

Introducing the New ESEH Presidential Team

We want to thank once more all members of the ESEH for the trust they have placed in us by electing us president and vice-presidents on the occasion of the 2023 ESEH Conference in Bern (the full results of the elections are available on the Society's homepage at <http://eseh.org/election-results-bern-25-august-2023/>). We also want to thank all the other newly elected members of the Board and of the Council of Regional Representatives, as well as the other candidates running for office for their continued commitment to the well-being of our community.

Rather than holders of individual offices we see ourselves as members in a presidential team. This is actually what we called ourselves in an email exchange ahead of a recent Zoom meeting, planned to discuss our next common steps. Even if our statutes do not allow for electoral tickets or the like, we have seen that we are all three very much on the same page as regards the direction we want to give to the Society in the next two years.

Over the years, all three of us have experienced the Society as a true community and its conferences as places of both cheerful conviviality and intellectual discovery. In recent years, going through the dire times of a global pandemic, the ESEH has faced a number of crucial challenges – challenges to which we believe it has responded exceptionally well, proving the strength and resilience of our community. Our primary desire is to foster and nurture this community spirit and make sure that the Society remains as welcoming, warm and inclusive as we have had the good fortune to experience it.

What is clear to us is that the ESEH is the home of all European (conceived extremely broadly, to include Europe's global connections, as well as colonial and imperial legacies) environmental historians, independent of their career stage or whether they practise environmental history within academia or not, and of their multiple identities. We thus pledge to work hard to strengthen and consolidate the Society's activities and policies aimed at supporting early career researchers, alt-ac practitioners and minority scholars. In particular, we really want to find ways to support those scholars who face the stress and precarity of having to live from grant to grant. Considering the Society's finances, this cannot be monetary, but we plan to work to further the existing training, networking and mentoring programmes.

The pandemic was a hard time for everybody, but in the joint responses to the difficulties it produced, the Society and its members have created initiatives that have allowed us to offer to a wider public exceptionally productive virtual discussion and mentoring spaces. These have been vital in helping overcome

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the ever-present risk of intellectual isolation. These initiatives need to become a permanent feature of our Society's life. Along these lines, we also aim to further the Society's interdisciplinary aspirations, in particular by picking up plans made in the past to promote events and seminar series in cooperation with other societies and networks in cognate disciplines. Organisations like the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and Environment (EASLCE), the European Society for the History of Science (ESHS) and the Climate History Network (CHN), as well as more activist or policy-oriented networks such as Historians for Future and the International Panel on Environmental History & Policy (EnvHist4P) come to mind. These obviously are only preliminary suggestions: the list of potential partners could be much longer.

The past board has left important legacies: the Next Generation Action Team (NextGATE); the Bristol-Bern Prize for public environmental history; a larger and more diverse membership. In the spirit of the idea that the growth of the Society as both an academic space and a community depends on building on the many good things that we already have, we pledge to preserve and strengthen these accomplishments. Supporting our early career members through initiatives like NextGATE remains thus our key priority, as is the strengthening of the Society's transnational nature by increasing the involvement of the regional representatives into all the Society's offerings. In the same spirit we will also work on developing the Society's collaborations with the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations (ICEHO), as well as the many societies and networks that represent environmental historians both in various world regions and within Europe.

Covid-19, war, financial instability and the need to lower carbon emissions do mean that more of the Society's activities will take place online. So we need to be pragmatic and further improve our online presence, looking for new ways to involve members and non-members in virtual spaces. This means that we need to think about ways to enhance our communication channels and knowledge-sharing platforms, focusing on online forums and social media engagements to facilitate a culture of knowledge exchange that globally connects us – especially between conferences. Furthermore, we need to extend existing initiatives for collaboration – among researchers, between institutions, between different parts of Europe and between global north and south – by facilitating platforms for interdisciplinary discussions, joint research projects and networking opportunities. Raising money to support such initiatives is not easy, but we all agree that finding ways to offer seed funding for such collaborations would greatly help the growth of the Society as a global community.

Despite, or even because of, the pressures mentioned above, our biennial conference remains the linchpin of the Society: it provides the time and space for us to meet, catch up, share our work, listen to new ideas and approaches. In Bern we enjoyed environment and society – a beautiful city setting, with the

cooling waters of the Aare providing relief from the heat for many conference goers, and lots of opportunities to congregate, greet old friends and meet new ones. We came away from the conference positively buzzing with the intellectual energy and innovative approaches that we encountered. Congratulations to all the Society Prize winners, and thanks to all the judges who formed the different committees. A full list of the prizes and winners is on the ESEH website under 'Awards and Grants'. We'd like to thank once more the organisers of the Bern conference for providing us with such an enjoyable conference. A full conference report will be published as a future Notepad.

And, last but not least, we want to hear from you! In which direction do you think our community should grow? Which activities and initiatives would you prioritise? Would you be willing to serve on one of our amazing committees (a full list is available on the Society's homepage under 'Committees and Councils')? Drop us an email at president@eseh.org. Let's talk!

WILKO GRAF VON HARDENBERG, *president*

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