Before coming to the United States, I had heard little about environmental history. Although I was very much aware of its diversity in ideas, perspectives, and theories from my own discipline of history, I had never been exposed to *Umweltgeschichte* or environmental history at my home institution in Germany. It was a graduate course focusing on American environmental history that eventually introduced me to the
field, a circumstance less probable given recent developments and an increasing visibility of European environmental history today.

The evolution of European environmental history makes a survey a worthwhile endeavor and invites reflections on the state of the field. Such a survey and discussion can be nothing more than a broad and incomplete overview. This admission has much to do with variances in discussions, complex language barriers, and my own focus, bias, and limited language competence. As a result, my overview is an incomplete status report and a flawed inventory, meant as a possible starting point for those in need of an introduction to the field. It relies on the support of various colleagues and experts, making it a collaborative effort.

At the same time, I also want to reflect on the use of nature as a vehicle to move beyond European boundaries. After all, as American historians Richard White and Donald Worster argued, environmental history is transnational and possibly even international by nature.

Many recent trends within Europe point in that direction, as scholars and disciplines increasingly collaborate across national borders. The growth and broader appeal of forums

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2 I thank all those who kindly assisted me in framing this paper, many of them simply by responding to one of my emails on h-environment a very long time ago.

like the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH) bear further witness to attempts to institutionalize these discussions. It is vital to continue along this path, thus keeping the interdisciplinary and transnational appeal of environmental history in mind.\(^4\)

Though hoping to move beyond the nation state as a unit of analysis, the following survey relies on exactly that entity as an organizational category. Given the way in which environmental history has come of age in Europe, denying the existence of national conversations seems counterproductive. This essay thus aims to broadly capture major trends in numerous geographic regions, and within broad national contexts, before reflecting on exciting interdisciplinary and transnational conversations. To start from nations that developed their own environmental histories early on is one way to create context and chronology, all the while acknowledging the various coinciding and overlapping layers of conversations within and outside these geographic areas.

The British Isles

British environmental history originated in landscape history and historical geography. According to historian Matt Osborn, “in part, landscape history is rooted in the nostalgia of an industrialized society that has lost an identifying connection to the land”.\(^5\) Following


some early and very descriptive scholarship, W.G. Hoskins’ publication *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955) established the field in many ways. As Osborn notes, Hoskins traced the “historical evolution of the landscape as we know it and simultaneously he traced the outlines of a new interdisciplinary field.” Whereas his publications continue to influence the field of landscape history down to this day, other scholars helped to diversify the discipline as a whole. The objective of historical geography “has been to reconstruct past environments and landscapes.” Apart from influential publications like Robin Butlin’s *Historical Geography: Through the Gates of Space and Time* (1993) and H.C. Darby’s Domesday geographies of England, “recent scholarship in historical geography is more environmentally sensitive and [...] firmly grounded in ecological science”. More recent publications support this interpretation, even if historical geography remains a prime influence on British environmental history.

During the 1980s and 1990s, British environmental history evolved into a more self-aware sub-discipline of history. Geographer I.G. Simmons helped pave the way towards a synthesis of numerous discussions. Along with his earlier book, *Changing the Face of the Earth* (1989), his book *Environmental History: A Concise Introduction*
(1993) helped frame major themes. The self-awareness of the discipline also owes a lot to the work of Scottish historian T.G. Smout. As environmental historian Verena Winiwarter, among others, rightly observed, Smout was “one of the founding fathers of environmental history in Britain in the modern era”. He established the Institute for Environmental History at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland in 1992, thus founding a space to house and institutionalize the discipline. Ever since he has also been involved in further framing environmental history in Great Britain, most notably with his publication *Nature Contested* (2000). In this volume he describes encounters with the natural world by illustrating how the countryside is historically structured around use and delight. Although the book is essentially a local case study focusing primarily on Scotland and Northern England since 1600, Smout paints a broader picture of landscapes, woods of imagination, waters, and fragile hills as features that describe environmental history within this region.

British environmental history also addressed the relations between humans and nature. For example, the impact of humans on nature led to scholarly discussions regarding protection and conservation. John Sheail, in particular, illustrated the history of these aspects in *Nature in Trust: The History of Nature Conservation in Britain* (1976) and *Nature Conservation in Britain: The Formative Years* (1998). Connections to and distinctions from urban history and industrialization are apparent within this field. The impact of nature on humans, on the other hand, was to the fore in several studies

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14 The institutionalization of environmental history is also apparent in various publications, most notably the interdisciplinary journal *Environment & History*.
15 John Sheail continues to work on historical ecology and is currently documenting environmental change at the Center for History and Economics at King’s College (University of Cambridge).
on natural history. Gilbert White’s *The Natural History of Selborne* (1778) remains, in many regards, the founding text for British naturalists, along with more recent publications. Keith Thomas’s *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (1983) and Peter Coates’s *Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times* (1998) provide a broader framework for this kind of work, underlining recent trends that move beyond national contexts.

