

# Measuring Eurasia

A Conference on Survey Sciences at the Edges of Empire

Humanities Institute, University College Dublin  
26-27 June 2024



Program

## Acknowledgement of funding

Irish Research Council

Humanities Institute, University College Dublin

Earth Institute, University College Dublin

Environmental Humanities, University College Dublin

College of Arts and Humanities, University College Dublin

## Image credits

Observing a solar eclipse on January 1, 1907, near the Cherniaevo Station in the Tian-Shan mountains above the Saliuktin mines. Golodnaia Steppe. Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii. Library of Congress, LC-P87- 8055A.

Генеральная карта Азиатской России по новейшему разделению на губернии, области и приморские управления, с показанием путей российских мореходцев / General Map of Asian Russia ... Showing the Ways of Russian Seafarers, Military Topographic Depot, 1825. Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library, ВВК 26.89 (25) i64.

Altai Mountains. Photograph by Katya Shkiper, 2021.

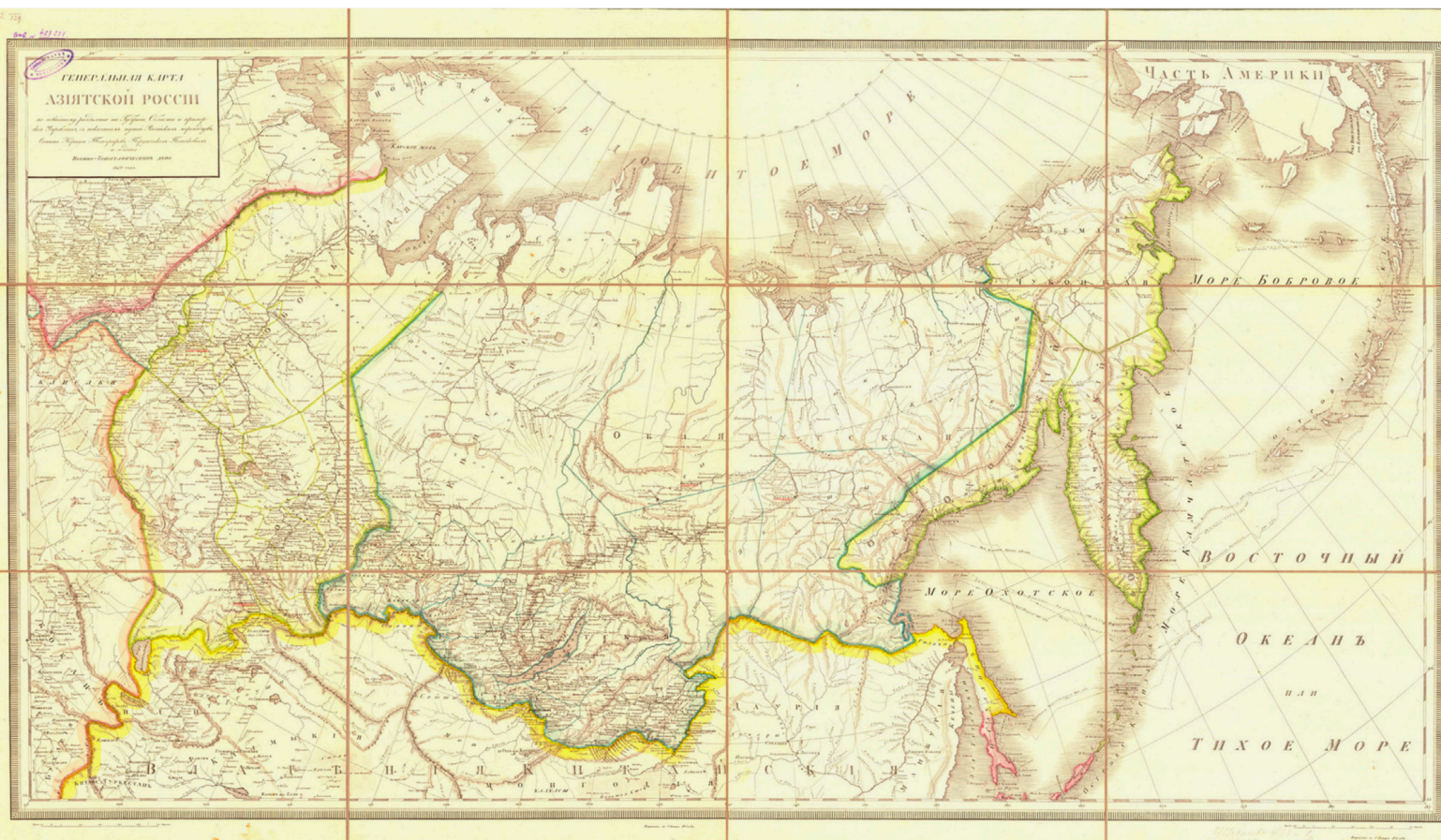
# Conference Abstract

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This conference analyzes attempts to survey the edges of the Russian Empire, from the Baltic and Black seas to the Bering Strait. Historians and geographers have used “survey science” to study global enterprises of astronomy and physics in the early nineteenth century, focusing on their coordination across the British Empire. Measuring Eurasia reorients this field of research to develop new histories of science and surveillance in the Russian imperial world. It emphasizes diverse surveys carried out across disparate borderlands—ethnographic as well as geodetic surveys, expeditions of land and sea, and sciences of ice, plants, and peat.

Recent research points to an emerging study of Eurasian survey sciences not as self-evident acts of expansion and modernization, but as social and cultural endeavors that need to be explained. The production of space is complex terrain: surveillance projects often enrolled diverse artists, brokers, and servitors. Maps might therefore be used to negotiate or subvert indigenous claims to land, nation, or dynasty. Contest over survey technique and nomenclature could similarly magnify questions of social and political (dis)order.

