

Environmental history *in* Russia and *about* Russia

There are two distinct flows of publications in the field of Russian environmental history: environmental history *in* Russia and environmental history *about* Russia. The peculiarities of Russian environmental history are connected to the fact that although there are positive developments of the field in Russia, interest from outside is still more pronounced. On the other hand, Russian scholars in this small field are more international than in established subfields of history. The consequences of this situation are a growing number of publications in English compared to publications in Russian (English is the most popular language for publications in the field, even for environmental historians working in Russia).¹

Environmental history in Russia is poorly institutionalised. The very small Center for Environmental and Technological History at the European University at St. Petersburg had been the main headquarters from its foundation in 2002 until its closure in 2015. In 2016 this Center found new life as the Laboratory for Environmental and Technological History at the Center for Historical Research of the St. Petersburg School for Social Sciences and Humanities within the leading Russian university, the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE SPb) <http://sh.spb.hse.ru/en/chr/eth/>. Its members are the representatives of Russia for ESEH, participate in international projects, and produce publications in both English and Russian. They are also popularising environmental history in Russia, for instance by publishing a collection of Russian translations of the best environmental history that, along with a recent translation of Joachim Radkau's book, include a few works that introduce environmental history to the Russian audience.²

The main directions of research in the Laboratory are:

- environmental and technological history of natural resources, mainly history of water, forests,³ fisheries⁴ and mining;

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1. For a bibliography of nearly 500 items in English on Russian environmental history, see: https://www.zotero.org/groups/271874/russian_environmental_history.
 2. D.A. Alexandrov, F.-J. Bruggemeier, J. Lajus (eds.), *Chelovek i priroda: ekologicheskaja istoriia* (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii universitet v St. Peterburge, Aleteia, 2008); J. Radkau, '*Priroda i vlast': Istoriia okruzhaiuschei sredy* (Moscow: Vysshiaia shkola ekonomiki, 2014).
 3. E. A. Kochetkova, 'Industry and Forests: Alternative raw materials in the Soviet forestry industry from the mid-1950s to the 1960s', *Environment and History* (forthcoming).
 4. J.A. Lajus and D.L. Lajus, (eds.), *More nashe pole: Kolichestvennye dannye o rybnnykh promyslakh Belogo i Barentseva morei, 18 – nachalo 20 v* (St. Petersburg: European University at St. Petersburg, 2010); J. Lajus, A. Kraikovski, D. Lajus, 'Coastal Fisheries in the Eastern

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- cultural history of rivers;⁵
- history of the Arctic (in cooperation with historians from Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm);⁶
- interrelations of natural and cultural heritage.

Environmental history is taught at undergraduate and graduate levels at HSE SPb, especially at the international Master's Programme, 'Usable Pasts': <https://spb.hse.ru/en/ma/apphist/>.

Several conferences and ESEH Summer Schools on history of natural resources have been organised in Russia during the last five years in cooperation with the Rachel Carson Center (RCC), including a major project on Russian environmental history funded by The Leverhulme Trust (leader David Moon),⁷ Tensions of Europe Network, etc.⁸ From these collaborative efforts a new collective book is being planned that was supported by RCC with short fellowships for its editors (Catherine Evtuhov, David Moon and Julia Lajus).⁹

Other places in Russia where research, teaching and conferences in environmental history have taken place include the Russian State University

Baltic Sea (Gulf of Finland) and Its Basin from the 15th to the Early 20th Centuries', *PLOS One* 8,10 (2013); e77059 DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0077059](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0077059).

5. A. Kraikovski and J. Lajus, 'The Neva as a Metropolitan River of Russia: Environment, Economy and Culture', in T. Tvedt and R. Coopey (eds.), *A History of Water. Series 2, V. 2, Rivers and Society: From Early Civilizations to Modern Times* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 339–364.
6. J. Lajus, 'Colonization of the Russian North: A Frozen Frontier', in Ch. Folke-Ax, et al. (eds.), *Cultivating the Colony: Colonial States and their Environmental Legacies* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2011): 164–190; J. Lajus, 'In search for instructive models: The Russian state at a crossroads to conquering the North', in D. Jorgensen and S. Sorlin (eds.), *Northscapes: History, Technology, and the Making of Northern Environments* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013): 110–136.
7. A network of scholars from Russian, British, and American universities participated in a three-year project (2013–16), 'Exploring Russia's Environmental History and Natural Resources', funded by the Leverhulme Trust: <https://www.york.ac.uk/history/research/majorprojects/russiasenvironmentalhistory/>; K. Evtukhov, E/A/ Kochetkova, J.A. Lajus, D. Moon, *Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiis, 'Prirodnye resursy, landshafty i klimat v istorii Rossii i sopredelnykh stran', posviaschennaia 200-letiiu akademika A.F. Middendorfa, Istoriko-biologicheskie issledovaniia* 8,2 (2016): 160–168.
8. Materials presented at one of the conferences were published in J. Oldfield, J. Lajus and Denis J.B. Shaw, 'Conceptualizing and Utilizing the Natural Environment: Critical Reflections from Imperial and Soviet Russia', *Slavonic and East European Review* 93,1 (January 2015): 1–15.
9. The book should be prepared during 2018. Discussion on the directions of this book took place at ESEH 2017 in Zagreb.