Imperialism played a major role within environmental history due to the importance of the British Empire. Scholars like Richard H. Grove, Peter Coates, and others repeatedly underscored the importance of encounters with nature abroad, and its effects on the British homeland. Grove in particular “insisted on the importance of the colonial enterprise, especially in Africa, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, for shaping European knowledge of nature”. The seeming abundance of resources away from home differentiated Great Britain from continental Europe, making imperialism a more embedded discourse. It also opened up broader discussions regarding dominating attitudes, as described in *Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times* (1998) and other publications.

British environmental history also focused on pollution. Tied to the importance of the Industrial Revolution and urbanization, the influ-

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ence of economic history is apparent throughout, and embodied most notably by B.W. Clapp’s *An Environmental History of Britain Since the Industrial Revolution* (1994). The city of London and the Thames received lots of scrutiny, though industrial hubs like Manchester have seen some attention as well. Along with the pollution of water, dirty air played a key role. Since studies like *The Politics of Clean Air* by Eric Ashby and Mary Anderson, published in 1981, much has been written on air pollution, most notably Peter Brimblecombe’s *The Big Smoke: A History of Air Pollution in London since Medieval Times* (1987), Stephen Mosley’s *The Chimney of the Word* (2000), and Peter Thorsheim’s *Inventing Pollution* (2006). More recent scholarship has been more receptive towards comparative analysis, an aspect apparent in publications on the history of waste like *The World Turned Inside Out* (2009) by John Scanlan and John F.M. Clark.

Environmental history in the Republic of Ireland follows similar trends. Consequently, overlaps are frequent, notably in the work of T.C. Smout. Historical specificities including a complicated relationship

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with England and severe rural poverty clearly influenced Irish scholarship.\textsuperscript{28} The Irish Environmental History Network, based in Trinity College in Dublin, recently organized, coordinated, and partially institutionalized efforts in Ireland. According to its own description, “the primary goal of the Network is to act as a contact point for researchers in diverse disciplines focusing on the different aspects of Irish environmental history.”\textsuperscript{29} Such efforts seem fruitful given the diversity of research, scholarship, and disciplines coming together to study environmental history in Ireland, even though little has been done on a variety of environmental topics have not been explored in detail as yet.

\textbf{Scandinavia, Iceland, and the Baltic States}

Amongst the Scandinavian nations, and their Nordic relatives Iceland and the Baltic States, environmental history has been on the forefront for several decades.\textsuperscript{30} This is especially true of Finland, which is not surprising, given that, as noted by economic and social historian Timo Myllyntaus, “in terms of the wilderness, Finland is a European superpower”.\textsuperscript{31} Unlike many other European nations, Finland has an element of wilderness (Erämaa) ingrained in its na-


\textsuperscript{29} The Irish Environmental History Network, Trinity College in Dublin, information accessible at, \url{www.tcd.ie/longroomhub/iehn}, last accessed August 26, 2012. On specific research activity, see \url{www.tcd.ie/longroomhub/iehn/audit.php}, last accessed August 26, 2012.


tional identity. The country’s environmental history (ympäristöhistoria) has a long tradition, and Finnish scholars have been investigating relations between humans and nature since the eighteenth century. According to environmental historian J. Donald Hughes, over the decades Finnish scholars focused on “climate, forests, water resources, and landscape”, producing some intriguing, diverse, and internationally oriented scholarship down to the present day.

Timo Myllyntaus divides this long environmental tradition in Finland into three periods. First, there was “the embryonic phase from the 18th century to the mid-20th century”. Early climate history in connection to the Little Ice Age (1500-1870) sparked interest, as did lessons learned regarding the destruction of forests in neighboring Denmark. Finnish scholar and statesman Ernst Gustaf Palmén critiqued historiographical trends stressing the need for dredging in his study of the impact of lowering lake levels. Landscape history has also been important in Finland. Zacharias Topelius’ study on Finnish landscapes titled Das malerische Finnland (1845) is still a milestone in this field. Beginning in the 1950s, Finnish scholars became increasingly interested in foreign models, notably the Annales school, a trend that eventually defined the second period in Finnish environmental history. This lasted until the limits-of-growth debate, a general turning point for environmental history. The current phase, as Timo Myllyntaus describes it, remains diverse, with forays into new fields such as urban environments and catastrophes.