Vital here are questions of collaboration, calibration, and coordination. How, for instance, did seemingly novel systems of Russian survey relate to existing knowledges in, say, Baltic, Kazakh, or Qing borderlands? On whom did those systems come to depend? What agencies attempted to coordinate data across the empire, according to what metrics and logics, and with what reciprocal effects? And how, crucially, were Eurasian surveys then generalized in wider data-gathering schemes, or at work in global processes?



# Wednesday, 26 June

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9:15 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

**Welcome**

9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**Session 1: Frontier agents and encounters**

Chair: Patrick Anthony

Chechesh Kudachinova, "The German naturalists and a loophole between two empires: Order and disorder at inner Asia's frontier"

Christine Bischel, "On cold ground: Dmitrii L'vovich Ivanov and early glaciology in Russian Turkestan"

11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

**Break**

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

**Session 2: Social survey sciences**

Chair: Jennifer Keating

Katya Morgunova, "Behind the scenes of ethnographic expeditions in Northeast Siberia, c. 1890-1917"

Catherine Gibson, "Social Surveying in the late imperial Baltic provinces: Popular reactions to changing cultures of enumeration"

1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Lunch**

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2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Session 3: Measurement and surveillance**

Chair: Katja Bruisch

Kelly O'Neill, "Reconstructing Crimean waterscapes (and an empire's spatial culture) from survey projects"

Patrick Anthony, "Eurasian transits: the many paths of astro-navigation from the Black Sea to Lake Balkhash"

Simon Werrett, "Russian survey sciences: From the Great Embassy to the transit of Venus"

4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Break**

4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**Keynote lecture**

Adeeb Khalid, "Getting to know Central Asia: The production of imperial knowledge and its discontents"

7:00 p.m.

