

*The All-Russian scientific conference with international participation
'Environmental History of Russia: The local measurements and perspectives
of integral studies'*

On 5–7th October 2017, the All-Russian scientific conference with international participation 'Environmental History of Russia: The local measurements and perspectives of integral studies' took place at Cherepovets State University. Among the hosts of the conference were Cherepovets State University and its Interdisciplinary Center 'Sociopolis-35', Kazan Federal University, Surgut State Pedagogical University and Russian Society for Intellectual History (Cherepovets Local Department). The project of the conference was supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) (grant of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences No. 17-01-14041).

The conference received applications from Russian scientists representing 15 cities of the Russian Federation (Moscow, St Petersburg, Surgut, Ekaterinburg, Irkutsk, Ivanovo, Kaluga, Novokuznetsk, Samara, Simferopol, Tambov etc.) as well as applications from foreign researchers (the United Kingdom, China, Ukraine and Germany). The scientific novelty of the conference lies in the attempt to discuss the specifics of environmental history (literally: 'ecological history') with the participation of representatives of both socio-humanitarian knowledge and natural sciences. Five doctors of historical sciences, one doctor of philosophical sciences, one doctor of psychological sciences, fourteen candidates of historical sciences, three candidates of biological sciences and one candidate of sociological and philological sciences participated in the conference.

The organizing committee of the conference, outlining its program, proceeded from the idea that currently, in the face of aggravation of environmental problems, the focus of researchers' attention shifted towards studying the environmental aspects of the society in preceding historical epochs. The identification of environmental history as an independent trend of historical sciences in the USA and Europe in the 1970s played an important role in this process.

Several regional schools and individual researchers represent environmental history in Russia; however, in most cases, they only work in narrow and very specific fields. Over the past few decades, environmental historians have been studying the main problems of interaction between nature and society in specific regions of the Russian Empire and the USSR and formed their own research methods or tested those already available in modern historical science. At the same time, due to the localization of scientific schools working in this direction in Northwest Russia, the Ur-

als, the Volga region and Siberia, there are many gaps and ‘blank pages’ in the Russian environmental history. The existing conditions only brought up to date the topic of the conference, which discussed the specifics and summarized the results of the regional studies, and outlined the way forward for the environmental history in Russia.

The scientists from leading scientific and educational centers of Russia, specializing in the study of environmental history, the history of human-nature relations and the phenomenon of industrial cities presented their reports at the conference. Among these universities were the Higher School of Economics (HSE), the Russian State University for the Humanities, Surgut State Pedagogical University, The S.I. Vavilov Institute for the History of Science and Technology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IHST), Kazan Federal University, Ivanovo State University, Pushkin Leningrad State University, Derzhavin Tambov State University, Siberian State Industrial University, Lomonosov Moscow State University and others.

The conference included the following sections: ‘Humans and environment: The history of scientific knowledge’; ‘The environment and management practices used by the population of the Russian Empire and the USSR’; ‘Environmental protection in the Russian Federation’; ‘Environmental history of the urban environment and industrial development of the Russian Empire, the USSR and the Russian Federation’ and ‘The natural environment in Russian culture and education’.

At the plenary session of the conference, Y. A. Laius, Candidate of Historical Sciences and Leading Researcher at the Laboratory for Environmental and Technological History of the Higher School of Economics (HSE, St Petersburg Local Department), presented a conceptional report on the history of natural resources being part of the environmental history. Based on the results of the previous years, Y. A. Laius demonstrated the research potential in this area of environmental history, provoking numerous questions and a lively discussion. Due to the great importance of the ideas expressed by Y.A. Laius, the hosts of the conference suggested that she should not limit herself to the format of these talk abstracts, but rather prepare a detailed article for the dedicated issue of the online journal ‘Historia provinciae – the journal of regional history’. Bao Maohong, Professor of Peking University (China) also devoted his report to the research potential of environmental history in the context of world history. The report was presented in absenta. The special ‘track’ of the conference related to the scientific knowledge of the environment was initiated by the report (The report was presented in absenta) submitted by David Moon, Professor at University of York (the United Kingdom), as an introduction to the topic. He analyzed the transfer of ideas of Russian scientists supervised by V.V. Dokuchaev in the field of soil science, who already internationally presented his innovative concept of genetic pedology in the 1870s and 1880s. Various articles in foreign languages, exhibits presented at different world exhibitions, reports of Russian soil scientists at in-

