on foreign investments from China for development of transportation as well as telecommunication and agricultural infrastructure, clearly is warranted. Many significant benefits as well as potential challenges stemming from financial and technological investments and other forms of influence should be considered and discussed, even debated, and eventually synthesized – to inform both policy and practice. An inclusive approach to dialogue is essential, too, and should encompass a broad range of thematic, geographic, and socio-cultural perspectives.

Focusing on the mountains of Central Asia (with special attention given to the Pamir and Hindu Kush ranges), the present workshop will consider both the opportunities and challenges associated with current or planned *infrastructure developments* such as roads, railways, pipelines, and increased urbanization, as well as a range of *institutional changes* that are likely to arise through emerging development pressures, such as changes in land tenure, access and benefit sharing (in regard to ecosystem services), civic engagement, legislation, etc.

The workshop will adopt a distinct *social-ecological systems* approach in the dialogues it encourages, and will seek to foster new *partnerships and networks* that promote *interdisciplinary research*. A more refined *research agenda* to advance Sustainable Mountain Development is anticipated from the workshop, as part of the global Mountain Agenda promoted by UN FAO and other global agencies.

In regard to the OBOR initiative, the workshop aims to answer the following questions, and more...

- *What are the actual or anticipated impacts of the OBOR initiative on mountain regions in Central Asia?*
- *To what extent will improved accessibility benefit local communities, versus external stakeholders?*
- *Who are likely to be the main winners and who will be the losers in the mountain regions?*
- *How will the OBOR initiative affect urbanization in mountain regions?*
- *What environmental impacts may be expected in mountain environments, such as land degradation, loss of wildlife/biodiversity, transformation of traditional indigenous systems and cultural identity?*
- *How will the initiative influence the ability of external actors to determine developments in the mountain regions (cf. tele-coupled landscapes)?*
- *How should potential impacts of OBOR initiative and other 'Silk Road' developments be assessed in context of, or in conjunction with, other manifestations of global change, particularly climate change?*

Anticipated workshop outcomes and outputs

- Inventory of existing knowledge about current development trajectories in the Pamir Mountains and other Central Asian mountain ranges
- Synthesis of progress in our understanding of global changes occurring in mountain regions, including examples of innovative development approaches as well as identification of priority knowledge gaps
- Increased interdisciplinary work, increased international exchanges, and increased collaborations amongst researchers, practitioners and policy-makers
- Network of researchers and development practitioners with special interest in the Mountain Agenda
- Publication of several policy briefs under MSRI's *Policy Brief Series* and submission of several articles for a 'special issue' in a development journal is planned (e.g. *Geography, Environment, Sustainability*)

Workshop Format & Deadlines

The first in a series of workshops, this meeting aims to develop broad consensus on priorities for research in relation to development policy impacts on the societies resident in, or dependent on, the mountains of Central Asia. The workshop will take place in Dushanbe over a 2-day period in October 2017. Following the workshop, an optional 4 or 5 field trip will be organized (limited numbers, additional cost) to visit UCA's campus in Khorog and to experience the cultures and natural environments in the Pamir region.

If interested to participate in the workshop, please **submit an abstract** (max. 250 words) by 8 September 2017 so that presentations can be organized appropriately. Please confirm **intent to participate** as early as possible, including participation in the optional post-workshop visit to the high Pamir Mountains in Gorno Badakhshan.

Invited speakers	Institutional affiliations	Presentation
Dr Yuri Badenkov	Institute of Geography, RAS	Transboundary Knots of High Asia and Silk Road: Geography, Environment & Sustainability in Altai
Dr Hermann Kreutzmann	ZELF, Freie Universität Berlin	Pamirian Crossroads & the New Silk Road Initiative
Dr Wu Ning	ICIMOD (Ecosystem Services)	Transboundary conservation and management of mountain ecosystem services
Dr Troy Sternberg	Geography and Environment, University of Oxford	The role of landscape and politics of infrastructure for China's New Silk Road program in Central Asia



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Mountain Societies Research Institute University of Central Asia (UCA)

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For more information about the Silk Road workshop, write to msri@ucentralasia.org

To learn more about the Pamir region and UCA Khorog campus, visit www.pamirs.org/, www.visitpamirs.com/, and www.ucentralasia.org/Campuses/Khorog.

