

## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

DEADLINE  
8 July 2024

# Multispecies migration in the climate-changed Himalayas

A publication symposium of the Himalayan University Consortium Thematic Working Group on Environmental Humanities



## The context

Himalayan climate change is inherently a multispecies affair. In its terrestrial effects, it variously fractures, fragments, and reorders the situated entanglements of humans with plants, animals, water, soil, rocks, and other nonhuman beings, whose meaningful lives are thoroughly, if unevenly, impacted by climate-changed environs (Wouters, 2024). Central to the anthropogenically impacted, “New Himalayas” (Smyer Yü, 2021) is the climate-induced migration of both humans and nonhumans, biotic and not. This climate-driven migration imbricates into multispecies social and ecological networks that spin deeply entangled, situated Himalayan worlds (Pachua and Van Schendel, 2022).

While migration, and patterns and networks of mobility, has long been at the heart of various

Himalayan lifeways (e.g. transhumance, seasonal migration, trade, shifting cultivation, and pilgrimage), more recent anthropogenic impacts, including climate change and related ecological crises, have become a novel cause of migration. This climate migration results from, variously, acute natural disasters, slow onset situations that affect the liveability of places, changing weather patterns and shifting hydrological cycles, state-planned relocation, or is resorted to by vulnerable households as a form of climate adaptation.

This body of knowledge around climate migration is fixed on human actors and their differentiated agency, and revolves centrally around themes of human vulnerability, resilience, interventions, and adaptation (Maharjan et al. 2020, Adger et al. 2020, Biella et al. 2022). This symposium complements this knowledge-field by also integrating nonhuman climate-induced migration, and by developing

conjoined narratives of human-nonhuman migration that are cognizant of the enduring intimacies of humans, plants, animals, waters, and other nonhuman entities. Historical studies on plants and animals show that human settlement and migration was significantly co-shaped by the mobility of plants and animals (Pandit 2019; Pachau and Van Schendel, 2022). In the unfolding Anthropocene, matter is increasingly on-the-move with crops and plants, tree- and snow-lines, animals, water – in its liquid, solid, and vapoury states – soil and silt, and other nonhuman entities, variously migrating (broadly conceived, including: movement, scattering, shapeshifting, disappearing) in response to climate-changed environs. These forms of nonhuman climate-induced migration have been insufficiently explored, yet are expected to importantly co-shape human migration patterns in the contemporary Himalayas. In this context, our working hypothesis is that it will be generative to think of climate change, in its terrestrial, lived and lively dimensions, as multispecies migration; as a process in which humans and other matter are increasingly on-the-move, resulting in the un-making and re-making of shared worlds.

Thus, this interdisciplinary symposium broadens academic and policy conversations around climate-induced migration by asking: what happens when we think of climate migration as a multispecies process that involves both humans and nonhumans, and the relations and ecologies of life that bind them? How do nonhuman beings and factors influence human migration patterns? What are the affective, relational, and experiential dimensions humans attach to anthropogenic nonhuman migrations? How is the migration of matter variously fracturing, fragmenting, but also reconstituting lively and situated entangled worlds? How does matter-on-the-move and changing landscapes impact human-earth affective and spiritual relations, as often mediated through immaterial, spiritual, and otherwise nonsecular beings with whom Himalayan communities spin together negotiated and shared lifeworlds? What, in sum, might be gained from imagining and engaging with climate change as multispecies migration?

## Interdisciplinary-intellectual linkages

From a deep time perspective, the Himalayas are makers and changers of climate (Pandit 2017; Wouters and Smyer Yü 2024). Scientific research now affirms the Himalayas as disproportionately impacted by – and impacting and accelerating – anthropogenic climate change (IPCC 2007, IPCC 2013, ICIMOD 2015, 2023). This recognition of an unfolding great Himalayan socio-ecological unravelling, and this also impacting densely inhabited lower altitudinal regions linked to the Himalayas, led to the ‘vast machine’ of climate science (Edward, 2010) descending on the Himalayas. There is now a steady production of scientific-technical knowledge on Himalayan climate change. Social scientific and humanities research on Himalayan climate change is of more recent origins. This scholarship is beginning to offer situated, indigenous, and lively accounts which reveal that climate change is always also part of a cultural process, is experienced in specific places, and is lived and adapted to with others, most of whom are not humans (Smyer Yü and De Maaker, 2021, Mathur 2017, Sherpa 2018, Gagné 2019; Wouters & Smyer Yü, 2024). These bodies of scholarship only seldom interact.

Indeed, current knowledge-making on Himalayan climate change is impeded by a marked decoupling of scientific knowledge of climate and lived and lively experiences of climate change. At the heart of the emergent Himalayan Environmental Humanities, as developed by HUC-ICIMOD, is the impetus to connect technical-scientific insight with human experience, including the diverse local comprehensions and practices of climate change (Smyer Yü and Wouters 2023); extended, in this symposium, to also encompass climate-driven migration. Our approach grounds itself in the recognition that humans are also geological and ecological beings, and are embedded in more-than-human geographies and histories that shape and – in the Anthropocene – reshape our relationships with physical landscapes, waters, animals, plants, and other beings.

