

editorial



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In the editorial plan of *Global Environment* there was a lot of insistence on the need for a public space allowing stable communication and collective discussion among scholars from very distant and different parts of the world, both spatially and culturally. One of the aims of the journal is indeed to disseminate knowledge of national historiographies including works and studies that are very valuable, but little known because published in local languages. Accordingly, in number 5 we have included Alexander Fehér's review of a study by Peter Chrastina, published in Slovak, on the evolution of landscape use in the Trencin basin from the Middle Ages to the Velvet Revolution.

Besides acting as a vehicle for communication and the dissemination of scientific knowledge among scholars at the planetary level, the journal continues to report on environmental historians' variety of cognitive approaches to social issues. The effects of European settlement in other continents is a privileged field of inquiry, with its tragic history of dramatic impact not just on natural resources, but also on human institutions inextricably associated with them, such as villages and tribes, religious associations and corporations, and kinship and neighbor groups. Vimbai Kwashirai's engrossing study of the Chinhoyi Caves in Zimbabwe between 1845 and 1945 is a prime example of this approach. Rich in water and surrounded by sacred forests managed with practices embedded in religion and taboo, they became an internationally known destination for hunters and travelers. Once the indigenous populations were expropriated, the Caves became a dry and infertile area.

The globalization of market economies and exploitation of the environment took place with no regard to the history of local areas and nature, or to environmental vocations and traditional land management practices. It also often went hand in hand with politics of consensus building aimed at justifying resource depletion and reduction of biodiversity. In the case narrated by Ravi Kumar, during the nineteenth century British hegemony on the forests of southern India was facilitated by politics founded on an inappropriate and manipulative use of desiccationist discourses preaching that forest destruction had a negative impact on water resources. This allowed the government to expand its control on woodland in the name of the well-being of the country. The British propagated the desiccationist paradigm after they themselves had destroyed Indian forests, placing the blame on the native population.

The expansion of urbanized areas is one of the socio-environmental aspects of globalization studied by environmental historians. In Mediterranean countries, this expansion has had an especially strong impact on ecosystems, because it used up more land and at a faster rate than in other countries with similar demographic growth rates. Such issues are the province of urban environmental history, and for some years have provided an interesting field for the testing of the methodologies typical of social research. Anna Badia, Marti Boada, Gemma Estany and Iago Otero's original article belongs within this historiographic trend. It employs "participating observation" and oral sources to illustrate the transformation of an area in the metropolitan zone of Barcelona in the second half of the twentieth century.

Jò Klanovicz, instead, discusses the emergence of environmentalist awareness over the last few decades through an analysis of the public debate on apple contamination in the 1980s, which accompanied the process of acclimation of this plant in southern Brazil. The modernization of food production and industrialization of agriculture sparked a wide debate in Brazilian public opinion on notions such as risk, toxicity and food security.

The critical relationship between globalization and sustainable water management is dealt with the interview of Desirée A.L. Quagliarotti with A.Hoekstra. The concept of virtual water - the amount of water that is embedded in food or other products needed for their

production - helps analyze the link between water management and international trade. Questions whether trade can enhance global water use efficiency, or whether it simply shifts the environmental burden to a distant location highlights the link between water pricing and the use of water resources across the globe.

When we speak of globalization in connection with the environment, we do not refer only to the planet-wide character of the environmental impact of economic and social change, but also to reactions to this impact, in the form of attempts at conservation and protection of the environment. This is the subject of John Dargavel's rich essay on the history of attempts to influence the conservation and management of the world's forests. The international network of forest protection organization sprang up at the end of the nineteenth century (the IUFRO was founded in 1891) and expanded during the twentieth. During this period one witnesses an evolution in the notion of "conservation". In their oscillation between the need to impose universal norms and that to respect the rights and practices of local populations, between the need to develop the economic exploitation of forests and the protection of biodiversity, these organizations have met with only partial success. This is mainly due to the extreme diversity of the situations they have been striving to manage. "The globalised world – concludes Dargavel – will also change in larger ways and new attempts to conserve and manage the forests will doubtless have to be found".

So here is another issue of *Global Environment* that opens up new perspectives not only on the past, but also on the writing of history in a new, participative way, whereby scholars can contribute significantly to the public debate on the environment. This approach calls for the reinforcing of relation systems and debate among scholars from very distant areas of the world, because to interpret a globalized and strongly interconnected environment we need a global scientific paradigm. There can be no global environmental history without the ability to look beyond one's own national and cultural identity, without global dialogue and communication.

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