

## **President's Message Board**

Dear Friends, Environmental Historians,

In the “project-plan” for 2008–9 the ESEH Board stated: “In order to improve its visibility and credibility and to make its historical expertise available to the civil society, the Executive will promote ESEH as an expert group within international institutions and political bodies such as EU Ministerial Conference and European Landscape Convention.” We have already taken some steps in this direction, as you may recall. Recently, the European Environmental Agency called for experts to join its scientific committee. Among the disciplines identified in the call is environmental history. This is a step in the right direction by policy makers to recognise our discipline, though we cannot yet be too optimistic about the real weight we might have in such an institution. Nor should we be naïve about the meaning and value of “expertise”. Specialists of Science Studies have taught us that scientific expertise is, in itself, a topic of studies, not least a topic for historians, and certainly not a panacea. Nonetheless, we would be inconsistent not to accept this challenge, and try to show why and how environmental historians, and history in general, can be useful to society. Accordingly, at least two members of the ESEH executive will apply to the EEA, and we have tried in the short time available before the deadline for application to encourage the candidacy of senior scholars likely to be appointed. Let's hope that historians will manage to put a foot in the door that has opened partway.

The negotiations with a publisher carried out by Petra van Dam and David Moon to establish a book series dedicated to Environmental History and affiliated to the ESEH are almost completed. Following our call to the membership we received some very good proposals for potential titles.

The 2010 Copenhagen World Congress in Environmental History is shaping up well. Over 650 abstracts for panels, papers and posters have been submitted, covering all continents and all periods of history. The range of themes reaches from A (Air) to W (Wetlands), but the majority of submitted abstracts deals with landscapes, land-use, forests, politics and fresh-water ecosystems. While it will take until spring 2009 for the final programme to come out, it is already clear that the congress will not only feature an excellent scholarly program at three locations (Copenhagen, Roskilde and Malmö), but also a visit to the world-famous Viking Ship Museum (with the possibility of a short Viking cruise) and several outstanding plenary speakers, among them Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen.

Although this Congress is still in preparation, ESEH is already thinking

of its next conference in 2011. I am happy to announce that it will be held in Turku, Finland, and prepared by a local committee chaired by our Nordic Countries Regional Representative, Prof. Timo Myllyntaus. In accepting the Turku application, the ESEH Board was impressed by its high quality. Our Finnish colleagues are already at work to secure funding and the best possible facilities for an international scholarly conference. On our side, let's already think of innovative and thought provoking panels and papers we could propose for this future event.

Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, ESEH President

### **Report on the IVth SOLCHA Conference, 28th–30th May**

Dear Friends,

As Regional Representative of ESEH for Spain and Portugal, I want to report on the conference of Latin American and Caribbean Environmental History, recently held in Belo Horizonte (Brazil, 28th–30th May). This conference with the title *Environmental History and Culture of Nature* was organised by SOLCHA (Sociedad Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Historia Ambiental). It was the aim of the organisers to concentrate efforts of the Latin American environmental history for the future. This effort is particularly interesting for ESEH and SOLCHA as an opportunity to establish links between the two organizations in order to intensify contacts and promote the discussion of a joint agenda of research for Europe and Latin America.

As the broad range of sessions indicates (see list below), the conference in Belo Horizonte may be considered as a substantial scientific success. The range of sessions also represent the agenda of research topics for the future that promote interdisciplinary projects and groups. There is a special focus on the relation between scientific disciplines, the study of socioenvironmental disputes/movements and the most suitable understanding of new forms of “development” in terms of sustainability, a sometimes imprecise historical object of study.

SOLCHA is the recently founded Sociedad Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Historia Ambiental. First conferences had been held in Santiago do Chile, in 2003, and La Habana, Cuba, in October 2004. The appointed president of the Sociedad is Guillermo Castro Herrera, from Panama, and in the following months SOLCHA was legally constituted with its headquarters in Panama. Finally, in Seville, Spain, in April 2006, the first official meeting of SOLCHA occurred at the III Simposio Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Historia Ambiental/III Spanish Meeting of Environmental History, hosted by the Spanish Group of Researchers incorporated to European Society for Environmental History (Antonio Ortega et al., Granada, and Pablo Olavide, Seville). The next conference will be held in May 2010 in city of La Paz (Baja California, Mexico) under the auspices of Universidad Autónoma Baja California Sur and coordinated by Professor Micheline Cariño.

I wanted to offer a brief report about the simposio and thus promote further intensification of the relation between SOLCHA and ESEH. I shall make every effort to increase this level of relationship in the future. For further information, please contact:

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***List of Sessions, IV Simposio de la Sociedad Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Historia Ambiental (SOLCHA), Environmental History and Culture of Nature***

- Conflicts and Environmental Movements
- Nature, Racial Thought and Medical Knowledge, XIXth Century
- Environmentalism and Environmental Science in Latin America
- Environmental Dimension of European Colonialism
- Unsustainable Situation. Environmental Readings of Latin American Literature
- Environmental History and Education
- Environmental History and Science History
- Landscape and Environmental Management
- Cities and Environment in Latin American and Caribbean History
- Cultures and Nature in movement: ideology, geographical imaginary and appropriation of territory in Brazil
- Concepts of Nature and Imperial Culture in England, USA and France, XIXth Century
- Environmental History of a future Technology: the case of ethanol and oil.
- Protected Areas, Appropriation of Territory and Environmental Policies.
- Forest and Economic Modernization.
- Places, Uses and Memory
- Emigration, Colonization and Environmental Impact in South of Brazil and Paraguay.
- Sustainability, Models of Development and History
- Agricultural Frontier and Model of Development; the global and local
- Brazil's Forest: Destruction and Preservation
- Fauna and American History: History and Conservation.
- National Parks of Costa Rica, Ecuador, Colombia and Argentina: Impacts of Society and Role of Science.
- Environmental History, Geography and historical cartography
- Livestock Economies and Environment in Latin American History
- Agriculture and Environment
- Relationship of Environmental History with other subdisciplines of History
- Social Representation of Nature in America
- History, Museum and Material Culture.

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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](http://www.eseh.org)>.

### Notepad Editor: Martin Knoll

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

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