

ZMO-Colloquium

Monday, 11 November 2019, 5 pm, ZMO

What Is in the Air: Global Environmentalism and Local Activists in Bishkek and Almaty

Lecture by **Xeniya Prilutskaya** (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen)

Central Asian ecological activism has recently grown in reaction to different ecological threats and has many interconnected flows. The talk concentrates on the activism based on ideas around air quality, air pollution and its visibility in two metropolises, Almaty and Bishkek, former and current capitals of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, respectively. The air quality issue in Almaty and Bishkek is a new phenomenon, related to an increased number of cars, congestion and the heritage of highly polluting Soviet electro energy, along with new awareness among the population and an anti-establishment youth subculture. Awareness of and knowledge about air pollution, as well as the organisational patterns, methods, protest modalities and frameworks of civic activism often come to Central Asia from the West. However, they can take local forms which differ from those of the West, because they mingle with already existing, culturally mediated knowledge about air and the environment. The political conditions and the social composition of these two cities

today influence the way in which notions about air and environment develop. As a result, different types of activism appear in the region. This presentation focuses on two activists, one in Bishkek, one in Almaty. By adopting the comparative and local perspective of two activists, the project aims at showing how, even if they share geographical and historical backgrounds, different contexts and environments end up producing distinct and peculiar outcomes.

Xeniya Prilutskaya is a doctoral student at Eberhard Karls University Tübingen. Her research concerns environmental urban activism and perceptions of air quality, air pollution and industrial health risk in cities of Central Asia, namely in Almaty, Bishkek and Temirtau. She holds a Master's degree in Eurasian studies from Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan. Currently she is a member of the junior research group "Environment and Society in Central Asia", led by Dr. Jeanne Féaux de la Croix.

