CFP: Tracing the Anthropocene: Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet Earth Sciences, ASEEES 13-14 October 2022

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Call for panel papers for the 54th ASEEES Annual Convention 2022, October 13-14, 2022 (virtual convention) "Precarity in Eastern Europe and Eurasia" (convention theme) DEADLINE EXTENDED

Panel organisers:

Katja Doose, Christine Bichsel, and Esther Blokbergen (University of Fribourg)

The Earth sciences have gained increasing importance and weight in scientific debates on climate change over the last decades, as they shed light on the physical indicators of the environmental changes occurring on a global scale. Earth sciences also held a prominent position in the scientific canon of the Soviet Union, which built on a long tradition of Imperial Russian and early Soviet research in these disciplines. For many years, historians have mainly researched them in the context of the Cold War and the impact of military patronage on the sciences (Doel et al. 2016). Like elsewhere, Russian and Soviet Earth sciences have also played an important role in producing knowledge about the environment and human-nature relations; however, unless they managed to make their research useful for military or economic concerns, departments and scientists often received limited support from the government, and worked in precarious conditions. This proved particularly true after 1991, with the disappearance of funding and the negligence of environmental monitoring activities. Recently, scholars have explored the works of selected Russian and Soviet scientists for their influence on the idea of the Anthropocene (Rispoli 2014), or traced their roles in the history of soil sciences (Elie 2015), permafrost studies (Chu 2020), and climate sciences (Doose 2021; Oldfield 2018). These works contend that particular concepts of human-nature relations from the Russian and Soviet sciences have had significant influence on Earth system thinking. However, to date, existing scholarship on the various disciplines within Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet Earth sciences remains largely disconnected from each other.
This panel (most likely two panels) will thus examine in depth the history of Earth sciences in Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet contexts and tie together the various disciplines, to understand how their different researches on the environment fed back on each other. It will focus on how scientists observed and interpreted environmental changes in different disciplines and geographical places, how their research designs and results were shaped by specific ideas of human agency and social organisation, and, importantly, how their scholarship was defined by institutional arrangements and larger political frameworks.

We welcome papers which engage critically with the history of Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet Earth sciences, including but not limited to the following themes:

- Historical trajectories of individual disciplines such as geology, soil science, hydrology, glaciology, geophysics and climate science: political, social, economical contexts
- Earth sciences and the Soviet science apparatus: improvising and doing research in precarious scientific conditions
- A genealogy of ideas: Earth sciences and the understanding of Earth's "spheres"
- History of knowledge production on the Anthropocene within the Earth sciences: explanations of global environmental change and their intellectual (and political) genesis
- Cybernetics and Soviet Earth science

We aim to produce a peer-reviewed special issue from these sessions.

Please note that the panel will take place virtually on the platform offered by the conference organisers.

Please email the following details to Katja Doose (katja.doose@unifr.ch) and Christine Bichsel (christine.bichsel@unifr.ch) by 10 March 2022:

- title
- abstract of your paper (max. 250 words)
- a short bio
- contact information (name, affiliation, email address)

References


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