32 As Timo Myllyntaus points out, the literal translation of Erämaa is “hunting ground”, a remote and nearly uninhabited area. Myllyntaus, Writing about the Past with Green Ink cit.
33 Hughes, What is Environmental History? cit., p. 60.
34 Myllyntaus, Writing about the Past with Green Ink cit.
38 Myllyntaus, Writing about the Past with Green Ink cit. See, for instance,
stitutionalization of Finnish environmental history advanced significantly in the last decades, most notably through the creation of the bilingual *Ympäristöhistoria Finnish Journal of Environmental History (YFJEH)*, published by the University of Tampere. There have been significant efforts to connect to international discussions, notably in the form of two conferences held in Finland in 1992 and 2005,39 and a widespread participation of Scandinavian scholars at international venues. This symbiosis of regional interests and international connections should serve as a model in many ways, because it opens up intriguing new discussions beyond national boundaries.

As in Finland, debates on forests, rivers, growth, and ways to institutionalize a growing discipline dominate Swedish environmental history. Institutionalization moved forward more quickly in Sweden than elsewhere in Scandinavia. At the moment, there are three major centers for environmental history in Sweden: the Department of Environmental History at Umeå University, the Center for Environment and Development Studies at Uppsala University, and the Human Ecology Division at Lund University. Leading scholars like environmental historian Sverker Sörlin and L. Anders Sandberg continue to produce exciting scholarship on Scandinavia that focuses on sustainability, biosphere stewardship, and other discourses, showing a remarkable ability to connect and cooperate across borders.40

Trends in Denmark followed in the wake of Finland and Sweden, although clearly emphasizing forest history. Thorkild Kjaergaard’s publication *The Danish Revolution 1500-1800* (1994) regarding the cutting down of trees and its effects on the environment was key


within this discourse, and scholars like Bo Fritzbøger continue to add valuable elements and nuances to this focus. Conservation was also a contested issue early on, which is not surprising, given the long tradition of several environmental institutions in Denmark. The Danish Society for Nature and Conservation, for instance, has been around since 1911, making it one of the oldest naturalist and environmental organizations. More recent contributions, like Copenhagen-based scholar Bjorn Lomborg’s *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (2001) and *Cool it* (2007), focus on global warming, an issue that provides space for trans-national connections.

Environmental history in Norway, Iceland, and the Baltic States is less advanced. Whereas policy-makers in Norway show some interest in environmental resource management, scholarship is surprisingly sparse. The same can be said for Iceland, although connections to the Atlantic resulted in a broader range of scholarship. Most notably, historian Karen Oslund’s *Iceland Imagined* (2011) fueled discussion about this seemingly remote and, in her view, imagined Other. Scholars recently voiced their interest in the Baltic States, as manifested by a call for publications on Baltic food history and a publication on environmental issues in the region. Other examples for such focus include scholarly papers on Latvian Salmon and a panel on “idealized landscape” in Estonia at the annual conference of the American Society of Environmental History in 2009. The future thus looks hopeful for scholars studying this region.

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44 European Society of Environmental History, conference 2003, panel: “History of Latvian Salmon (16th-20th Centuries)”.

Germany, Austria, and Switzerland

In many ways, the German-speaking region remains on the forefront of environmental history in Europe. Grounded in diverse naturalist experiences, trends within Germany, Austria, and Switzerland are deeply intertwined. More transnational cooperation would be desirable, and indeed, recent developments point towards a shift in this direction.

The so-called *Neue Soziale Bewegung* (new social movement) played a key role in the evolution of environmental history in Germany. Deeply intertwined with the anti-nuclear paradigm that developed prior to the catastrophe of Chernobyl, the protests of the 1960s and 1970s, in combination with traditional environmentalism and the fight for conserving the German *Heimat* or homeland, played a key role shortly after WW II. In her study *Nature of the Miracle Years* (2008), historian Susan Chaney, in particular, illustrates how grassroots movements in favor of environmental conservation emerged in the 1950s. A focus on pre-1945 trends, and most notably on National Socialism and environmentalism, spawned further interesting studies. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), *Waldsterben* or forest


dieback, along with the limits-of-growth debate, helped strengthen a variegated movement, from which die Grünen, the German Green Party, eventually originated, at least in part.\textsuperscript{49}

