

BOOK REVIEWS

that the expansion of cane production was a causal element in the increased flooding, a discussion of that causality would have been useful.

A certain ahistoricity of ideas also emerges within the narrative of *The Deepest Wounds*. The military government's emphasis on coordinating large scale production at the national level and the state government's response to flooding by building dams may not be solutions of democratic governments of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries; but they were well within mainstream thinking about economic development of their period, regardless of political orientation. Rogers' assertion that the connection between building dams and 'the state's management of labor relationships[:.] Water was a resource (and potential energy) to be managed; workers were energy to be managed' (pp. 188–189) does not explain the particular forms and consequences of management applied to each resource. None of these questions or concerns about important components of the book's argument, by themselves, is definitive in assessing the book; their cumulative effect reinforces the privileging of perception over action as the book's focus.

Rogers is convincing that [a] 'perspective that naturalizes hierarchies can similarly naturalize the place of workers at the bottom of those hierarchies' (p. 189). *The Deepest Wounds* demonstrates that the cane producing regions of the Brazilian Northeast naturalise hierarchies with workers at the bottom. However, that outcome is not necessary; so, we still do not know why it was the outcome in this place and time. Further, the causal connections between the environment and on workers remain subject to debate. Notwithstanding these concerns, *The Deepest Wounds* is invaluable for understanding the environmental destruction and poverty of the region and for a demonstration of the use of landscape for establishing a larger view of the social relations.

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Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud and Richard Rodger (eds.)
Environmental and Social Justice in the City: Historical Perspectives
Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 2011
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This book explores two areas which have received less prominence in mainstream environmental history than the more traditional concerns of man and nature: urban environmental history and social or environmental justice. Based on a session at the European Association of Urban Historians' conference with some additional commissioned pieces, it includes contributions from Europe and North America covering over 700 years of environmental development touching on both the management of natural resources and the impact of human interventions. The twelve chapters are split into five sections with cross-cutting

themes, such as the interactions of urban and rural, the role of the state, business and elites and the intended and unintended consequences of economic, social and environmental change.

The book opens with an attempt to define and understand environmental justice and inequality in both North American and European contexts. Central to the traditional understanding, derived from work in North America, is a concern with racism built on a suspicion that much environmental injustice, especially when it affects minorities, is consciously enacted. The editors, while questioning the weakness of environmental justice in Europe – in ideological, social and historiographical terms – shy away from adopting the North American model, a position largely justified by the findings of the individual chapters. Indeed, these even begin to question the link between injustice and racial minorities in America, noting that the dynamics of urban development and redevelopment result in constantly shifting neighbourhood social structures. As a result formerly white middle-class areas, with strongly developed environmental amenities, may become home to African American families, as seen in Baltimore by Buckley and Boone, whilst the prosperous populations of gentrifying inner city areas, like those in Joanna Dean's Ottawa, may still have relatively few. Similarly, the need to provide environmental protection to the white middle class may result in a state policy which also benefits minority communities, as Colten observes in his contribution on pre-Katrina New Orleans. However, the issue of ethnic or racial minorities is of limited concern to the contributors addressing European subjects.

Rather it is class which dominates as the key determinant of environmental injustice. Access to wealth and political power was the surest way to maximise environmental goods and minimise dis-amenities while those with less money or power invariably experienced amenity deficient and degraded environments. This was particularly so with access to resources such as water and fuel but also when considering security from natural threats to economic or personal livelihood or the ability to avoid the siting of pollutants in one's surroundings. Thus, as Jonas Hallström demonstrates for nineteenth-century Sweden, new working class suburbs found it very difficult to gain access to adequate water supplies, with town elites blocking requests from fear of increased cost. Similarly, Marcus Stippak shows workers' suburbs in industrialising Germany initially benefitted from a willingness amongst local elites to provide improved services but these were then allowed to decay, especially in the face of intransigence from external bodies such as landowners. The poor were not always weak, however, as can be seen by the effective mobilisation of the Belgian workers against river pollution in the late nineteenth century. In this case, as revealed by Chloé Deligne and Wanda Balcers, around cities like Liege and Ghent anglers' societies mounted a vociferous campaign to see rivers cleaned up and industrialists prosecuted. They built alliances with some bourgeois supporters and achieved limited suc-

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cess when their case was taken up by the labour movement and generalised to an issue of health – though this interest did not survive the First World War.

Those with wealth and power showed themselves able to secure the best environments and the greatest access to resources. Richard Oram's exploration of the transition of urban Scotland from wood and peat to coal as a source of domestic fuel shows that as scarcity and fashion pushed the better-off to switch to coal the management of and access to non-coal sources of fuel changed in ways which disadvantaged the poor. Supplies of wood and peat declined, even in rural areas, while the enormous cost of transporting coal pushed the price beyond the pockets of most urban Scots. The effects of the changing needs and fashions of the urban elite also had severe consequences for communities living in the flood risk areas of the North Sea coast in the medieval and early modern period. Changes in land ownership and in the interests of wealthy town dwellers served to weaken flood defences in Kent, Belgium and Holland, with the result, Tim Soens suggests, that populations declined and livelihoods and even lives were threatened. In these cases the environmental injustices were the unintended consequences of other social changes, especially in land ownership, rather than the result of deliberate policies as contended by some theorists.

Indeed, across these essays there is evidence that environmental disadvantage was a contested issue, especially when it came to the disposal of waste and the impact of new technologies. The difficulties faced by modernist urban planners seeking to develop technological solutions to the growing mountain of human, industrial and domestic garbage are illustrative of these divergent agenda. Thus in Brandenburg Christoph Bernhardt found considerable resistance from rural interests to the move away from sewage farming, whilst Stéphane Frioux's findings suggest the urban French were never completely convinced that the incineration of garbage was an improvement on carting. Similar confusion could be found amongst business leaders and urban elites when it came to industrial environments, as Janet Greenlees' essay makes clear. Focused on the New England textile trade of the early twentieth century, she shows that industrialists could take very different decisions about the need to deploy new technology to meet both commercial and employee welfare ends. Such decisions could be shaped by external factors, such as state pressure or community influence, but in most cases it would appear that conventional investment strategies predominated and that environmental benefits were usually unintended by products.

Overall, this is a useful collection, which begins to place the issue of urban environmental inequalities on the European research agenda. Although the essays are very disparate, exploring a wide range of temporal, spatial and thematic examples, there are underlying continuities and connections which make this a worthwhile introduction to this important methodological approach.

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