**Conference Dinner**

# Thursday, 27 June

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9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

## **Session 4: Rethinking Resources**

Chair: Catherine Gibson

Oleksandr Polianichev, “The science of the exotic: South  
Caucasia and the idea of the Subtropics”

Vasily Borovoy, “Surveys and imperial modernisation:  
technocrats, governance, and natural resources in the  
European North of Russia, 1890s–1910s”

Katja Bruisch, “An inner periphery as far as the eye can see:  
Wetlands in the geographic imagination of the Russian  
Empire”

11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

## **Break**

12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

## **Closing Roundtable**

Chair: Patrick Anthony

Jennifer Keating & Adeeb Khalid

1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

## **Lunch**

## Session I: Frontier agents and encounters

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### **Chechesh Kudachinova, “The German naturalists and a loophole between two empires: Order and disorder at Inner Asia’s frontier”**

On 20 August 1826, Carl Friedrich von Ledebour (1786-1851) packed several axes, traps, and leather items. The botany professor badly wanted to take a barometer but had to drop the idea to avoid suspicion. Disguised as a merchant, the author of *Flora Rossica* illegally crossed the Russo-Qing borderline somewhere in the Altay Mountains, a geopolitical buffer zone contested by both powers. Some time in August 1829, no less than Alexander von Humboldt followed Ledebour’s route. On his tour across Siberia, the noted explorer used his only chance to set his foot on Chinese soil.

By combining the methods of microhistory and the history of knowledge, this paper intends to explore the crossings of the Russo-Qing border initiated by the Western naturalists under imperial sponsorship. This section of the Russo-Qing borderline was “a legal abstraction.” The paper argues that what existed on the ground posed a zone of multiple encounters between diverse agents of Eurasian societies that inhabited, served and traded in the frontier: Qing and Russian officers, Mongol and Cossacks soldiers, Russian Old Believers and indigenous semi-nomads. The paper zooms in on the role of intermediaries and the communication channels that involved multiple languages: German, French, Russian, Turkic, Mongol, and Manchu. It also focuses on the cultural interactions that unfolded at the Qing station.

### **Christine Bichsel, “On cold ground: Dmitrii L’vovich Ivanov and early glaciology in Russian Turkestan”**

This paper examines Russian expeditionary science, armed conquest, and resource prospection in Turkestan. It focuses on the emergence of Russian glacier science in the region’s Pamir and Tian Shan Mountains. I draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of “minor science” to unravel the intertwined scientific, extractionist and military character of early glaciology. Rather than putting at centre stage the “big names” of Imperial Russian science in and of Turkestan such as Alexei Fedchenko, Nikolai Severtov or Ivan Mushketov, I examine Dmitrii L’vovich Ivanov’s (1846-1924) scientific and artistic work of glaciers in the region. Ivanov was an army conscript sentenced to a Russian battalion for the conquest of Turkestan, and later a mining engineer and member of the first Russian glaciological expedition in the region in 1881. He was also a talented artist, and his drawings of the Zeravshan Glacier are the first Russian representations of glaciers in Turkestan. I argue that Ivanov’s biographical trajectory, disciplinary training and artistic expression are a case of “minor science” both within and outside the existing power structures. Examining Ivanov’s life and work in relation to early glaciology can help us unpacking the multiple political, cultural and ethnic hierarchies and complex social relations that characterised field sciences in Russian Turkestan.

## Session 2: Social survey sciences

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### **Katya Morgunova, “Behind the scenes of ethnographic expeditions in Northeast Siberia, c. 1890-1917”**

Quite a bit of diplomatic art is required for this small census’, wrote the ethnographer Vladimir Bogoras in 1897. He was recording demographic information about the Chukchi, a north-east Siberian ethnic minority group, as part of an ethnographic expedition organised by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. The term ‘diplomatic art’ aptly hints at the complexity of the negotiations that underpinned late imperial Russian ethnographic research. These negotiations were multi-sided, involving the political exile ethnographers, indigenous research subjects, imperial authorities, guides and mediators, scientific societies and sponsors, among others.

This paper concentrates on the fieldwork of Vladimir Jochelson (1855-1937) and Vladimir Bogoras (1865-1936). Both men were former socialist-Populist political exiles who became ethnographers whilst serving their sentences in remote north-east Siberian regions. Both researchers became leading experts on local ethnic groups, with an international reputation and a lasting disciplinary legacy. The archival materials of Jochelson and Bogoras provide a rare window onto the behind-the-scenes of ethnographic fieldwork. Using little-known field diaries and letters, this paper will argue that the scientific outcomes of Bogoras and Jochelson’s projects were shaped by complex negotiations between stakeholders, and importantly, the research subjects.

