

# **MOUNTAIN COMMONS: CHANGING SPACE AND STATUS AT COMMUNITY LEVELS IN HIMALAYAS**

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## **The Issues Focused**

### **A. CPRs an Institutional Product of Nature-Society Interactions/Adaptations**

- **Mountain Specificities Shaping Interactions and Space and Status of CPRs.**

### **B. Mountain Commons: Traditional Context**

- **Marginalisation of Traditional Arrangements (Textual Tables (1 & 2))**

### **C. Emerging Scenarios: Impact of Globalisation Percolating Through: State, Market, Differentiated Communities and the state of CPR Itself**

### **D. Reclaiming Commons: Lead Lines and Challenges**

- **Rebuilding Collective Stakes of Communities**
- **Recognising Centrality of Market Processes**
- **Shifting Priorities for CPR – Products/Services**
- **New Responsibilities for the State**

**Table 1: Circumstances Historically Associated with CPRs in Mountain Areas**

<b>Features of Natural Resource Base and Traditional Human Adaptations<sup>1)</sup></b> <b>(High extent of fragile resources, vulnerable to degradation with intensive use; dominance of low productivity – high risk production options, limited surplus generation and reinvestment; isolation and semi-closed situation; mutually reinforcing environmental, socio-economic vulnerabilities and poverty; human adaptation to above through group action and local institutions in predominantly subsistence oriented systems)</b>		
<b>Implications and Imperatives at:</b>		
<b>Regional Level</b>	<b>Community Level</b>	<b>Farm Household Level</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Low population pressure; relative market isolation; limited technological and institutional interventions.</li> <li>b. Limited incentives and compulsions for privatization of CPRs.</li> <li>c. Overall circumstances (a,b) favourable to high extent of CPRs and transhumance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Heterogeneity, fragility and marginality of resource base; inadequacy of private risk strategies; need for group action to protect collective stake in local resources.</li> <li>b. Balancing extensive-intensive land uses; focus on collective risk sharing and supportive local institutions.</li> <li>c. Community responses to (a,b): provision of CPRs (their protection, access, usage, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Narrow, unstable production base; diversified, biomass centred, land extensive farming systems.</li> <li>b. Reliance on collective measures against seasonality and risk.</li> <li>c. Induced by (a,b) stronger focus on complementarity of: CPR-PPR (private property resources)-based activities, annual-perennial based activities etc.; CPRs as an integral component of ecologically well suited, diversified farming systems</li> </ul>

1) See Annex A for details on mountain specificities promoting the adaptations involving CPRs and NRB in general.

**Table 2: Changed Circumstances Adversely Affecting CPRs in Mountain Areas**

<p><b>Economic, Institutional and Technological Changes Influencing the Patterns of Resource Use<sup>1</sup></b>  <b>Increased physical, administrative and market integration, increased extent and changed nature of public interventions, increased demographic pressure, etc. shaping the pace and pattern of rural development affecting CPRs</b></p>		
<p><b>Implications and Imperatives at:</b></p>		
<p><b>Regional Level</b></p>	<p><b>Community Level</b></p>	<p><b>Farm Household Level</b></p>
<p>a. Population growth accentuating land hunger.</p> <p>b. Public policies enhancing legal/ illegal private and public encroachment on CPR/ privatization.</p> <p>c. Technologies and market forces activating the land market, extending even to fragile/marginal lands.</p> <p>d. Over all circumstances (a,b,c) unfavourable to CPRs.</p>	<p>a. Development and market led differentiation of rural community and decline of collective strategies for resource management, risk sharing etc.</p> <p>b. Usurpation of community's mandates, initiatives by the state through legal, administrative and fiscal means.</p> <p>c. Emphasis on acquiring CPRs as private property, rather than use collectively.</p> <p>d. Due to (a,b,c) rapid erosion of community concerns and group action for CPRs.</p>	<p>a. Reduced area and productivity of CPRs, marginalizing their contribution to diversified and biomass-centred production strategies.</p> <p>b. Individualization of adjustment measures against risk, vulnerability and seasonality etc.</p> <p>c. Reliance on private resource, public relief, non-biomass oriented technologies, etc.</p> <p>d. Due to (a,b,c) reduced reliance on complementarities of CPR-PPR (private property resources) based activities/products.</p>

1) See Annex B, for details of the process of changes and their consequences.

