

SCIENTIFIC HISTORY

Ossified contributions

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While a considerable amount of scientific research shaping the modern world has been done outside Europe and the United States, much of the historical narrative regarding that research has been, intentionally or not, centred on or shaped by the West. A history of science with blind spots regarding the contributions and failures from outside the West is not only incomplete, but may lead to flawed science.

Jonathan Oldfield at the University of Birmingham studied the history of Soviet climate science from 1953 to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, and found that Soviet scientists played a critical role in the development of not just climate modelling, but also conceptualizing the larger global physical system with interconnected meteorological processes. Much of this

work was involved with planning for potential Nuclear Winter in the midst of the Cold War, but Soviet scientists were also very much involved in the creation of the IPCC. However, Soviet science was based on assumptions that were seen as outdated and unable to change, and was therefore disregarded by the Western scientific community. This scientific ossification, leading to a sidelining of research output, serves as a warning for researchers to be aware of ideological and methodological blind spots in the climate and sustainability fields.

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