To bring multispecies migration into focus requires interdisciplinary-intellectual exchanges. It requires insights from many different disciplines and knowledge-fields – climate science, ethology, botany, anthropology, history, hydrology, geology,



geography, as well as from post-humanist currents (e.g. environmental humanities, new animisms and materialisms, multispecies studies, 'lively ethnography' (Van Dooren & Bird-Rose 2016). To meaningfully address multispecies migration, this symposium seeks to bring together scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds but connected by a drive for genuine interdisciplinary attentiveness and curiosity that will foster the complementarity, convergence, translatability, and mutuality between the climate sciences, other sciences, the humanities, policy-makers, and the public. This symposium aims to further advance interdisciplinary-intellectual exchanges in the context of the migrations of humans and nonhumans.

## Topical themes

Framed by the interconnected themes of climate/clime studies and migration, we welcome papers addressing climate-driven migration as a relational and multispecies affair in concrete historical, ecological, scientific, social, spiritual, and affective terms. We welcome research projects addressing, but not limited to, the following topics contextualised in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH), including its downstream river basins: human and nonhuman migrations, plant-human entanglements, animal geographies, the lives, deaths, and after-lives of matter, more-than-human histories, shapeshifting and migrating waters, indigenous crops, seeds, and food-systems (and changes therein), human affective and spiritual relations with physical environments, movement, mobility, and connection to places, epistemologies of climate (change), anthropogenic alterations of landscapes, and multispecies ethics and justice in climate-changed environs.

## Eligibility, procedure, and outcomes

The symposium takes the form of a two-year project that encompasses capacity-building, a workshop/conference, field-research, and collective publication. A key-event is a multiple-days, in-person workshop in Thimphu, Bhutan that will consist of technical sessions, methodological discussions, guest-lectures, and the streamlining and planning of publication goals. The symposium is open to scholars working in the HKH region. Scholars from or based in the HKH region will be given first priority in terms of travel and research funding. Selection will take place through a competitive process. In the selection process, priority will be allotted to indigenous, female, early career scholars, and to applicants applying from institutions that are members of the HUC network.

### The direct outputs are:

1. A high-quality collective publication (i.e. special journal issue, book-publication, policy brief),
2. Generating interdisciplinary alliances across the HKH around the theme of climate-induced migration,
3. Developing a curriculum on climate migration that can be shared across the HUC network, and
4. Capacity-building of Himalayan and early career scholars through, variously, conferencing, individual supervision, substantive feedback, and language enhancement.

**Applications should consist of a motivation letter including a pitch of the proposed research and paper (500-750 words) and a CV.**

**Applications may be submitted to: [jjpwouters@rtc.bt](mailto:jjpwouters@rtc.bt), with a copy to [huc@icimod.org](mailto:huc@icimod.org)**

**The application deadline is 8 July 2024.**

## About the HUC

The Himalayan University Consortium (established 2007) has its mandate to develop an effective, sustainable network of universities in the HKH, in collaboration with academic research and knowledge-generating and exchange institutions both within and outside the region. This network engages

top-notch professional women and men capable of undertaking high-quality research, education, teaching, and knowledge dissemination in service of a mountain-specific, sustainable, fair, and inclusive development for HKH communities and adjoining mountainous areas. The Consortium's eleven-member Steering Committee and a Secretariat coordinate with member institutions in network building, partnership enhancing, collaboration promoting, resource sharing and fundraising activities. The Secretariat is hosted by the Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICMOD, Kathmandu) and funded through the generous support of ICIMOD's core donors: the Governments of Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, Pakistan, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

## About Himalayan Environmental Humanities Thematic Working Group

The Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Trans-Himalayan Environmental Humanities is a multinational venue of collaborative research and teaching on the Himalayan environment, climate change, and traditional ecological knowledge. The group aims to explore the more-than-human meanings of the Earth, sustainability, and multispecies interactions and co-existence by building bridges between traditional knowledge systems and modern environmental sciences in the Anthropocene, the current epoch of the Earth largely induced by human industrial activities. The TWG is keen on researching traditional sustainability wisdoms from Himalayan indigenous societies as well as their hybrid forms incorporated with modern scientific methods. It is particularly dedicated to the practice of the humanist approaches from environmental humanities, a fast-growing interdisciplinary field of environmental studies concerning local manifestations of global climate and environmental changes. Recent outputs of this TWG include: *Environmental Humanities in the New Himalayas* (edited by Dan Smyer Yü and Erik de Maaker, Routledge: 2021); *Storying Multipolar Climes in the Himalaya, Andes, and Arctic*; (edited by Dan Smyer Yü and Jelle J. P. Wouters, Routledge: 2023), and *Himalayan Climes and Multispecies Encounters* (edited by Jelle J P Wouters and Dan Smyer Yü, Routledge: 2024).

## Timeline

DATE	ACTION	REMARKS
8 July 2024	Submission of abstract, curriculum vitae, and letter of motivation	
15 August 2024	Selection announced	
15 September 2024	Virtual inception meeting	
31 October 2024	Submission of working draft	
7–9 November 2024	Physical meeting at the Royal Thimphu College, Bhutan	Full funding will be provided for scholars from/based in the HKH
December 2024 – June 2025	Additional fieldwork	Authors build on their extant research by an attunement to multispecies migration. Fieldwork funding will be prioritised for HKH scholars.
September 2025	Submission of complete draft	
October – November 2025	Substantive feedback on the individual submissions	
February 2026	Submission of revised and final manuscripts	
March 2026	Language enhancement and submission of collective work to an international publisher	

## **CONTACT**

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**The Himalayan University Consortium Secretariat** | [huc@icimod.org](mailto:huc@icimod.org)

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