The ultimate success of the Green Party as a political institution solicited lots of scholarship over the years. Petra Kelly’s \textit{Um Hoffnung kämpfen} (1983) became widely read, just as political scientists drove themselves to exhaustion trying to analyze every twist and paradox of a complex and heterogeneous green movement. The contributions of political scientist Gene Frankland remain crucial in this context,\textsuperscript{50} as do some more recent publications.\textsuperscript{51} Other disciplines, including history, contributed more sparsely and with inadequate theoretical underpinnings.\textsuperscript{52} Using existing theoretical frameworks, including \textit{Umweltgerechtigkeit} (environmental justice), could be one way to connect to international discussions.\textsuperscript{53}


\textsuperscript{53} See namely www.umweltgerechtigkeit.de, last accessed December 17, 2012.
The environment in former East Germany has seen surprisingly little attention. Although the country itself has been extensively dealt with in post-1990 historiography, discussions on nature in the German Democratic Republic remain limited. Political scientist Christiane Olivo’s study *Creating a Democratic Civil Society in Eastern Germany* (2001) remains a good starting point, while more dated overviews and recent case studies add some details and nuances.\(^5^4\)

Given an overall rich tradition of environmental thought, attempts to move towards a synthesis are apparent in various publications.\(^5^5\) German historian Joachim Radkau’s *Nature and Power* (2008) and historian David Blackbourn’s *The Conquest of Nature* (2006) emphasize the importance of nature in modern Germany in more recent times. Their studies, along with the work of Thomas Lekan and Frank Uekötter,\(^5^6\) provide concise and useful overviews. Attempts at defining *Umweltgeschichte* or environmental history more clearly are also apparent, most notably in the work of Verena Winiwarter and Frank Uekötter.\(^5^7\) The conference of the European Society for Environment-


\(^5^5\) See, for example, K.G. Wey, *Umweltpolitik in Deutschland: Kurze Geschichte des Umweltschutzes in Deutschland seit 1900*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen 1982.


tal History at the Rachel Carson Center in Munich can help such endeavors. This “international, interdisciplinary center for research and education in the environmental humanities and social sciences”\(^\text{58}\) is playing a major role in the institutionalization of the field.

Environmental history in Austria followed similar trends. As Verena Winiwarter shows, it is catastrophe and protests that originally defined environmental history in this Alpine republic. Martina Lehner’s study and overview titled *Und das Unglück ist von Gott gemacht: Geschichte der Naturkatastrophen in Österreich* (1995) demonstrates this clearly, while specific events like a limestone slide that followed an earthquake in 1348 repeatedly capture scholars’ interest.\(^\text{59}\) Protests against nuclear power plants in the late 1970s have also drawn scholarly attention.\(^\text{60}\) Studies concentrating on national parks have been controversial, while sustainable development remains a key discourse within the recent Austrian environmental historiography. Forest history, of course, had its share of attention, as illustrated by an overview by Christoph Sonnlechner and Verena Winiwarter published in an edited volume in 1999.\(^\text{61}\) More recent publications attempt to extend Austrian environmental history beyond national state borders,\(^\text{62}\) as does Alison Frank in her discussion of the prosperity of Austrian Galicia in connection to oil.\(^\text{63}\)

\(^{58}\) Rachel Carson Center, accessible at www.carsoncenter.uni-muenchen.de/about_rcc/index.html, last accessed September 8, 2013. See also Interdisciplinary Environmental History Research Training Group (University of Göttingen, Germany), accessible at, www.anthro.uni-goettingen.de/gk/english.html, last accessed September 8, 2013.


\(^{63}\) A. F. Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia*, Harvard
Also dominated by the Alps, Swiss environmental history remains closely tied to neighboring Austria. A wide concern for the Alpine environment and scenery in both Swiss and Austrian society translated into a keen interest in environmental protection. Issues like air pollution and environmental destruction also resulted in some studies in Switzerland. Historian Christian Pfister’s work remains the most influential on many topics regarding the history of the environment in Switzerland. Klimageschichte (history of climate) and the debate on catastrophes are also prominent in the country. Although partially outdated, François Walters’s study Bedrohliche und bedrohte Nature (1990) still provides the most succinct overview of environmental history in Switzerland.


The Benelux Nations

The Dutch are the leaders in environmental history in the so-called Benelux nations (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg). This is apparent in the fact that until 1999 a combined Dutch-Flemish initiative published the *Tijdschrift voor Ecologische Geschiedenis* (*Journal for Environmental History*) through Academia Press in Gent, Belgium. Most recently, a new outlet was created, the by now well-established *Jaarboek voor Ecologische Geschiednis* (*Yearbook of Ecological History*), dominated by Dutch environmental history (*milieugeschiedenis* or *ecologische geschiedenis*). The 2007 conference of the European Society for Environmental History in Amsterdam and the *Net Werk* network also underlines Dutch prominence in environmental history in recent years.