**TABLE 3: THE EMERGING SCENARIOS: IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON MOUNTAIN COMMONS**

<b>A. The Fundamental Conflicts Between:</b>	
<b>Key Attributes of Globalisation Process</b>	<b>Imperatives of Mountain Specificities</b>
Focus on profit-driven selectivity, narrow specialisation and intensity of resource use leading to resource-degradation	Fragility, diversity, marginality-driven diversification strategiEs, balancing intensive-extensive land usage conducive to sustainable production systems
Highly demand-driven processes concentrating on niche resources, causing disintegration of traditionally inter-connected resource use systems	Pressure and arrangements for environment friendly and livelihood supporting resource use systems governed by supply side constraints
Community perspectives and practices displaced by external market-led approaches with little sensitivity to the local needs and capacities	Dominance of local knowledge and experience-based responses to imperative of mountain conditions (e.g. two way adaptations)

**Table 4: The Globalisation Induced Shifts in the Approachrd/Actions of Agencies Affecting Status and Governance of CPRs**

Agency with Conventional Roles	Emerging Tendencies Adversely Affecting CPRs
A. <b>STATE:</b> As custodian of country's natural resources; protector of CPRs and promoter of governance, usage regulation of CPRs	Governed by provisions of market friendly economic-reforms, induced by funding from corporate bodies etc., promoting large-scale privatization of CPRs, bypassing the customary laws and livelihood concerns of communities. Also conversion of local commons into environmental landscapes (protected areas etc.)
B. <b>RURAL COMMUNITIES:</b> As defacto-custodians and managers of CPRs for collective benefits, and protectors of collective stakes	Enhanced community differentiation following incentives and compulsions through globalization processes, reducing the community concerns and group action for CPRs
C. <b>Market forces</b> as "servant rather than master", helping the process of change in mountain areas	Unprecedented primacy to market forces under globalization marginalising both state and communities regarding CPR-situation
D. <b>CPRs as an institution</b> promoting group action for NRM	The degraded status of CPRs inducing little hope and action for their revival, specially in the context of (A, B, C) in Col. 1

**Table 5: Reclaiming CPRs: Indicative Lead Lines**

Potential Approaches	Rationale and Challenges
A. Reviving Community's Collective Stakes in CPRs, obstructed by enhanced differentiations within aggregated, diverse communities	Replace aggregates of CPRs and village communities as targets, by disaggregated CPR/CPR units and specific voluntary user groups respectively, in CPR research and policy-programme interventions. This will fit well with the emerging market orientation of CPR-products/services, and eventual federating of disaggregated user groups with strong stakes in CPRs
B. Recognition and Harnessing of Centrality of Market Processes to help CPRs	Guarding against the potential risks, focus on high value CPR products/services and equitable links with market agencies; public-private complementarities to enhance gainful diversification and occupational shifts involving CPRs
C. Changing Priorities and Choices of CPR products/services	Quite related to the above (B), needed balancing of bio-mass and self provisioning based approaches and the market oriented options while managing/using CPRs by communities
D. Changing role and responsibilities of the state by changing its "mind set"	In place of treating CPRs largely as "natural wastes and component of subsistence-oriented livelihood system", focus on CPRs as social assets with vast potential for income generation including through "environmental services" used by the society at large

## **Annex A: Mountain Specificities and their Indicative CPR – Related Imperatives**

<b>Limited Accessibility</b>	
a) Manifestations and implications (i.e., promoting vulnerability and poverty-circumstances)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation, semi-closedness, poor mobility, high cost of: mobility, infrastructural logistics, support systems, and production/exchange activities</li> <li>• Limited access to, and dependability of, external support (products, inputs, resources, experiences)</li> <li>• Detrimental to harnessing niche and gains from trade, invisibility of problems/ potentials to outsiders</li> </ul>
b) Imperative (appropriate responses, adaptation approaches to reduce risk and vulnerability) with significant role for group action and CPRs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primacy of local resource centred, diversified production/consumption activities fitting to spatial and temporal opportunities and constraints (features of resource base)</li> <li>• Local regeneration of resources, protection, recycling regulated use (e.g. CPRs)</li> <li>• Nature and scale of operations as permitted by the degree of accessibility/ mobility</li> </ul>

## Fragility and Marginality

<p>a) Manifestations and implications (i.e. vulnerability and poverty promoting circumstances)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large parts of resources vulnerable to rapid degradation, unsuited to intensification and use of costly inputs; low carrying capacity</li> <li>• Limited, low productivity, high risk production options; little surplus generation or reinvestment and subsistence orientation preventing high cost-high productivity options including for resource upgrading</li> <li>• Socio-political-marginality of communities and their disregard by 'mainstream' societies</li> </ul>
<p>b) Imperatives (i.e., appropriate responses, adaptation approaches to protect and use resource) where CPRs play role important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on low intensity, high stability in resource use (e.g. balancing cropping-grazing, annual-perennial complementarity)</li> <li>• Diversification involving a mix of high and low intensity uses of land, a mix of production and conservation measures</li> <li>• Local regeneration of resources, recycling, regulated use, dependence on nature's regenerative processes and collective regulatory measures supporting institutions (including CPRs)</li> </ul>

