

Call for Papers

Climate Change Adaptation: Historical Lessons from Eurasia

Adapting to climate change and climate extremes in historical perspective

27 February 2025 – 1 March 2025, [on site](#)

Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO)

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As meeting the 1.5-degree benchmark for limiting the effects of climate change becomes increasingly implausible, the technological and social discussion is moving towards adaptation. Adaptation features prominently in the most recent synthesis report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), and formed a key theme at the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 28). There are, however, also gaps and barriers in adaptation policies, mostly caused by insufficient funding and inadequate technology in addition to the complex character of the climate change process. Philipp Staab (2022) argues that this gradual shift from mitigation to adaptation illustrates a greater shift from (self-)development to (self-)preservation in society, opposing the modernist agenda of democratization, emancipation, and individualization. This recent reappraisal of adaptation as policy and concept prompts the question: how and what can contemporary discussion learn from historical experience? As sociologists like Talcott Parsons have argued, adaptation is a structural means of human behavior and social order. This also holds true for the adaptation to changing environmental conditions, both in short- and long-term perspective.

The regions and countries of the former Soviet and Russian empires promise to be particularly rewarding case studies in this respect, considering the area's marked climatic zonal shifts and the prevalence of extreme weather and climate events. Furthermore, the area encompasses a range of competing adaptation approaches and traditions including, for example, the large-scale technocratic focus of Soviet and Russian managerialism, the more nuanced, local level adaptations at the national, regional, and local levels, and the enduring, lived adaptations of indigenous peoples. Its history also embodies the ambiguity and dialectics of adaptation, namely the human adaptation to environmental conditions and the adaptation of environmental conditions to human needs.

This conference calls for the historical lessons we can learn from these policies of adaptation from the 18th to 21st century. It invites scholars from various disciplines, including historiography, geography, literary and cultural studies, anthropology, and the natural sciences, to present small- and large-scale case studies on adaptation, its discursive implications and technological practicability in Eastern Europe and the former territories of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

Contributions may address, among others, the following issues:

- the cultural imaginary of climate change adaptation; tropes and narratives of adaptation; generic conventions (science-fiction, utopia/dystopia etc.)
- (socialist) policies of climate change adaptation (climate engineering, nature protection etc.);
- technological, political, moral and social constraints of adaptation;
- strategies of activating adaptive capacities;
- adaptation strategies in specific sectors (agriculture, urban planning), ecoregions or environments
- national and transnational approaches to climate challenge and adaptation
- local and indigenous strategies of adapting to changing climates; protection against and preparedness for extreme climate conditions; tools of adaptation
- personal, collective, institutional and infrastructural resources that allow individuals, groups or systems to respond and adapt to climate change
- limits and risks of adaptation; historical fallacies and their reasons

Please submit your abstract (up to 300 words), a short CV (1-2 sides of A4) and your contact details to Julia Herzberg (julia.herzberg@leibniz-gwzo.de) and/or Clemens Günther (clemens.guenther@fu-berlin.de) by **30 June 2024**. We might be able to cover costs for travel and accommodation if needed.

The conference is organised by Julia Herzberg, Mika Perkiömäki, Jonathan Oldfield, Clemens Günther and Andrei Vinogradov.

Literature

Block, Rachel; Ebinger, Jane; Fay, Marianne (eds.). 2010. *Adapting to Climate Change in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. Washington.

Chavez-Rodriguez, Libertad; Klepp, Silja (eds.). 2018. *A critical approach to climate change adaptation: discourses, policies and practices*. Boca Raton.

IPCC, 2023: Sections. In: *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 35–115, doi: 10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647

McQuillen, Colleen. 2018. Human adaptation in late-Soviet environmental science fiction. In McQuillen, Colleen. & Vaingurt, Julia, eds. *The human reimaged: Posthumanism in Russia*, 99–113. Boston.

Staab, Philipp. 2022. *Anpassung. Leitmotiv der nächsten Gesellschaft*. Berlin.

Tennberg, Monica. 2012. *Governing the Uncertain: Adaptation and Climate in Russia and Finland*. Heidelberg/London/New York.