Thematically, environmental historians in the Netherlands remain interested in their nation’s struggle against the sea. G. P. Van de Ven’s study on lowlands and the history of water management is a key example for such discussions. The location of Holland at the mouth of various rivers, most notably the Rhine, has attracted significant scholarship as well. Richard Tol and Andreas Langena, for instance, provide a broad overview of rivers in their article “A Concise History of Dutch River Floods”, while Petra Dam and P.H. Nienhuis focus more specifically on certain waterways.

67 Neither Belgium nor Luxembourg have an entry in the *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History.*


Dutch scholarship also frequently connects environmental history to urban environments, industrialization, and landscapes. Paintings encapsulated the importance of landscape early on, leading scholars from numerous disciplines to focus on the construction of nature within this framework.\(^{70}\) Continuing contributions of scholars to environmental policies\(^{71}\) in regard to land-use and other issues show similar influences, while at the same time demonstrating how broader discourses and conversations can influence actual policy-making.

The rich traditions of environmental history in the Netherlands ultimately led to broader overview studies. S.W. Verstegen and J.L. Zanden authored a green history in 1994, followed by an *Environmental Chronology of the Netherlands* (1997) by Henny van der Windt and Nigel Harle three years later. Comparative analyses of environmental consciousness plus the ability to draw on popular images like the Dutch Herring mark recent attempts to reach a broader audience.\(^{72}\)


The situation in Belgium and Luxembourg is comparatively less developed. Discussions in Belgium followed the general trend of environmental history in the Netherlands. Luxembourg has seen little in the way of environmental historical debate, but this is hardly surprising considering the size and environmental makeup of this Western European nation.

**France**

Surprisingly, environmental history in France seems to be a rather recent phenomenon. As Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud stated in 2004, “while for years or even decades disciplines like geography, economics, law, history of sciences or philosophy have all seen the environment as a valuable topic, it was not before the end of the 1990s that the phrase ‘history of the environment’ appeared in this country, with a very small number of earlier exceptions”.\(^{73}\) Massard-Guillbaud herself challenges assertions that the *École des Annales* was pioneering this field, although she does not dismiss its overall contribution to history and its focus on nature.\(^{74}\) Others question this view, as well as the whole notion of the backwardness of French environmental history,\(^{75}\) thereby leaving room for debate.

Topics within the growing field of French environmental history are diverse. Traditional themes like forest history played key roles early on, an interest notably embodied by the Groupe d’histoire des forêts

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françaises.\textsuperscript{76} Some of these discussions even incorporate the imperial experience, as exemplified by Caroline Ford’s article “Reforestation, Landscape Conservation, and Anxieties of Empire in French Colonial Algeria” (2008). Other fields of interest include national parks\textsuperscript{77} and the Alps, the latter being in part connected to the scholarship of neighboring Alpine nations.\textsuperscript{78} Some recent publications focus on rivers, notably the book Confluence: The Nature of Technology and the Remaking of the Rhône (2011), by historian of technology and the environment Sara Pritchard. Apart from providing a stunning, detailed, and coherent study, Pritchard makes a powerful argument for environmental analysis, understood as the “confluence of two fields, environmental history and the history of technology”.\textsuperscript{79} Connections to industrialization and urbanization are apparent when talking about water.\textsuperscript{80} Such discussions generally build upon previous studies, most


\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 11.

notably André Guillerme’s *The Age of Water* (1988). Ecological movements after WW II are the focus of Michael Bess’s *The Light-Green Society* (2003), which connects to similar trends within Germany, especially concerning the importance of the anti-nuclear movement and the development of environmental policies. An enduring scholarly interest in ways to synthesize discussions is evident in several more recent publications, showing that French environmental history has matured dramatically over the last years.

**Italy**

In Italy, environmental history began to emerge as a distinct field of research, as early as the 1980s. Yet even before environmental studies began to take their place among “hobbies for the well-to-do”, divisions along political lines had emerged, as Marco Armiero

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and Marcus Hall, recently demonstrated. Agricultural history, for example, is deeply influenced by Marxism, as exemplified by the work of Emilio Sereni and, more recently, Piero Bevilacqua, with his focus on food and the food supply. Other scholars stand on the opposite end of the political spectrum, adopting a distinctively anti-Marxist and stance in their works.

