Call for Papers

Workshop

“Resources in Use. Visions and Practices in Late Imperial Russia and the Early Soviet Union”

October 20–21, 2022

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

Resources embody economic as well as social and cultural values. They are exploited, produced and commodified in order to meet human demands. At the nexus of governmental visions and local participation, resources link economic aspects (markets, currencies, labor) to ecological issues. In historiography, questions of resource use have referred to the modification of raw materials and land through human agency in order to serve common and individual interests. Furthermore, studies have focused on services and employment by examining the changing understanding of human resources. Since the 19th century in particular, technological innovations have accelerated the development of a rational use of resources associated with promises of a brighter future. By assuming a global perspective, historical research has unveiled the complex transregional entanglements of resource use and distribution which highlight disparities and uneven dependencies.

In late imperial Russia and the early Soviet Union, the use of resources was embedded in aspirations of economic development and civilizing missions, as well as in attempts to enforce and establish centralized control over imperial peripheries. With the advent of the age of reforms in the 1860s, efforts directed at resource use were intertwined with ambitious endeavors to increase social participation and self-governance. While this has been the subject of local and regional studies, research has repeatedly highlighted the global connections of the Russian and Soviet economy by focusing on grain export, cotton growing, and the role of port cities. Whereas resources were indeed at the core of imperial expansion and global economy, more research is needed to understand how these processes were actually tied together in different places. Therefore, we want to examine how the use and distribution of resources was envisioned and translated into local practices.

In a publication-oriented workshop, we want to develop new perspectives on resource use and distribution in late imperial Russia while exploring (dis-)continuities in the early Soviet Union. We will focus on the interplay between state planning and processes unfolding on the ground in order to locate imperial and global entanglements of resource policies and practices: How did different groups of agents define and use resources? How did they interact with each other? How did social reforms facilitate the common use of resources and the coordination of their distribution? Who was limited from accessing resources and how did this contribute to social inequalities?
We invite researchers from all disciplines to submit proposals that deal with visions and practices of resource development, transfer, use, conversion, exploitation, and conservation in the period from late imperial Russia to the early Soviet Union. Papers may address – but must not be limited to – the following topics:

- Processes of resource exploitation, allocation, production, and commodification
- Conceptualization and exchange of knowledge on resource use
- Networks coordinating resource use in local, (trans-)national and global contexts
- Resources as (private and public) property before and after 1917
- Land policies and labor distribution
- Technological advancement and technologies in use
- Co-optation, coercion, and control in colonial and imperial settings
- Social inequality and conflict over access to resources
- Resource scarcity and changing views on sustainability
- Ecological impacts of resource use

Please submit an abstract of 250 words as well as a short bio by April 15, 2022. You will be notified by mid-May regarding acceptance. Drafts of papers in length of around 4,000 words are expected by September 20, 2022; these will be pre-circulated among the participants in preparation for the October workshop.

Organizers: Corinne Geering (GWZO), Immo Rebitschek (University of Jena), Timm Schönfelder (GWZO); contact us at: timm.schoenfelder@leibniz-gwzo.de