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ere is yet another issue of *Global Environment* offering a variety of approaches and stimuli for reflection aimed at the construction a common language to narrate the history of environmental transformation processes at the planetary level in a long-term perspective. The most evident common thread running through the essays in this issue is historical reflection on the role played by environmental policies and institutions in protecting society from threats of natural origin, climatic or otherwise, and, vice versa, in protecting the environment from the consequences of socioeconomic activities and the impact of the market and modernization. Thus, Anthony Goebel Mc Dermott and Ronny J. Viales Hurtado's study deals with a case where institutions took only very weak action to reduce social and economic damages caused by adverse environmental conditions. Throughout the history of Costa Rica, torrential rainfall impacted property value, infrastructure, local communities, and the agricultural export market. This impact was aggravated by weak institutional response. Furthermore, the data and sources analyzed by the authors indicate that environmental factors played a decisive role in the serious crisis experienced by Costarica at the beginning of World War I.

Saty Pravat Poshendra's "militant" and impassioned article on Nepal can be regarded as a warning to the new ruling classes of "democratic" Nepal – come to power in the new political course inaugurated in 2006 – to look at the previous history of forest management in the vast Terai region so that they can develop new and better advised policies. What is needed there is a participative and

consensual model capable of making the most of the area's environmental wealth and allow the residents to make money and benefit from it. Over the last three centuries, this has been impeded by an iniquitous management of the area by a restricted group of bureaucrats and politicians who have made significant profits at the expense of the local populations drawing their sustenance directly from the forests and farms of the Terai.

In history, state action has always had destructive repercussions when carried out for merely economic ends, without regard for the environmental characteristics and equilibriums of an area. This is true of many colonial policies. It is also an old and recurrent topos in environmental historical literature. Nirmal Kumar Mahato offers another example of this in his study of the environmental implications of English colonial intervention in the Bengal District of Manbhum in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The recurrent famines that plagued this area in the late nineteenth century were the consequence of the changes wrought by colonial policies on centuries-old traditional modes of productions and environmental resource management systems. The new emphasis on commodity production and consequent switch to monoculture disrupted the ecological equilibriums of the area and undermined the "moral economy" on which the local *adivasi* population had based their livelihood, causing deforestation, water scarcity, and soil infertility; problems which since then the area has never managed to overcome.

Paula Schönach's essay, instead, is a reflection on a case of scarce impact of environmental improvement policies in an urban environment. The improvement of air quality in Helsinki in the decades following World War II depended not so much on state intervention as on structural economic changes in the context of a crisis in the energy supply and relocation of polluting industries. A less negative view of the role of institutions and environmental policies is taken in Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud's book on the history of industrial pollution in France between the French revolution and the start of World War I, reviewed here by Federico Paolini. Regulations issued in France during the nineteenth century met with a certain degree of success, inducing especially small industries to take measures to improve sanitary and hygienic conditions.

The other review, by Paul Holm, is of Matthew McKenzie's *Clearing the Coastline. The Nineteenth-Century Ecological & Cultural Transformation of Cape Code*, which tells the story of the transformation of a fishing district along the Rhode Island and Massachusetts coast into an uncontaminated natural area set aside for tourism. An important factor in this transformation was the depletion of the coastal habitat and serious environmental deterioration problems as the result of the use of unsuitable techniques such as tub trawls and pound nets, which interfere with the reproductive cycles of marine resources.

Finally, in the "Policies" section we publish a collective study by Michael Goodsite, Catherine Ole Hertel, Lars Moseholm and Wong Mei Ling, bearing witness to the commitment of scientists and officials of large international organizations to the taking of common action to protect the environment based on interstate and intercontinental forms of cooperation. The authors compare different regional policies and actions to investigate possible responses to air pollution problems. They press for an exchange of viewpoints and perspectives among EU and ASEAN countries to determine the most effective approaches to the reduction of environmental and climatic damage caused by air pollution. It is a long-term objective that will require a lot of hard work, but one that needs to be pursued with the utmost determination, as it could help to improve environmental conditions planet-wide. Our journal cannot but offer its wholesale support and encouragement to this endeavor.

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