

Call for Papers

Knowledge Production in/on Central Asia: Forms, Purposes and Practices

University of Fribourg (CH)/CASNiG Conference, 25-26 August 2022

What does it mean, to produce knowledge about a region? Who is generating this knowledge, where, and to what ends? What are the implications and the effects of these practices?

The Fribourg 2022 conference, in collaboration with the Central Asian Studies Network in Germany (CASNiG), aims to inquire into the forms of knowledge being produced in and about Central Asia. By bringing together a broad range of disciplines and expertises, we strive to adequately reflect the field's growing richness and heterogeneity, and to carry on the fruitful conversations initiated by similar recent endeavours. The conference will prioritise "decolonising" the field - giving space to Central Asian voices, and promoting critical reflections on the positionalities, practices and interactions of scholars and experts working in/on the region (Haraway, 1988).

The goal is to collaboratively and critically assess claims to scientific authority - from the natural sciences, to the humanities, and the spaces in-between (De La Croix et al., 2021; Lave et al., 2014; Kassymbekova and Chokobaeva, 2021). Understanding their theoretical assumptions and historical backgrounds helps attune scholars to the power imbalances they reflect and perpetuate - in academic conferences and publications, as much as in field expeditions. The problem of unequal access to this knowledge production is increasingly evident, and rightly problematized (Sultanalieva, 2019; Tlostanova, 2015). Therefore, how do we foster transnational communities, spaces and institutions where local actors' ideas and ambitions take precedence, and are adequately heard?

After over 30 years of Central Asian independence, and with the growth of a lively and diverse research community, now more than ever is "a time to host spirited debates and explore experimental approaches, new theories, and topics." (Marat, 2021)

The conference welcomes papers **in English or Russian**, including but not limited to topics such as:

- The security/stability imperative and knowledge production in/on Central Asia;
- Reflections on the interactions between history, global(izing) transformation processes (and inequalities), traditional knowledges, and local practices;
- "Spaces and places:" histories of inter-ethnic interactions; local sociocultural and ecological perspectives; envisioning new spaces and institutions;
- Striving to "decolonize" the field: positionality, self-reflexivity, linguistic considerations, epistemic pluralism, and possible methodologies;
- Environmental histories and physical geography in a turbulent climate conjuncture: science, knowledge, power, and fieldwork in Central Asia;
- Central Asian perspectives on - and from - China, Russia, Mongolia, the Middle East and more.

The working language of the conference will be English.

We aim to produce a peer-reviewed special issue from this conference.

PhD workshops

The University of Fribourg and CASNiG are strongly committed to supporting PhD students and early-career researchers, by consolidating an international network able to maintain contacts and facilitate exchange and support through unpredictable times.

A series of workshops will be developed to tackle in-depth some of the aspects of research in/on Central Asia, such as: positionality, ethics, access, sharing research data, academic and social outreach.

Please indicate in your application email whether you would like to participate in the workshops, and which topics (not limited to those listed here) would be most relevant to you.

Submission deadlines

The deadline for submissions of abstracts is **March 18th, 2022**.

Please send the following details as a single PDF to
Kateřina Zäch (katerina.zaech-kozlova@unifr.ch),
CC: Esther Blokbergen (esther.blokbergen@unifr.ch)

- Title
- Abstract of your paper (max. 250 words)
- Brief bio (max. 250 words)
- Contact information (name, affiliation, email address)
- For PhD students: expression of interest in attending the workshops, and topics.

Full draft conference papers should be submitted by **May 30th, 2022**, at the latest.

The conference is planned for **25-26 August 2022**.

Given continuing travel uncertainties, a hybrid format will be arranged to accommodate participants who cannot attend in person.

The organizers will strive to secure (limited) travel grants and accommodation support.

References

- De La Croix, J. F., Arzhantseva, I., Dağyeli, J., Dubuisson, E.-M., Härke, H., Penati, B., Ueda, A., & Wooden, A. (2021). Roundtable studying the Anthropocene in Central Asia: the challenge of sources and scales in human–environment relations. *Central Asian Survey*, 1–24.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Fall 1988), 575-599.
- Kassymbekova, B., & Chokobaeva, A. (2021). On writing Soviet History of Central Asia: frameworks, challenges, prospects. *Central Asian Survey*, 40(4), 483–503.
- Lave, R., Wilson, M. W., Barron, E. S., Biermann, C., Carey, M. A., Duvall, C. S., Johnson, L., Lane, K. M., McClintock, N., Munroe, D., Pain, R., Proctor, J., Rhoads, B. L., Robertson, M. M., Rossi, J., Sayre, N. F., Simon, G., Tadaki, M., & van Dyke, C. (2014). Intervention: Critical physical geography. *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe Canadien*, 58(1), 1-10.
- Marat, E. (2021) Introduction: 30 years of Central Asian studies – the best is yet to come, *Central Asian Survey*, 40:4 (Special Issue: Central Asian studies: 30 years since independence), 477-482.
- Sultanalieva, S. (2019) How does it feel to be studied? A Central Asian perspective. *Open Democracy*. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/how-does-it-feel-be-studied-central-asian-perspective/>
- Tlostanova, M. (2015). Can the post-Soviet think? On coloniality of knowledge, external imperial and double colonial difference. *Intersections*, 1(2), 38-58.