The focus of environmental historians in Italy has been “a combination of landscape and humanscape, natural and artificial”, with little debate on wilderness. Scholars focus on gardens, as well as forests. Mario Agnoletti “was, and continues to be, the leading forest historian.” New scholarship continues to emerge. An example is the work of Stefania Barca on industrial hazards, labor, and the environment. Some scholars also began to address the theme of the construction of nature. James Sievert, for example, does so in The Origins of Nature Conservation in Italy, published in 2000. These recent trends reflect a wish to diversify the field of Italian environmental history.

A combination of urban and environmental history also had a long tradition in Italy. Embodied by Ercole Sori and others, discussions focusing on the city of Venice continue to mesmerize scholars well beyond Italy. Lidia D. Sciama’s A Venetian Island: Environment,

85 Armiero, Hall (eds), Nature and History in Modern Italy cit., pp. 4-5.
87 Armiero, Hall (eds), Nature and History in Modern Italy cit., p. 5.
89 Hughes, What is Environmental History? cit., p. 63.
History, and Change in Burano, for example, combines ethnography and archive research to capture how the local environment, along with other factors, helped inhabitants to construct their identity;93 Karl Appuhn, instead, uses environmental arguments to explain how Venice moved from its original isolation to becoming a highly dependent city-state.94 Finally, Salvatore Ciriacono addresses the construction of landscapes by focusing on conflicts over water in Venice and Holland, pushing existing scholarly discussions towards a more comparative approach.95 These studies, along with those discussing tourism and transportation, plus the 2005 conference of the European Society of Environmental History conference in Florence, Italy, bear witness to a trend in Italian environmental historiography to look beyond the country’s national boundaries.96

The Iberian Peninsula

Environmental history in the Iberian Peninsula (Portugal, Spain, Andorra) have followed the general European trends, emerging more clearly by the early 1990s.97 Iberian scholars have spent much time on forests, fire, and desertification, given the aridity of the region.98

98 J. Bentley, “Bread Forests and New Fields: The Ecology of Reforestation and Forest Clearing Among Small-Woodland Owners in Portugal”, in Journal of For-
Water was, accordingly, a central focus of early scholarship, such as T. F. Glick’s study of irrigation in medieval Valencia, published in 1970.99 There is an ongoing debate on pastoral lands, which are rarely featured in English publications.100 Such discussions reflect the widespread economic backwardness of the Iberian region, as emphasized by J. Donald Hughes. More recently, however, scholars have also been foregrounding debates on the construction and use of nature, as apparent, for instance, in the work of Martí Escayol and Maria Antònia.101 Surprisingly little is available regarding the influence of the policies of General Franco on the environment, leaving room for additional scholarship in the future.102


The Atlantic Ocean plays a key role within environmental history in the Iberian Peninsula. Historically, it embodies the connection of the region to the rest of the world, most notably in the time of the Iberian Expansion.\(^{103}\) Still, reflections on empires coming out of Spain or Portugal are rare. Instead, various institutions in the region have been using the Atlantic Ocean as a narrative vehicle. The Center for Studies of the Atlantic on Madeira produced several intriguing studies in this vein. A conference on the Atlantic organized by Alber-to Viera in 1999 resulted in an extensive volume.\(^{104}\) Discussions on fisheries, for instance, as found in an essay by Ernesto López Losa,\(^{105}\) impart to these recent conversations a more localized character.

**Greece**

The Encyclopedia of World Environmental History has no entry for Greece, and indeed, the country only recently embraced the field of environmental history. To quote J. Donald Hughes, “The environmental history community in Greece is in the process of formation as of this date of writing”.\(^{106}\) Nevertheless, since 1981 a research project on the “Historical geography of the Greek territory during the Byzantine period” is in place at the Department of Byzantine Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation.\(^{107}\) A conference titled “The Environment in Greece: Historical Dimensions”\(^{108}\) helped spark interest, resulting in a showing of scholars at the 2003

\(^{103}\) The work of Environmental Historian Alfred W. Crosby concerning the Columbian Exchange and ecological imperialism is of key importance in the larger context.


\(^{105}\) European Society of Environmental History, conference 2003, paper by E.L. Losa, *Informal Property Rights and Common Management in the Northern Spanish Fisheries until the Twentieth Century*.

\(^{106}\) Hughes, *What is Environmental History?* cit., p. 63.

\(^{107}\) For more information, see: eseh.org/about-eseh/regions/greece/, last accessed December 18, 2012.