for the Humanities in Moscow (RGGU),¹⁰ Kazan State University,¹¹ Surgut¹² and Cherepovets Pedagogical Universities and the Institute for the History of Science and Technology of the Russian Academy of Sciences.¹³

Russian environmental history has also become more visible within publications of global history. Although narratives of destruction and degradation of nature are still recognisable in this scholarship,¹⁴ other recent overviews of the field¹⁵ pay more attention to new approaches in Russian environmental history that focus on the complex relations between people and nature in particular natural zones (steppe, forest, the Arctic).¹⁶ The importance of local

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10. V. I. Durnovtsev, 'Na putiakh k ekologicheskoi istorii Rossii (istoriograficheskie nabliudeniia)', in M.F. Rumiantseva et al., (eds.), *Istoricheskaia geografiia: prostranstvo cheloveka vs. chelovek v prostranstve* (Moscow: RGGU, 2011): 45–58.
 11. *Ekologicheskaiia istoriia v Rossii: etapy stanovleniia i perspektivnye napravleniia issledovaniia. Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, g. Elabuga (13–15 noiabria 2014)* (Elabuga: Izdatelstvo Elabuzhskogo instituta KFU, 2014).
 12. E. Gololobov, *Chelovek i priroda na Ob'-Irtyshtskom Severe. Istoricheskie korni sovremennykh ekologicheskikh problem* (Khanty-Mansiisk, 2009).
 13. J. Lajus, 'Istoriia nauki i ekologicheskaiia istoriia: oblasti peresecheniia distsiplin i "sluchai Dokuchaeva"', *Voprosy istorii estestvoznaniia i tekhniki* 3 (2009): 43–47; A. A. Fedotova, 'The origins of a Russian Chernozem soil (Black Earth): Franz Josef Ruprecht's 'Geobotanical Researches into the Chernozem' of 1866', *Environment and History* 16 (2010): 271–293; M. Loskutova and A. Fedotova, *Stanovlenie prikladnykh biologicheskikh issledovaniia v Rossii: Vzaimodeistvie nauki i praktiki v 19 – nachale 20 veka. Istoricheskie ocherki* (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoria, 2014).
 14. D. R. Weiner, 'The Predatory Tribute-Taking State: A framework for understanding Russian environmental history', in J. McNeill and A. Roe (eds.), *Global Environmental History: An Introductory Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013): 283–319; P. Josephson, N. Dronin, et al., *Environmental History of Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
 15. J. Oldfield, J. Lajus and Denis J.B. Shaw, 'Conceptualizing and Utilizing the Natural Environment: Critical Reflections from Imperial and Soviet Russia', *Slavonic and East European Review* 93,1 (January 2015): 1–15; B. Bonhomme, 'Writing the Environmental History of the World's Largest State: Four Decades of Scholarship on Russia and the USSR', *Global Environment* 12 (2013): 12–37; R. Dills, 'Forest and Grassland: Recent Trends in Russian Environmental History', *Global Environment* 12 (2013): 39–61; S. Brain, 'Environmental History of the Soviet Union', in J. R. McNeill and E. C. S. Mauldin (eds.), *A Companion to Global Environmental History* (Chichester: UK, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012): 222–243.
 16. D. Moon, *The Plough that Broke the Steppes: Agriculture and Environment on Russia's Grasslands, 1700–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); J. Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and Writing the Nineteenth-Century Forest* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); C. Pey-Yi, 'Mapping Permafrost Country: Creating an Environmental Object in the Soviet Union, 1920s–1940s', *Environmental History* 20,3 (2015): 396–421; A. Bruno, *The Nature of Soviet Power: An Arctic Environmental History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

environmental history is also growing.¹⁷ In addition, there is marked interest toward history of environmental thought.¹⁸

Most importantly, Russian environmental history is entering new territories: Eurasian history,¹⁹ history of BRICS countries,²⁰ Pacific history,²¹ environmental history of dictatorships,²² comparative studies.²³ Subjects that still need more attention are climate, marine environment, urban spaces and human–animal relations, among others. Environmental humanities are almost unknown in Russia so far, and that fact is weakening more profound discussions of the past, present and future of human–nature relations.

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17. C. Evtukhov, *Portrait of a Russian Province: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).
 18. J. D. Oldfield and D. J. B. Shaw, *The Development of Russian Environmental Thought: Scientific and Geographical Perspectives on the Natural Environment* (London: Routledge, 2016).
 19. N. Breyfogle, (ed.), *Eurasian Environments: Nature and Ecology in Imperial Russian and Soviet History* (forthcoming).
 20. S. Ravi Rajan and Lise Sedrez, (eds.), *The Great Convergence: An Environmental History of Brics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) (forthcoming).
 21. R. Jones, *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific's Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741–1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
 22. See <https://thenednetwork.wordpress.com/>
 23. One recent example of comparative research is D. Moon, 'The Grasslands of North America and Russia', in J. R. McNeill and E. C. S. Mauldin (eds.), *A Companion to Global Environmental History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012): 247–262.