### **Catherine Gibson, “Social surveying in the late imperial Baltic provinces: Popular reactions to changing cultures of enumeration”**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, statistics attracted significant attention from government officials and educated elites as a method of quantifying socioeconomic change and rendering human and natural resources visible through data. We still know little, however, about how local communities responded to changing methods of gathering personal data during the gradual shift away from forms of enumeration based on legal estates and households toward modern methods of individual enumeration by census. Rarely do we approach the social history of surveying from the perspective of those being enumerated. This paper seeks to address this by placing interactions between surveyors and local populations at the forefront. It argues that social surveys, as a form of administrative intervention, opened up a space for local populations to articulate opinions and question the overlapping layers of authority within the empire between local elites, the provincial administration, and tsarist government. It also examines local voices of concern about how authorities might use personal data as a form of administrative surveillance and social control.



## Session 3: Measurement and surveillance

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### **Kelly O'Neill, "Reconstructing Crimean waterscapes (and an empire's spatial culture) from survey projects"**

This paper reconstructs the geography of fresh water across the Crimean peninsula in the 1860s. It draws on the intersections and idiosyncrasies of a trio of government studies: the General Staff's military-topographic survey, the Ministry of Interior's survey of settled places, and a survey of water resources conducted by the Ministry of State Domains. The projects were conducted simultaneously but 1) express remarkably different ideas about Crimean geography, 2) deploy divergent data practices, and 3) operate at different scales of knowledge. The paper shows that survey work generated a range of quantitative and cartographic representations of imperial space rather than a single authoritative mapping.

### **Patrick Anthony, "Eurasian transits: the many paths of astro-navigation from the Black Sea to Lake Balkhash"**

Survey sciences figure centrally in high-modernist projects to govern people, land, and information. In frontier histories, geodesists and ethnographers usually play a key role in turning borderlands into bordered lands, and in demarcating subjects and "savages." Related studies show how large-scale surveys claimed to usurp systems of global mediation ca. 1800, gradually displacing brokers and go-betweens with monopolistic institutions of trade and empire. In the Russian empire, new topographical depots, frontier commissions, and observatory networks provide yet more evidence for this shift. An imperial astronomy that once engaged interlocutors from Iran and Samarkand was succeeded by an effort to obviate the need for Central Asian collaborators, notably by installing colonial observatories from Tbilisi to Tashkent.

This talk shows how, amid these shifts, survey sciences were nonetheless organized around indigenous mobilities, architectures, and information orders. I argue for an expanded register beyond brokers and intermediaries, which reads Russian surveys within (rather than outside of) non-European traditions. This view recognizes the obscure role of Ottoman mosques and Armenian monasteries, Kazakh oasis networks, and Tashkent brass-founders in imperial surveillance. These examples show the imperial project as a profoundly Eurasian enterprise, contiguous with indigenous modes of transhumance, time-keeping, and astro-navigation.

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## **Simon Werrett, “Russian survey sciences: From the great embassy to the transit of Venus”**

This paper assesses the trajectories of measurement and surveillance in the Russian empire over two centuries between Peter I's Great Embassy of the 1690s and expeditions to view the transit of Venus across Eurasia in 1874. Foucauldian accounts of surveillance often position it in contradistinction to the sovereign power of the *ancien régime*, but this scheme ill fits Russia where, I shall argue, both forms of power were integrated through close ties between the imperial family, spectacular politics and survey and measurement enterprises. This becomes evident by considering astronomical, geographical and navigational projects in the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences, in enlightened imperial campaigns over land and sea, in Russian voyages of exploration, and in the development of new cartographic and astronomical institutions in Russia in the nineteenth century. Sovereign displays of power and the functioning and efficacy of survey sciences were routinely interdependent. Hence Russian “scenarios of power” (to follow Richard Wortman) should include the survey sciences. They were often intrinsic to political power and to the personal identity of the imperial family.