\(^{108}\) This conference took place in Athens, and its official language was Greek.
Environmental Society of Environmental History conference in Prague and the 2005 conference in Florence. The growing need for some institutionalization has been met by postgraduate courses available at the University of Athens since 2009, where research and teaching generally focus on the environmental history of the southeastern Mediterranean in the early modern period. An international workshop with the University of Minnesota titled “The Mediterranean and its seas: natural, social, political landscapes and environments” in 2009 underlines such growth of environmental history in Greece, which hopefully will translate into more publications, especially in English.

**Eastern Europe**

Environmental history in Eastern Europe (here under this heading I will be referring mainly to the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland) evolved in a significantly different manner than in the ‘West’. After being influenced by totalitarian state structures and collective environmental polices, the end of the so-called Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a turning point for environmental history in this region. Until then, courageous scholars and individuals had repeatedly critiqued flaws in environmental policies and denounced pollution, environmental degradation, and other hazards behind the Iron Curtain. Referring to this area collectively as Eastern Europe seems thus appropriate, while accounting for vast geographic, cultural, and political differences.

The Czech Republic and, to a certain extent, Slovakia, currently

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109 For more information, see: eseh.org/about-eseh/regions/greece/ cit.


play a leading role in Eastern European environmental history. Environmental history grew remarkably in each individual national context throughout the 1990s. Leos Jelecek first introduced environmental history in the Czech Republic after his research fellowship with Donald Worster in Kansas. Long-term studies on land-use and land-cover changes, as well as climatology, also saw increasing attention, as J. Donald Hughes points out. Attempts by Charles University in Prague to capture all of these developments reflect recent desires to institutionalize and accommodate a growing field. The conference of the European Society of Environmental History in Prague in 2003 and continuing international participation of leading scholars from the Czech Republic in the annual conference of the American Society for Environmental History demonstrate a continuing commitment to the growth of the field.

In Hungary, environmental history grew out of a long tradition of historical geography. Scholars like Pal Beluszky, Sandor Frisnyak, among others, widely influenced the field. Interdisciplinary approaches including geography, geology, meteorology, and history illustrate the potential of environmental history in the Carpathian Basin. Apart from the importance of Hungarian geologist Laszlo

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113 B. Moldan, T. Hak, Czech Republic 2000: Ten Years on: Environment and Quality of Life after Ten Years of Transition, Charles University, Prague 2000.


Kordos, an emphasis on landscape and forests defined as historical ecology continues to characterize the field as a whole. In many ways, historical ecologist Péter Szabó embodies this approach.

Water history with specific reference to the Danube River resulted in lots of scholarship in Hungary. Though more research is necessary, the most recent study by John Fitzmaurice, titled *Damming the Danube* (1996), underlines the possibilities of this approach. To utilize the Danube River as medium for discussing Eastern European history would help scholars to think outside national categories.

Similarly to the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, environmental history in Poland only fully evolved in the last decades. Influenced by geography and its continuing prevalence at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, forest history plays an important role in Poland. Tomasz Samojlik, for instance, focuses on the environmental history of forests within the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Scholars from the department of plant ecology in Gdansk,


122 For recent developments, including a collaborative project, see, for exam-
historians, and archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw continue to diversify the field. The interest of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry in the field at large and the recent addition of climate history indicate that there are possibilities for growth in the coming years.

**Russia**

Russian environmental history remains important within the general framework of the historiography of Eastern Europe. Historically, geography played a key role in the development of Russia. Not surprisingly, historical scholarship addressed environmental aspects early on. Local as well as non-native scholars originally focused on the environmental impact of totalitarianism, giving rise to a diverse and complex field of study focusing on the legacy of the Soviet state. Scholarship diversified even more after the fall of the

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USSR. The leading foreign scholar on Russian environmental history remains historian Douglas Weiner, although there have been other important contributors to this field. A recent overview study published by Cambridge University Press titled *An Environmental History of Russia* (2013) promises to give the field a push. The Institute for the History of Science and Technology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and a budding Russian Green movement outline current trends; these developments may open up new paths, or at least lead to new ways to frame coherent overviews of Russian environmental history.

**Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania, and the Balkans**

Beyond these Eastern European nations, environmental history has seen little attention. The disaster in Chernobyl persists as the most important focus within discussions in the Ukraine and

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Belarus, while Romania and Bulgaria have seen little scholarship focusing on the environment. The Balkans witnessed some early studies and discussions, most notably by historical geographers. This trend endures in locations like Croatia, where comparatively advanced discussions of environmental history are to the fore. In Serbia, on the other hand, the field is in its embryonic stage, making scholars like Jelena Mršić a lonely voice in what is still a growing discipline.

