

Commanding the Environment or Green Dictatorships?

Nature-Culture – Nature-Society Relationships in Authoritarian Regimes

International Seminar at the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki,

27-28 April 2017



"Photo: Fortepan / Kinga Morvay"

The Jean Monnet Team of the Aleksanteri Institute (the Finnish Centre of Russian and East European Studies) at the University of Helsinki will hold an international seminar 27-28 April 2017.

The two-day seminar offers an interdisciplinary initiative to study the evolution of authoritarian systems through the prism of how these regimes relate to their physical environment. There is a general assumption that, in comparison with liberal democratic systems, authoritarian regimes have less concern for nature preservation as they have less apprehension about their citizens' wellbeing. There is, however, a globally rising awareness of the declining state of the environment (climate change, pollution, resource depletion, overpopulation) that endangers the existence of any human political system. Authoritarian leaders have begun to show more and more interest in global discussions and processes aiming to find joint solutions to the fast deteriorating physical environment. Simultaneously, there is a growing social consciousness and flow of information generating civic activism with an environmental agenda. Taking into consideration this complex context, the seminar aims to investigate the nature-culture and nature-society relationship of any modern authoritarian regime.

We approach this topic with the following questions in mind. How do contemporary authoritarian regimes' attitudes to environment differ from any authoritarian states in the past? How do authoritarian regimes construct and modify their attitudes, rhetoric and policies towards nature and environment? What can a careful interdisciplinary and comparative analysis of the changes in culture-nature/ society-nature relations in an authoritarian regime reveal of the evolutionary phase of the authoritarian system itself?

The organizers suggest the following sub-themes for consideration in relation to the natural environment in authoritarian regimes:

- Perception of the environment: ideology, rhetoric, politics, culture and education
- Environmental management: change and continuity
- Civic response and power dynamics: actors, networks, action-models
- Pressures of the spatial context: international – regional – national – local perspectives

Confirmed speakers include:

Stephen Brain (Mississippi State University)

Pepijn van Eeden (Université libre de Bruxelles)

Julia Lajus (Higher School of Economics, St Petersburg)

Jonathan Oldfield (University of Birmingham)

The aim is to publish two edited international volumes based on the outcome of the seminar.

Abstracts for individual papers (max. 300 words) with short cv (max. 200 words): February 10, 2017
Notification of acceptance: February 17, 2017.

Please, send the abstracts to [katalin.miklossy\(at\)helsinki.fi](mailto:katalin.miklossy@helsinki.fi)

The program will be announced 28 February, 2017.

Participants are requested to make their own arrangements for travel although a limited number of travel grants are available for young academics based in overseas institutions. The accepted speakers will be offered financial support for accommodation and meals. There is no registration fee. The seminar is free for the audience.



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