ternational conferences, international visits of Russian scientists working in the field of pedology and the description of their work matching that of foreign scientists served as ‘channels’ for such knowledge transfer. David Moon concluded that Europe recognized the ideas of Russian soil scientists earlier than the United States, where, despite attempts to spread innovations, scientists faced obstacles from various local institutions.

Benjamin Beuerle, an employee of the German Historical Institute in Moscow, presented preliminary results of his research on the reaction of the media and public organizations of the Far East towards climate change. A certain ‘time window’ already allows us to see the problem in dynamics; however, the implementation is at the preliminary stage only, so this prevented the author from preparing a proper scientific publication.

V.I. Durnovtsev, Doctor of Historical Sciences and Head of the Department of Source Studies of the Moscow State Institute for History and Archives of the Russian State University for the Humanities, presented an overview of educational programs on environmental history in the United States, Western Europe and Russia. These include various master's programs on the history of environmental protection in several foreign universities and in Russia, tailor-made development programs as well as training and further training of scientific and management personnel. V.I. Durnovtsev noted that the attention of the world public and the authorities to the problems of environmental protection and rational use of natural resources led to the search for historical reasons of the current environmental crisis. The public and political interests matched the trends in the development of natural and social / humanitarian sciences, clearly aiming at their mutual enrichment, foremost in terms of research methods. V.I. Durnovtsev also pointed out that environmental history has contributed to the development of interdisciplinary approaches in the scientific research. Scientists who start to be engaged in environmental history mostly come from other areas of science; whereas experts in environmental history also need to have knowledge in the fields of biology, geology, geophysics, botany, geography, anthropology and the history of science. One of the objectives of such an educational practice is to overcome the traditional divides between the natural and human sciences.

E.I. Gololobov, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of the Department of Social Disciplines and Humanities, and pro-Rector for Research of Surgut State Pedagogical University, also being head of the Surgut school of environmental history, summarized the results and determined the prospects for further research in the field of environmental history in the north of Siberia. Thus, E. I. Gololobov believes that various issues in the history of nature management in Siberia were considered about the 19th and early 20th century or to the second half of the 20th century. Geographically, these studies are mostly devoted to regions with grain economy and industry. The northern territories of Siberia remained in this respect least-studied. The expansion of

time and geographical scope of regional studies on the environmental history of Siberia, according to Gololobov, is an important task towards institutionalization of this trend in the national historical science.

O.Y. Solodyankina, Doctor of Historical Sciences and Professor at the Department of History and Philosophy of Cherepovets State University, made a speech on ‘Discourse ‘man-animals’ in the context of studying history in the Russian Empire: Results and perspectives’. She suggested the research topics where the chain of human relations also include animals, on an equal footing, if this could ‘trigger off’ new researches in the context of everyday-life history.

