

President's Message Board

Dear Colleagues,

Just as any organization that is widening its scope and its audience, ESEH must adapt the structure of the society to the new challenges facing environmental history. On one hand, this requires a new society structure with a different, more satisfactory and consensual system of representation, as observed in the last notepad. On the other hand, global concern for the environment is producing many political initiatives affecting the economy, management of environmental resources and the quality of life of the population. In this respect it is widely perceived that there is more need for the active involvement of environmental historians, to inform policy-makers involved in the definition of strategies and actions, as there is also the need to stimulate more research and teaching opportunities.

So far, environmental history has produced an extraordinary amount of research material, particularly in the form of books and articles. However, we rarely see the presence of historians among the scientists supporting the activities of international organizations such as UN, World Bank, FAO, UNESCO, as well as many other continental bodies (EU Commission, European Environmental Agency, etc.) whose activities rely on a wide number of scholars directly or indirectly involved in the production of scientific reports and the formulation of directives and laws applying research findings. This is probably due to the separation still existing between science and humanities, which has also affected other modern historical disciplines, such as historical ecology or forest history. Although much has been done in the direction of integrating the different approaches, there is still a sort of separation between different scientific cultures, often termed as an opposition between “scientists” and “humanists”. Historians are often perceived as lacking an appropriate background to cope with scientific subjects, while scientists coming from natural sciences are seen by historians as too mechanistic, or reductive, in presenting their models of human–environment relationships. The absence of historians in the process of decision-making is sometimes due to their reluctance to accept the challenge of coping with policy-makers, but also to the low estimation of the role of history by other disciplines and several institutions. Although not all research materials are directly useful to the development of environmental policies, a lack of awareness of history is often recognizable in the ineffectiveness and the contradictions of strategies and actions applied, as well as the weakness of many widespread paradigms orienting politicians and public opinion. A typical example of this can be seen

in reactions to the problems with fires that affected many countries in southern Europe during last summer. TV networks, newspapers, politicians, as well as scientists, addressed the issue as a matter of “crimes” and “climate”. According to this perspective fires should be fought by enforcing police control and by fighting climate warming. Unfortunately, this does not take into appropriate consideration the long history of the use of fire in this area, and the need for correct information about its social roots and ecological role.

The lack of attention to history also influences the availability of research funds for this subject, especially at a European level, making very difficult the organization of large research networks, as well as the organization of scientific meetings and the publication of results. In this respect the Board is considering a wide range of initiatives, including the production of book series, the collaboration of ESEH in some international bodies (further covered in this notepad) and the need for exploring funding opportunities or for summer schools. In this respect we again stress the need for all members to support the life of the society, informing about the activities developed by their institutions, the possible involvement of ESEH in national and international organizations, as well as research and funding opportunities that require creating networks taking advantage of our memberships.

Mauro Agnoletti, Vice-President

2009 World Conference on Environmental History

The on-line submission form for the Call for Papers to the World Congress of Environmental History is now active at the web site <http://www.wceh2009.org/>. It can be accessed directly at: <https://wceh2009.ruc.dk/submission> where you will be required to register.

The Congress aims to bring together scholars from all over the globe, providing a unique opportunity to learn from each other and to create overarching perspectives on the historical relationships between people and the environment through time. The development of environmental history has been closely linked to local and regional histories and situations. While this is a strength of the field, it is also a potential weakness. We need to question whether big pictures can be constructed on the basis of more numerous case studies. Do we gain new insights by comparing case studies and drawing conclusions from doing so? Are we able to learn from each other with regard to sources and methods? Can environmental history become politically relevant if we put together empirically sound meta-narratives that go beyond specific times and places?

ICEHO member organizations believe that the answer to all these questions is YES! We therefore seek to devote this World Congress to sharing environmental histories worldwide. In order to broaden our comparative understanding, we seek to highlight places in which no environmental histories have been conducted, or have not yet reached an international audience. For the first time

young scholars and senior academics, environmental historians from all over the world, and with different disciplinary backgrounds will meet in order to further the development of environmental history world-wide.

Interest in the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations (ICEHO) and the first World Congress is growing. ICEHO was established to foster international communication among environmental history organizations. Membership is open to all organizations for which an important component of their focus is the history of the human interaction with the environment. Initial goals for the organization included establishing a web presence, creating a discussion list for member organizations, and periodically organizing an international meeting of member organizations and others. The following organizations have joined ICEHO so far:

- American Society for Environmental History
- Association of South Asia Environmental Historians
- Australian & New Zealand Environmental History Network
- Australian Forest History Society
- Czech Geographical Society
- European Society for Environmental History
- Forest History Society
- German Historical Institute, Washington
- International Water History Association
- IUFRO Research Group 6.07.00 Forest and Woodland History
- Network in Canadian History & Environment
- Otago University, History Department (NZ)
- Sheffield Hallam University
- Sociedad Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Historia Ambiental (SOLCHA)

ESEH Board Meeting in Düsseldorf

The ESEH Board meeting, including all regional representatives, will be held in Düsseldorf on 12–13 January 2008. During the meeting the ESEH Project Plan 2008–2009 is going to be presented. The main items to be discussed are: future conferences, website, bibliography, book series, summer school, regional initiatives, fundraising and communication, revision of constitution, journals, promoting ESEH expertise.

Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe (MCPFE)

During the meeting held in Warsaw on 4–5 November 2007, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forest in Europe has approved a scientific document named “Guidelines for the Implementation of Social and Cultural Values in Sustainable Forest Management”, including it in the next work programme 2007–2012. The document was produced by an international group of experts

chaired by Mauro Agnoletti, vice-president of ESEH and chair of IUFRO 6.07.00, and presents strategies and actions for the inclusion of cultural and historical values in the criteria and indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) developed by MCPFE. The document is important in several ways. Until now the conservation of historical and cultural values has not been included in the concept of sustainability applied to forest territory. In fact, SFM has always been related mostly to the conservation and enhancement of ecological values, while culture played a very small role with no influence on EU forestry policies. During the next work programme the 40 member states of MCPFE will make a decision on the adoption of a final document that will be included in the forest policies of single states and in certification standards. The other important aspect of this initiative is that historians have been called on not only to inform policy makers, but also to suggest actions, finally taking into consideration the importance of historical research. This is an important step ahead for the role of historians in the development and the application of the concept of sustainability, usually managed by scientists coming from the field of biology. Several organizations collaborated with IUFRO and ESEH: European Landscape Convention, UNESCO WHC, World Bank, European Science Foundation, IUFRO Task Force on Traditional Forest Knowledge. The document has recently been published by IUFRO. The printed version is available at the IUFRO headquarters in Wien (office@iufro.org), while the on-line version can be downloaded at www.forestlandscape.unifi.it.

Collaboration with UNESCO

Recently UNESCO asked ESEH to collaborate in the writing of a contribution named "World Environmental History" for the *Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems* (EOLSS) (www.eolss.net), an integrated compendium of sixteen encyclopedias. EOLSS attempts to forge pathways between disciplines in order to show their interdependence and help foster the transdisciplinary aspects of the relationship between nature and human society. It deals in detail with interdisciplinary subjects, but it is also disciplinary, because each major core subject is covered in great depth by world experts. The EOLSS is the result of an unprecedented global effort and a decade of planning.

The World Environmental History is to be like a treatise on the subject and be accessible to a wide audience including non-experts, saying what environmental History is about and presenting a perspective of the subject in all its aspects such as nature, history, overview of development and state-of-the-art. The treatise is to be of value to the various target audiences and should be structured so as to appeal to both the non-specialist and the expert in related fields, seeking a comprehensive understanding of efforts in the subject. The publisher offers an honorarium to all experts willing to write on a specific subject. Those interested in collaborating in this interesting project are invited to get in touch with ESEH by writing to mauro.agnoletti@unifi.it.

European Society for Environmental History

Executive Board:

President: **Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud**, *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales Paris*
 Vice-President: **Mauro Agnoletti**, *University of Florence*
 Vice-President: **Petra van Dam**, *VU University Amsterdam*
 Secretary: **Martin Knoll**, *Technische Universität Darmstadt*
 Treasurer: **Ulrich Koppitz**, *University of Düsseldorf*

Ex officio:

Poul Holm, *Roskilde University*

Regional Representatives:

Benelux, **Adrian de Kraker**, The Netherlands
 British Isles, **David Moon**, England, UK
 Czechia & Slovakia, **Leoš Jeleček**, Czechia
 Francophone Countries, **Stephane Frioux**, France
 Germanophone Countries, **Christian Rohr**, Austria
 Hungary, **Lajos Racz**, Hungary
 Iberian Peninsula, **Antonio Ortega Santos**, Spain
 Italy, **Simone Neri Serneri**, Italy
 Nordic Countries, **Timo Myllyntaus**, Finland
 Russia & additional Eastern European Countries, **Julia Lajus**, Russia

ESEH aims to promote environmental history in Europe, by encouraging and supporting research, teaching and publications in the field. The ESEH maintains its web site at <www.eseh.org>.

Notepad Editor: Martin Knoll

Items for the next Notepad should be sent by 1 April 2008 to the address shown below.

All correspondence should be directed to the secretariat:

c/o Dr. Martin Knoll
 Institut fuer Geschichte
 Technische Universitaet Darmstadt
 Fachbereich 2
 Residenzschloss
 D-64283 Darmstadt
 Germany
 e-mail: secretary.ESEH@geschichte.uni-regensburg.de

Online Access to the current volume of Environment and History is free for ESEH members – ask the Secretary for more details.