<b>Diversity &amp; Niche</b>	
a) Manifestations and implications (i.e. potential for sustenance and growth supporting activities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basis for spatially and temporally diversified and interlinked activities conducive to sustainability and security, strong location specificity of production and consumption activities limiting the scope for large-scale operation</li> <li>• Potential for products, services, activities with comparative advantages; (difficult to harness without large investment)</li> </ul>
b) Imperatives (i.e., appropriate responses, adaptation approaches to harness niche including through collective action and focus on low weight/ volume-high value products for market)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small-scale, interlinked, diversified production/consumption activities differentiated temporally and spatially for fuller use of environment</li> <li>• Need diversified and decentralized interventions to match diversity</li> <li>• Transhumance, CPRs, niche-based petty trading etc. as means to harness diversity</li> </ul>

Source: Table adapted from Jodha (1997) and based on evidence and inferences from over 60 studies referred to by Jodha and Shrestha (1994)

1. Mountain specificities are products of bio-physical conditions and processes characterizing mountain areas, such as slope, attitude, terrain, geologic, edafic and biotic factors, climatic variables etc. along with the specific human responses/adaptation to all the above conditions. As general factors generating constraints and opportunities for human use, the degree of mountain specificities do show variations within mountain regions.

**Annex B: Factors and processes associated with community approaches and usage of natural resources (including CPRs) mountain areas under the traditional and the present systems**

Traditional Systems	Present Day Systems
<p><i>A. Basic objective circumstances:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Poor accessibility, isolation, semi-closeness: low extent and undependable external linkages and support: subsistence-oriented small population</li> <li>(ii) Diverse and fragile of NRB vulnerable to degradation with intensification</li> <li>(iii) Almost total or critical dependence on local, fragile, diverse natural resource base (NRB)</li> </ul> <p>Consequence: High collective concern for health and productivity of NRB (CPRs), as a source of security and sustenance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Enhanced physical, administrative and market integration of traditionally isolated, mountain areas/communities with the dominant mainstream systems at the latter's terms; increased population;</li> <li>(ii) Reduced critical dependence on local NRB (CPRs); diversification of sources of sustenance;</li> <li>(iii) High external demand, natural resource extraction</li> </ul> <p>Consequence: Reduced collective concern for local NRB; rise of individual resource extractive strategies</p>
<p><i>B. Key driving forces/factors generated by (A):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Sustenance strategies focused on local resources (e.g. CPRs);</li> <li>(ii) Sustenance-driven collective stake in protection and regeneration of NRB (CPRs);</li> <li>(iii) Close proximity and access-based functional knowledge/understanding of limitations and usability of NRB, inducing diversification;</li> <li>(iv) Local control of local resources/decisions; little gap between decision-makers and resource users helping adaptations;</li> </ul> <p>Consequence: Collective stake in NRB (CPRs) supported by local control and functional knowledge of NRB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) External linkage-based diversification of sources of sustenance (welfare, relief, trade, production etc.);</li> <li>(ii) Disintegration of collective stake in NRB (CPRs);</li> <li>(iii) Marginalisation of traditional knowledge, and imposition of generalized solutions from above;</li> <li>(iv) The state imposed legal, administrative, fiscal measures displacing local controls/decisions about local NRB/CPRs, wider gap between decision-makers and local resource users</li> </ul> <p>Consequence: Loss of collective stake and local control over NRB (e.g. CPRs); resource users respond in a 'reactive' mode</p>

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Traditional Systems	Present Day Systems
<p><i>C. Social responses to (B)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Evolution, adoption of resource use systems (including CPRs) and folk technologies promoting diversification, resource protection, regeneration, recycling, etc.; covering forest, pasture, cropland and their organic links;</li> <li>(ii) Resource use regulations, rationing measures;</li> <li>(iii) Formal/informal institutional mechanisms/group action to enforce the above.</li> </ul> <p>Consequence: Effective social adaptation to NRB, balancing production and protection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Extension of externally evolved, generalized technological/institutional interventions (including for CPRs); disregarding local concerns/experiences and traditional arrangements; promoting sectoral fragmentation;</li> <li>(ii) Emphasis on supply-side issues ignoring management of demand pressure;</li> <li>(iii) Formal, rarely enforced measures.</li> </ul> <p>Consequence: Natural resources (e.g. CPRs) over-extracted as open access resources</p>
<p><i>D. End results</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Nature-friendly management systems;</li> <li>(ii) Evolved and enforced by local communities;</li> <li>(iii) Facilitated by close functional knowledge and community control over local resources and local affairs.</li> </ul> <p>Consequences: 'Resource-protective/regenerative' social system-ecosystem links</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Over-extractive resource use systems, driven by uncontrolled external market demands and internal population-driven demands;</li> <li>(ii) Externally conceived, ineffective and un-enforceable interventions for protection of NRB;</li> <li>(iii) Little investment and technology input in NRB.</li> </ul> <p>Consequence: Rapid degradation of fragile NRB/CPRs; nature pleads not guilty; so does the rural poor</p>

*Source:* Adapted from: Jodha (1998). Based on evidence and inferences from over 60 studies referred to by Jodha and Shrestha (1994).