Later, the conference participants began working in the format of meetings within conference sections. As part of the section ‘Humans and environment: The history of scientific knowledge’, the speeches of representatives working in the field of natural sciences attracted immense interest. Among these was N.B. Afanasyeva, Candidate of Biological Sciences and Head of the Department of Biology at Cherepovets State University, who spoke about the history of botanical studies of the Belozersk-Kirillov ridges. A. A. Fedotova, Candidate of Biological Sciences and Leading Research Associate of The S.I. Vavilov Institute for the History of Science and Technology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IHST), and A.V. Kupriyanova, Candidate of Biological Sciences and Associate Professor at the Higher School of Economics (HSE), presented their report on ‘Insecticides and extermination of locusts in the North Caucasus in the first half of the 1910s’. The participants of the conference could witness the differences in the approaches of the representatives of social and humanitarian knowledge, although each approach allows achieving certain results, and the greatest interest lies in the possible synthesis of both approaches. The conference participants discussed the denotations and connotations of the terms ‘historical environment’ (literal translation from Russian: ‘historical ecology’) and ‘environmental history’ (literal translation from Russian: ‘ecological history’) and concluded that the second alternative is more appropriate for the historical studies. The discussion also arose when N.Y. Poddubnaya, Candidate of Biological Sciences and Associate Professor of the Department of Biology at Cherepovets State University, doubted the correctness of the term ‘ecological history’ chosen for the scientific focus area of the conference, as abroad, in this case the expression ‘environmental history’ would be used.

Within the framework of the conference, presentations of scientific centers, programs, websites and publications on environmental and historical research were considered. Among the presenters were Y.A. Laius (the Laboratory for Environmental and Technological History of the Higher School of Economics (HSE)), E.I. Gololobov (Surgut State Pedagogical University), O.Y. Solodyankina (online journal ‘Historia provinciae – the journal of regional history’), the Interdisciplinary Center of Cherepovets State University ‘Sociopolis-35’), A.V. Vinogradov (scientific website

‘Environmental History’ (www.environmentalhistory.ru), N.S. Tsintsadze (Derzhavin Tambov State University), V.I. Durnovtsev (Russian State University for the Humanities), M.Y. Timofeev (online newspaper ‘Labyrinth: The Journal of Social and Humanitarian Studies’).

As part of the section ‘The environment and management practices used by the population of the Russian Empire and the USSR’, N.V. Alekseeva, Candidate of Historical Sciences and Associate Professor of the Department of History and Philosophy at Cherepovets State University, spoke about ecological consciousness of a person in the pre-industrial society. She noted their integration with nature and the inseparable connection of their physical labor with the spiritual folk culture. A.V. Vsevolodov, Senior Research Fellow at Cherepovets Museum Association and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Public Relations, Journalism and Advertising of Cherepovets State University, spoke of another aspect of labor. He argued that working the land and the natural environment as the context of this work would be, remained one of the natural foundations of life for the northern rural clergy in the second half of the 19th century. The perception of natural environment and an economic system common for the clergy, had distinct differences that deserved further study. N. S. Tsintsadze, Candidate of Historical Sciences and Associate Professor of the Department of Theory and History of the State and Law at Derzhavin Tambov State University, talked about her study based on personal sources. She outlined the specifics of perception with regards to the social and human problems of a Soviet pre-war village in European Russia by creative and scientific intellectuals. She revealed certain eco-stories from memoirs, diaries and letters of intellectuals and added color to the study of the authorities / public perception of the social-nature aspects of the development of a pre-war village in European Russia by using valuable memoirs of the contemporaries. For N.S. Tsintsadze, it was obvious that those processes were complex, multidimensional, multivariate, not straightforward and ambiguously perceived by their contemporaries. Considering the above, it appears obvious that the task of modern researchers is to find and closely examine all those nuances.

Another live discussion of the reports arose in the section ‘Environmental protection in the Russian Federation (the second half of the 19th and early 20th century)’. Within the framework of this section, the Novokuznetsk researcher A.V. Shmygleva, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Head of the Department of Social Disciplines and Humanities of Siberian State Industrial University, analyzed the authorities / public relationship in the matter of environmental protection. She reported that the people's ecological movement of the 1970s and 1980s played an important role in the adoption and further amendments of environmental law and legislation, and in the establishment of environmental management authorities for the use of nature resources. It was due to the public pressure that in 1989 it was decided to establish the USSR State Committee for Nature Protection and to adopt the new law on environmental

