

Mapping the Territory: Exploring People and Nature, 1700-1830

**Closing conference of the SNF-Project: “Cultures of Natural History: Main Actors, Networks and Places of Scientific Communication in the Early-Modern Period”
University of Berne, 21th-23th September 2017**

**Opening conference of the project: “Global Natural History around 1800: Collections, Media and Pedagogy”
University of Göttingen, 7th - 9th December 2017**

In the early eighteenth century the physician and naturalist Johann Jakob Scheuchzer published in Zurich a bibliography of all books on natural history that he knew about. His catalogue contained publications on Europe, Africa, Asia and America. Scheuchzer’s idea was to combine the different “local” natural histories into a natural history of the world. His contribution to this “global natural history” was his research about the Alps and their fauna, flora, minerals and about the “homo alpinus helveticus”.

Half a century later, the Physical Society of Zurich, inspired by similar projects undertaken elsewhere, conducted surveys of the city’s subject territory. Likewise, inspired by reports from travels to hitherto unknown regions and news about the exploration of faraway territories, diverse actors – both with and without academic training – all over Europe became increasingly interested in their surroundings. Drawing on travelogues and questionnaires of local and colonial actors as well as on their own observations, early modern natural historians collected information about both nature and people inhabiting these territories, which helped to turn them into distinct spaces.

The later decades of the 18th century became an important era for the development of different fields of natural history and related fields of ethnology and archaeology as academic subjects due to the advancement of Linnaean systematics in botany and zoology. These caused paradigmatic changes in the perception, systematization and classification of the natural world. Collections and the practices of collecting played a major role in this process and influenced the global exchange of ideas, knowledge, specimens and personnel. Material as well as intellectual exchange happened in diverse institutions that also included collections, media, the university classroom and the natural world itself. At the same time European exploration and colonialism influenced and was influenced by these developments too.

The conferences aims to analyse the exploration of the different “local natures” (natural history) and the discovery of “local inhabitants and their history” (ethnography and antiquarianism) from a comparative perspective in a period marked by an increase in scientific travels and expeditions around the world. It also wants to question the periodization of this “discovery of the indigenous”. To do so, the conferences will bring together historians of natural history, ethnology and archaeology, from Europe and outside, engaged in studying sources generated in different political contexts (republics, monarchies, colonial rule etc.).

Based on the findings of historians, with particular emphasis on the social and cultural practices of early modern natural history, the conferences will focus on collecting and exchanging, measuring and classifying information on territories and institutions of different scope. Thus, we are interested in discussing how the various researches and explorations enabled the production of new forms of knowledge of nature and of people.

We invite presentations on issues such as “Mapping Nature” and “Mapping People”, including but not limited to the following themes:

- Media, methods and tools used to collect and communicate information, for example maps, statistics, local floras as well as objects
- areas of interest concerning the natural world, e.g. minerals, flora and fauna, and/or demography, local people’s lifestyle, customs and history within a certain territory
- actors involved, and their specific interests, opportunities and resources, e.g. learned as well as amateur’s curiosity; the role of individual or public actors in this process
- concepts of the relationship of man and nature
- the universalisation of locally generated knowledge

We welcome contributions from early career as well as established scholars and we particularly encourage applications from researchers working on areas outside Europe. Travel and hotel expenses will be refunded.

If you wish to present a contribution, please send an abstract of your proposed paper in **English** or **German** (max. 250 words) and a short CV to Simona Boscani Leoni: simona.boscani@hist.unibe.ch and Dominik Hünninger: dominik.huenniger@zvw.uni-goettingen.de

Submission deadline: 20 January 2017