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## **Keynote Lecture**

### **Adeeb Khalid, “Getting to know Central Asia: The production of imperial knowledge and its discontents”**

When Russian armies conquered Central Asia in the nineteenth century, the Russians knew very little about the region. Over the decades, imperial ethnographers, geographers, and Orientalists created a vast corpus of colonial knowledge about the newly conquered territories. In doing so, they had the help of numerous local actors. Some, such as Shoqan Wälikhanov (Chokan Valikhanov), acted as imperial officers. Far more commonly, locals acted as collaborators and intermediaries to imperial experts. Russian imperial knowledge of Central Asia owed a great deal to their local collaborators, who then appropriated this collaboration for their own ends. In this paper, I will explore the production of geographic and ethnographic in Tsarist Central Asia through these collaborations, with a focus on a few key figures and sites of collaboration in the Tsarist period. Ethnographic knowledge, at least, remained unstable and weak down to the end of the old regime. The paper will conclude with a brief look forward into the early Soviet period.

## Session 4: Re-thinking resources

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### **Oleksandr Polianichev, “The science of the exotic: South Caucasia and the idea of the Subtropics”**

Throughout much of the 19th century, generations of Russian authors cultivated an image of the Russian Empire as a universe in miniature, which included nearly all nations, religions, and cultures of the world. Besides, they also believed the empire to encompass nature in all its diversity, with all types of landscapes, biota, and climate. The widely-held image of Tsarist Russia as stretching from the polar ice caps to scorching deserts lacked only one element—the exotic tropical scenery, which came to be seen as a symbol of any empire’s global reach. The paper examines the efforts of tsarist geographers, climatologists, botanists, zoologists, soil scientists, and other specialists to stretch the borders of Russia into the tropical world by inventing a “nearly tropical,” “semi-tropical,” or “quasi-tropical” climate zone within the boundaries of their empire. It shows how, by the turn of the 20th century, tsarist scholars constructed the idea of some parts of the South Caucasus such as the valley of the Rioni River and the Black Sea coast as Russia’s own “subtropics”—marked by evergreen rainforests with pre-historic flora. This conceptual invention enabled the transformation of the local environment through the introduction of tropical and subtropical plant species from across the globe.

### **Vasily Borovoy, “Surveys and imperial modernisation: technocrats, governance, and natural resources in the European North of Russia, 1890s–1910s”**

In the final quarter of a century of imperial rule the northern outskirts of European Russia underwent rapid economic development in industries connected to the extraction and sale of timber, fish, products of maritime and forest hunting (such as furs, hides, and feathers), and other ‘natural riches.’ This growth was closely observed by provincial officials and the educated public represented by scientists, ethnographers, and writers. Conservative officials and those connected to the Ministry of the Interior were under the influence of a strong ‘Northern myth’ developed since the time of Peter the Great that pictured northern nature abundant in resources and its ethnic Russian inhabitants as backward but naturally industrious and thus in need of state tutelage. Technocratic and market-oriented experts in the region as well as at the Ministries of Finance and Trade and Industry possessed direct knowledge of recent rapid economic growth and its social consequences in the north. They reflected it in their surveys and overviews in attempt to optimise governance of this region via the introduction of zemstvo and a resettlement programme, but were rather unable to compete with the exoticising ‘Northern myth’ in the public discourse until the end of ancien régime. The aim of the paper is to trace and explain the growing divergence in approach to the policy of economic development in the European North of Russia among these actors, focusing particularly on published surveys as a vehicle for these debates.

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**Katja Bruisch, “An inner periphery as far as the eye can see: Wetlands in the geographic imagination of the Russian Empire”**

A crucial feature of Eurasia’s natural environment, wetlands attracted the attention of imperial Russian elites since the nineteenth century, when landowners, state officials and scientists began to see them as potential resources once drainage made them accessible for profitable use. The “improvement” discourse generated a host of efforts to survey, map and ultimately exploit the empire’s “inner periphery”. Depending on what vision for economic development wetlands were meant to serve, their ability to function as resources was constructed in two different ways: horizontally, implying a transformation of wetlands into farmland, or vertically, a conception focusing on wetlands as stores of peat fuel. Tracing how wetlands entered the geographic imagination of the Russian Empire, this paper shows that the appropriation of wetlands was by and large an elite-driven process. Notions of abundance and scarcity intersected with enlightened ideas of progress merging into developmentalist wetland imaginaries, which marginalized the ways in which most of the rural population interacted with these landscapes. The case of wetlands opens up an intriguing perspective on the geography of peripherality in the Russian Empire. Imperial imperatives of control and development were not limited to people and environments in the empire’s borderlands, but also concerned places which challenged such imperatives despite their geographic proximity to the centres of imperial power.

