

“EXPLORING ICE AND SNOW IN THE COLD WAR”

Workshop by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society

at the Deutsche Museum in Munich

27th to 29th of January 2011

11.5.10

cfp: Exploring Ice and Snow in the Cold War

The scientific exploration of extreme climatic conditions and hostile environments flourished during the Cold War. In the course of these years of confrontation between East and West, research on ‘the cold’ served ambivalent purposes. On the one hand, increasing knowledge about extreme climatic conditions seemed to guarantee political power and access to future resources. On the other hand, the very nature of the earth’s surface and its characteristics challenged dichotomous ideologies of ‘East’ and ‘West’. Events like the International Geophysical Year (1957-1958) structured global efforts to investigate the world as a whole. Spatial images of the ‘blue planet’ can be seen to be a result of the environmental knowledge gained through earth sciences. As the earth’s climate influenced many aspects of human life, culture, and politics, the scientific perception of ice and snow needed to be investigated from different perspectives. Scientific disciplines such as meteorology, geophysics, glaciology and oceanography were part of the exploration of ice and snow.

This workshop is interested in new research projects at the interface of environmental history, military history and the history of science and technology to contribute to the discussion on the scientific perception and constitution of nature in the Cold War.

Applications for any of the following research areas, but also proposals that deal with the workshop’s topic from alternative perspectives, are welcome:

Sites of Knowledge

How did military strategy and politics influence concrete research projects and how did this knowledge flow back into society? Are there typical Cold War sciences dealing with ice and snow and which places, sites or laboratories were typical for these endeavours? Which infrastructures were required to explore ice and snow and what role did technology play in the construction of artificial environments?

Knowledge and ‘the’ Environment – Environmental Knowledge

Did the Cold War foster or inhibit knowledge about the fragility of nature, and which scientific disciplines were involved in this process? When, where and how were issues of pollution addressed? Did knowledge motivated by military and strategic interests also play a part in environmental contexts?

Metaphors, visions and narrations

Epistemologically, ice and snow are objects that are shaped through different scientific perspectives and cultural narratives. Which metaphors, visions and narratives are associated with the scientific exploration of extreme climatic conditions during the Cold War?

The workshop “EXPLORING ICE AND SNOW IN THE COLD WAR” is supported by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich and will take place at the Deutsche Museum in Munich from 27th to 29th of January 2011. Travel and accommodation costs will be met by the organizers. Applications must be written in English. Abstracts (500 words) and a short CV should be submitted by email no later than August 30th 2010 to the following address:

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