protection. In article 14 of the said law, the state guaranteed to environmental and other public associations fulfilling the environmental functions, as well as for the Russian citizens, the opportunity to implement the rights granted to them in the matter of environmental protection in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation and constituent territories of the Russian Federation. Another Siberian researcher, Y.S. Mikheeva, Candidate of Historical Sciences and Deputy Dean for Educational Work of the Department of Social Disciplines and Humanities of Surgut State Pedagogical University, analyzed the role of regional environmental protection committees in implementing the main directives of the state environmental policy in the north of Western Siberia in the 1980s and 1990s. According to Mikheeva, it is worth paying attention to the conditions for the implementation of those activities. The formation of such committees as a single body for environmental protection faced certain organizational difficulties, lack of legal mechanisms to influence perpetrators of law, as well as the crisis in the economy that made it rather difficult to impose any fines and fees for the use of natural resources. The differences among the regions in terms of natural resources also played an important role. This led to the intensive industrial development of hydrocarbon deposits since the mid-20th century and, as a result, to a massive negative impact on the environment. Then, the state gave its priority to the implementation of economic interests, whilst the environmental consequences of industrial activities did not receive enough attention. Nevertheless, the committees were very active, and by the mid-1990s, based on the results of their activities, they developed a scientific document to work out further improvement of the legal mechanism of state's environmental policy, considering the peculiarities of the region. The external doctoral candidate of Lomonosov Moscow State University O. D. Blatova reconstructed the history of environmental referendums in Russia in 1993–2009. This rich historical material allowed Blatova to name the opposition of state and local governments observed in almost every case as the main reason for failures of environmental referendums. Often, formulating referendum issues in the first place, the initiators of the referendums found no help in neither strict compliance with the relevant legislation nor appealing to the judiciary.

Another section, 'Environmental history of the urban environment and industrial development of the Russian Empire, the USSR and the Russian Federation', featured speeches of researchers studying both the capital regions of Russia and the circumstances in the provinces. St Petersburg researcher G.Y. Afanasyev analyzed the subject-matter of ecology in the materials devoted to the environment in the periodicals of the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This led him to several conclusions. Preparation and implementation by the authorities of the large-scale projects of urban improvement and the need for the national legislative base with regards to preventing the adverse effects of industry (such as the laws 'On the sanitary protection of water, soil, and air' of 1913 and 'On the sanitary protection of air from smoke pol-

lution' of 1914) significantly increased the relevance of health and environmental problems in the capital press. Among these projects were the construction of sewer lines in Moscow in 1893–98, the construction of sewer lines and reconstruction of water distribution in St Petersburg in 1911–17. This also brought these problems into the circle of other social and political issues for both the urban society and the authorities. Discussion of the initiatives of the authorities in the press meant the urgent need to update the existing legal and regulatory basis and the creation of special permanent authorities to conduct the monitoring of the situation on site. On the other hand, this also meant lack of readiness for a constructive dialogue between the parties involved, expressed in the absence of a unified position of the authorities and the public both within their own structures and among each other, as well as lack of expressed public opinion from the expert-scientific community on the greatly deteriorated problem. Moscow researcher A.N. Davydov, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Head of the Department to work with researchers at Central State Archive of the city of Moscow, analyzed the ecological situation in Moscow in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century, as well as measures of urban management for its improvement. He noted that, until the mid-19th century, the pollution of the environment in Moscow and the suburbs, except for the areas along the banks of the Yauza River, was not yet that critical for Moscow citizens. The situation with the ecological situation in Moscow escalated during the second half of the 19th and early 20th century because of the increased anthropogenic pressure on the urban environment due to industrial revolution, industrialization and urbanization. The increase of biological pollution was directly associated with an intense increase in population of the city and the peculiarity of industrial pollution resulted mostly from the development of textile and related industries. Because of these, the problem of water pollution by both domestic and industrial wastewater became the most acute issue for Moscow.