## Participants

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**Patrick Anthony** is an Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow at University College Dublin and a Research Partner in “Instructing Natural History: Nature, People, Empire” at Uppsala University. Patrick’s forthcoming book tells the story of earth and atmospheric sciences assembled across mineral frontiers of the Americas, Central Europe, and northern Eurasia in the nineteenth century. This project evolved from a 2021 PhD thesis at Vanderbilt University and was supported by fellowships in Germany, Hungary, and the UK. His research on underground labor and environmental crises among other themes has appeared in journals like *Isis*, *Historical Journal*, and *Journal of Social History*. Patrick’s current research studies Baltic German projects of long-range observation in the Caucasus and across the northern Kazakh Steppe, juxtaposed with nomadic modes of mobility and Islamic sciences.

**Christine Bichsel**, Professor in the Department of Geosciences at the Université de Fribourg, is a political geographer and environmental historian of Central Asia, Russia, and China. Her research explores how relations of power and violence shape knowledge, infrastructure, and the environment, dealing extensively with contemporary and past water issues in Central Asia. She is the author of *Conflict Transformation in Central Asia: Irrigation Disputes in the Fergana Valley* (Routledge, 2009) as well as articles in *Environment and Planning D, Water History*, and *Slavic Review* among other journals. Christine’s current research turns to the historical practices, geopolitics, and epistemologies of glaciology in Central Asia and is supported by the Swiss Polar Institute and the SNFS project “Timescapes of ice.” Focusing on temporalities of glacial change, this research unravels ideas of time and history that currently inform scientific concepts of climate change and the Anthropocene.

**Vasily Borovoy** is a PhD student in the School of History at University College Dublin with the thesis: “Governing regions of Empire: resource regimes in the European North of late imperial and Soviet Russia.” Prior to UCD, Vasily was a researcher at the Centre of Historical Research at the Higher School of Economics in Saint Petersburg. His PhD project shows how conceptualizations of the scarcity and abundance of resources were central to the construction of Russia’s European North. The project examines the way in which the north-western region of Russia was governed through its natural resources and emerges as a resource frontier ca. 1890-1930. Vasily’s research employs approaches from environmental, economic, global and New Imperial History to follow the quest of commercial actors, local communities, and state officials in the allocation and utilization of such resources as timber and furs, fish and seaweed, energy sources and agricultural land.

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**Katja Bruisch**, Ussher Assistant Professor in Environmental History at Trinity College Dublin, is an environmental historian of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. She is the author of *Als das Dorf noch Zukunft war: Agrarismus und Expertise zwischen Zarenreich und Sowjetunion* (Böhlau, 2014), which dealt with the relationship between politics, science and the public sphere, and the role played by experts in dealing with the “agrarian question” in late imperial and early Soviet Russia. Katja’s articles cover a range of territorial and ecological themes in *Environment and History*, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, and *Cahiers du Monde Russe* among other journals. Her current project on the history of peat fuel centers on actors, places, and energy sources at the forgotten margins of Russia’s fossil economy. This research underscores the relevance of regional perspectives for writing the history of the fossil fuel age and associated social and environmental changes.

**Sarah Comyn**, Assistant Professor in the School of English, Drama and Film at University College Dublin, researches the literary cultures of settler colonialism, political economy, and nineteenth-century mining in the British southern hemisphere. Sarah is the PI on the Irish Research Council Starting Laureate project “Imperial Minerals,” which investigates the impact of the extractive mineral industries on the developing Anglophone literary cultures of the British settle colonies of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa in the period 1842-1910. She is also Co-I on an Andrew W. Mellon-funded Global Humanities Institute “Post-extractivist legacies and landscapes: Humanities, artistic and activist responses.” She is an editor of *Worlding the south: Nineteenth-century literary culture and the southern settler colonies* (Manchester, 2021) and author of articles on gold mining, race, and hemispheric methods in the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, *Journal of Victorian Culture*.

