

[KNOWING NATURE: The Changing Foundations of Environmental Knowledge](#)

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

May 25, 2017 to May 27, 2017

Location:

China

Subject Fields:

Chinese History / Studies, Environmental History / Studies, Geography, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, World History / Studies

An international conference to be held in Beijing,
Renmin University of China,
25-27 May 2017

Co-Sponsored by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, and the Center for Ecological History, Renmin University of China, Beijing, with the collaboration of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin

Who knows nature best? Over the past 10,000 years competing communities of knowledge have evolved, each with formalized standards and processes. Peasants have competed against craftsmen, religious leaders, and urban experts. In modern societies based on science and technology, the claims to knowledge have changed even more dramatically, although scientific knowledge still competes with other bodies of knowledge. And always, who gets to define knowledge can have profound consequences for the natural world.

For our conference we seek proposals that examine what has been seen and understood as measurable, speculative, safe or unsafe and how scale (of landscapes, research projects etc.) can affect knowledge production. We welcome proposals on the rise of new fields of knowledge about nature and the environment and their search for disciplinary and institutional stability. Our conference will seek to move beyond simple dichotomies (modernity vs. tradition, science vs. religion, folk wisdom vs. urban ignorance), to develop comparisons that cross national boundaries, and to bring neglected parts of the globe and time into view.

Our keynote speaker will be Dagmar Schäfer, managing director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, and author of *The Crafting of the 10,000 Things: Knowledge and Technology in Seventeenth-Century China* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).

This conference is open to all ranks of scholars, from graduate students to senior professors. Paper proposals should be one-page long (or about 300 words) and include a title and a one- or two-page CV.

Send proposals to conference secretary Agnes Kneitz, Assistant Professor of History at Renmin University at this address: [a.kneitz\[at\]ruc.edu.cn](mailto:a.kneitz@ruc.edu.cn). The deadline for consideration is 1 January 2017.

Successful proposals will be announced around 1 February, and complete drafts of papers (minimum of 5,000 words in English or the equivalent in Chinese characters) will be required by 1 May 2017. All papers will be circulated to the participants in advance and will not be orally presented during the conference.

The members of the selection committee include Mingfang Xia, Director of the Center for Ecological History and Senior Professor in the School of History, Renmin University of China; Helmuth Trischler, Head of Research at the Deutsches Museum, Munich, and Co-Director of the Rachel Carson Center; and Donald Worster, Hall Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus, University of Kansas, and Distinguished Foreign Expert, Renmin University.

The organizing chairperson for the conference is Professor Shen Hou, Deputy Director of the Center for Ecological History and Associate Professor of history at Renmin University.

Travel expenses for scholars living outside of China will be reimbursed by the Rachel Carson Center. Scholars living within China should depend on their own universities for covering travel expenses. For all participants, hotel accommodations for four nights and all meals will be covered by Renmin University of China.

Following the conference we will organize a group field trip to the Great Wall as a site and symbol of what Joseph Needham called "science and civilization in China."

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