The speech of A.B. Agafonova, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology and Social Technologies of Cherepovets State University, focused on the possibility of applying the actor-network theory for the environmental history research. According to Agafonova, the actor-network theory allows reconstructing the process of improving the sanitary conditions of the urban environment from the point of view of gradual involvement in this process of the authorities, social groups, institutions and citizens, as well as involvement of new technologies, theories and legal provisions. Therefore, within the framework of this theory, the formation of sanitary conditions in the urban environment of the Russian province looked like a complex process that in one way or another involved citizens, medicals, police and industrialists along with the city public administration. The non-social agents of transformation of the urban environment was also very important. This included legislative and administrative acts, intestinal infections that turned into epidemics, scientific and everyday

public perceptions of the impact of environmental conditions on public health, water supply, waste management and disposal technologies, transport networks, road infrastructure, the demographic factor, economic conditions and political events of the early 20th century. According to Agafonova, the interaction of all these factors is exactly what formed the sanitary environment of a Russian city.

Continuing the topic of the urban environmental history, A.V. Vinogradov, Candidate of Economic Sciences and Senior Lecturer of the Elabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University, talked about fighting the industrial pollution in late Imperial Russia in 1850–1917. The researcher proved that conflicts between different social groups that arose because of sanitary pollution did not have any ready solutions and took place alongside serious gaps in the law that were only filled with new legal regulations after Russian Revolution of 1917.

The section ‘Environmental history of the urban environment and industrial development of the Russian Empire, the USSR and the Russian Federation’ also covered the subject of urban ecology. K. D. Pokrovskaya, a student of the Higher School of Economics, analyzed the system of separate waste collection in the cities and working settlements of the USSR in 1948–56. R.S. Kolokolchikova, Doctor of Historical Sciences and Professor at the Department of History and Philosophy of Cherepovets State University, described the materials of the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI) on the ecological history of Russia in the 1960s and 1970s. The materials provided great research opportunities for the reconstruction of environmental history of Russia in the period of late socialism. G.A. Kovaleva, Candidate of Sociological Sciences and Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Technologies of Cherepovets State University, described the recreational areas of Cherepovets as an element of the infrastructure of an industrial city. M.Y. Timofeev, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor at the Department of Philosophy of Ivanovo State University, and Editor-in-Chief of the online newspaper ‘Labyrinth: The Journal of Social and Humanitarian Studies’ described the ecological factor of ‘branding’ for the industrial cities.

The conference ended with the section ‘The natural environment in Russian culture and education’.

The guests of the conference, who arrived from other universities, enjoyed the excursions to the museum of the metallurgy industry and to the museum ‘The Green Planet’ by PhosAgro, as well as a great sightseeing tour of Cherepovets.

Whilst summing up the results of the event, it was noted that the conference provoked live and fruitful discussions followed the speeches. Many students, undergraduates and graduates from the Faculties of History, Psychology and Biology of Cherepovets State University attended different sections of the conference. The event served as a perfect place for the exchange of ideas and experience in carrying out environmental and historical research at the local level, as a platform for discussing the

problems of integrated research in this area and of institutionalizing the environmental history in Russia. Participants of the conference outlined ways of further cooperation and developed a strategy for the formation of a scientific community of specialists dealing with environmental history. As a result, the achievements of regional studies were summarized, and new areas of research will be developed, making it possible to fully represent the historical experience of environmental management and solution of environmental problems in Russia. This representation, in turn, will contribute to the improvement of policies in the field of environmental management at both regional and national levels.

Followed the discussions, the Proceedings of the Conference are also being prepared for publication¹.

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¹ Environmental History of Russia: The local measurements and perspectives of integral studies: The All-Russian scientific conference with international participation (Cherepovets, 5–7th October 2017): Miscellany of scientific works; In O. Y. Solodyankina (Ed.). Cherepovets: Cherepovets State University, 2017. 276 p. ISBN 978-5-85341-780-9