**Catherine Gibson**, Lecturer in East European and Eurasian Studies at the University of Tartu, is an expert on the history of cartography, mapping and geographical sciences in the Russian Empire and the independent states of Estonia, Latvia, and Belarus. Catherine is the author of the book *Geographies of Nationhood: Cartography, Science, and Society in the Russian Imperial Baltic* (OUP, 2022) and, in 2023, the recipient of the University of Cambridge Baltic Geopolitics Programme Publication Prize. Her 2019 PhD at the European University Institute won the James Kay Memorial prize for the Best Thesis in History and Visuality. Catherine’s most recent articles explore emotions in the history of border-making, religion and national indifference, resistance to census surveys in the Baltic provinces, and women cartographers in late imperial Russia, appearing in the *Journal of Modern European History*, *Past & Present*, *Journal of Social History*, and *Journal of Historical Geography*.

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**Jennifer Keating**, Associate Professor in the School of History at University College Dublin, is an environmental historian of imperial and early Soviet Russia and Central Asia. Jennifer's research interests lie in using environmental history, spatial history, and political ecology to explore the idea and practice of imperialism across Eurasia, and in tracing the ways in which ecological change and shifting practices of land use were integral to the years of conflict that marked the end of the empire and the birth of the new Soviet state. She is the author of *On Arid Ground: Political Ecologies of Empire in Russian Central Asia, 1881-1916* (OUP, 2022), which was awarded the 2023 Royal Historical Society Gladstone Prize. Beginning this year, Jennifer is PI of the ERC-funded project "Land Limits: Towards a connected history of population, environmental change, capital and conflict in Russian Eurasia, 1860s-1920s.

**Adeeb Khalid** is the Jane and Raphael Bernstein Professor of Asian Studies and History at Carleton College. He is a leading historian of Central Asia and a specialist on its sedentary societies from the Russian conquest of the 1860s to the present. Supported variously by grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Council of Learned Societies, among others, Adeeb has published four books: *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (1998), *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (2007), *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Revolution, and Empire in the Early USSR* (2015) and *Central Asia: A New History from the Imperial Conquests to the Present* (2021), which provides an integrated narrative of the "Russian" and "Chinese" parts of the Central Asia. Adeeb is also the section editor for Central Asia in *Modernist Islam, 1840-2940: A Sourcebook* (OUP, 2002) and a special section on "Locating the (Post-)Colonial in Soviet History," *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 26, no. 4 (2007). Thematically, these and other works range explore transformations of culture and identity and the fate of Islam under Tsarist and Soviet rule.

**Chechesh Kudachinova**, Researcher at Freie Universität Berlin, is a historian of geography, environment, and commodification in Siberia. Her current project at the University of Bonn, supported by the Gerda Henkel Foundation, is called "The Sea of Siberian Slavery: Human Commodification and Empire in Early Modern Northeast Eurasia, 1600s–1800s." With experience as an educator and NGO coordinator in the Altai Republic, Chechesh received her PhD from the Humboldt-Universität in 2015. Publications ranging from the Muscovite silver crusade to the geographical imagination of the Altai Mountains have appeared in *Ab Imperio* and the edited volume *Russia in Asia* (Routledge, 2020). In talks delivered variously at the Centre d'études des mondes russe (L'École des hautes études) and the European Studies Council (Yale University) Chechesh has analyzed entangled histories of extraction, enslavement, and settler colonialism.

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**Katya Morgunova**, a historian of human sciences in northern Eurasia, is the author of the PhD thesis “Ethnographic studies of Northeastern Siberian peoples in the Russian Empire, c. 1890-1917,” defended at King’s College London. After earning a BA in Natural Sciences and an MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge (Trinity College), Katya received the Hans Rausing Scholarship at the Centre for History of Science, Technology, and Medicine at King’s College London. Katya’s research makes little-known expedition diaries and correspondence alongside governmental and published sources to show how anthropology and ethnography in late imperial Russia was shaped by a diverse set of Russian agents and multi-ethnic indigenous stakeholders. Focusing on northeastern Siberia, her analysis critically reads the perspectives of exiled ethnographers against those of indigenous groups deemed “alien” by the imperial state.

**Kelly O’Neill** is creator and director of the Imperia Project at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, a long-term, collaborative exploration in the spatial history of the Russian Empire. Kelly is the author of *Claiming Crimea: A History of Catherine the Great’s Southern Empire* (Yale, 2017) along with articles on the complexity of national and religious identity during the integration of Crimean Tatars into the Russian Empire in such journals as *Cahiers du monde russe*, *Ab Imperio*, and *Central Eurasian Studies Review*. The Imperia Project, supported by a Digital Humanities Advancement Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, visualizes Eurasian history through interactive “MapStories.” Recent and on-going projects show how, where, and when fires raged across European Russia during the tumultuous years of 1860 to 1864 and use metadata of biodiversity in nineteenth-century Ukraine to develop inclusive strategies for historical practice.

**Oleksandr Polianichev** is project researcher at Södertörn University, Stockholm and an expert on colonialism and environment in the Russian Empire. Oleksandr’s PhD thesis at the European University Institute in Florence (2017) was titled “Rediscovering Zaporozhians: Memory, Loyalties, and Politics in Late Imperial Kuban, 1880-1914.” His current book project investigates the imperial afterlife of the Zaporozhian Host, banished from Ukraine in the late eighteenth century and transferred to the steppes north of the Caucasus for settler colonial purposes. Oleksandr is the author of “A rada for empire: Invention the tradition of Cossack self-governance during the 1905 Revolution,” in *Planting Parliaments in Eurasia, 1850-1950* (Routledge, 2021) along with articles on Russian projects of African colonization in *Al Jazeera* and *The Moscow Times*. The magazine *Aeon* has featured Oleksandr’s newest research on “Dreams of the Russian tropics” in the Caucasus.



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**Ge (Gigi) Tang** is a postdoctoral research fellow on the IRC-funded project "Minerals," led by Dr. Sarah Comyn. Her current project, "Literary Tracks: Mining Infrastructure, Global Connectivity, and Racial Capitalism in British Southern Colonies," examines the transcultural narratives of various migrant groups, with a focus on Chinese miners in colonial Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The aim is to explore and contrast different critiques of racial capitalism that facilitated and proliferated through the railway and steamship networks crucial to the empire's extractive enterprises. Gigi is also working on turning in her PhD thesis, which she completed in 2023, into a book, which examines the interplay between emotion, environment, and racial politics in Anthony Trollope's travel writing on British settler colonies in the Southern Hemisphere.

**Simon Werrett**, Professor of the History of Science at University College London, has written on the materiality of science, technology, and empire across Russia, France, Britain, and North America. His first book, *Fireworks: Pyrotechnic Arts and Sciences in European History* (UCP, 2010) revealed pyrotechnics at work in the making of many branches of science since the Renaissance. *Fireworks* was followed by *Thrifty Science: Making the Most of Materials in the History of Experiment* (UCP, 2018), on the ways early modern experimentalism recycled, repaired, and reused material possessions to learn about the natural world. Notable examples of Simon's research on science in imperial Russia include studies of politics and spectacle at the Pulkovo Observatory under Tsar Nicholas I, information flows between Russian navigators and the Royal Navy, the role of maintenance and repair in the Krusenstern-Lisianskii circumnavigation, and the memoirs of Ekaterina Romanova Dashkova.



## Information

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### **Conference venue**

Seminar Room (H.204)  
UCD Humanities Institute  
Belfield, Dublin

### **Getting here**

Take bus 39A (UCD Belfield) from Merrion Row bus stop to UCD 767. It leaves every 10 minutes. It should take about 35 minutes from the hotel to the venue.

### **Wifi**

UCD Wifi is open to anyone on campus, no password required.



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### **Hotel address**

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83 St. Stephen's Green South  
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### **Restaurant address**

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