**Moving Beyond the Nation State?**

This brief and in many ways incomplete overview highlights at least three points. First, environmental history clearly experienced a major boost in the 1990s. This is when it was institutionalized in universities and networks, and increasingly in the ESEH. The end of the Cold War, the continuing sway of U.S. environmental history, and more specific and localized events may help to explain this bloom. Second, discussions amongst scholars within different nations are surprisingly similar in regard to chronological developments and themes. Though still diverse in many aspects, topics like forest history, climate history, and a discussion of environmental movements are present in almost all national contexts. This makes comparative discussions across borders possible. Take, for example, forest history. In Great Britain, this field

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connects primarily to landscape history, while in Scandinavia there is a trend to categorize forests as wilderness. While “comparative and transnational projects remain rare”, recent research has been encouraging for scholars working in a comparative and transnational perspective. J.R. McNeill’s statement that environmental history is “as interdisciplinary as intellectual pursuits can get” is applicable to European environmental history in many ways. Third, while scholars in other fields generally fear to sit between two different disciplinary chairs, from the start the rise of environmental history in various academic settings invited more collaboration across disciplines. Such an ability to transcend disciplinary frameworks and, at times, isolationist academic approaches, is a key advantage that needs to be preserved within emerging institutions. The RCC in Munich, the ESEH, and other institutions underline the opportunities ingrained in this approach. The ESEH in particular is playing an increasingly important role and should continue working on ways to connect scholars in Europe.

Recent attempts to give major trends a transnational format are indeed encouraging. Edited volumes like *Shades of Green* (2006), *Common Ground* (2010), and *Soils and Societies* (2010) are useful, as are thematically organized volumes like *The Turning Points of Environmental History* (2010). The latter, for instance, focuses on agriculture, forest history, desertification, and urban history, transcending artificial national boundaries. In other cases, promising vantage points are apparent. As J. Donald Hughes pointed out, “the Mediterranean is a unique ecological region with the central sea as its unifying feature. [...] The environmental history of the Mediterranean as a whole has been well treated”. Connecting discussions to tourism, irrigation,

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139 Winiwarter, Knoll, *Umweltgeschichte* cit., p. 15.
and other issues seems worthwhile, and would help moving even more towards a transnational history. At the same time, other water bodies and oceans have still seen less scrutiny. This includes the Baltic and North Seas, although some publications on them have seen the light since the early 2000s. Mountain regions provide a similar starting point, and some areas, like the Alps and the Pyrenees, have seen some scholarly discussions. Scholars rightfully underscore embedded possibilities when discussing a geographical region like the Pyrenees, noting how “through interpreting landscapes as inextricable combinations of social and natural valuable and of social and natural chronologies, we attempt to overcome the all-too-familiar nature-society dichotomy” and move beyond the nation state.


Institutionalizing such transnational cooperation is key to producing studies on larger geographical and environmental units. Scandinavia is, in many ways, on the forefront of this effort. Rooted in Umea, the Nordic Environmental History Network has become a powerful organizational structure. According to its self-description, “this network proposal aims to support knowledge exchange and learning across borders and institutions. Since Nordic environmental historians are often located in an institution with few other environmental historians, there is a need to build stronger external networks and a sense of academic community”. Moreover, through a series of workshops it plans to “discuss how to grow environmental history as a discipline, discuss how Nordic environmental history can and should be written, make a concrete plan for educating our future researchers, and identify future collaborative projects and funding sources”. These recent developments show that J. Donald Hughes was right when he predicted a “rapid growing activity in environmental history” within Scandinavia. Attempts to return to a more transnational focus by discussing, for instance, the Baltic Sea, would certainly help the evolution of the field at large. An approach of this kind has been adopted in the Balkans, where the project Triplex Confinium adopted such an approach, connecting Croatia, Austria, and Hungary, and thereby also opening up new possibilities for research from an environmental historical angle.

148 Ibid.
149 Hughes, What is Environmental History? cit., p. 60.
Apart from specific regions, certain vehicles continue to offer useful narratives to transcend national boundaries. Christof Mauch and Thomas Zeller, for example, discuss rivers and waterways in Europe and North America.\(^\text{153}\) The contributions in their edited volume, along with excellent historiographical introductions by the editors themselves, underline the usefulness of rivers. The Rhine and the Danube have seen such scrutiny, while other waterways have still gone largely unnoticed.\(^\text{154}\) Cities also offer scope for useful storylines and comparative discussions, as apparent in Dieter Schott, Bill Luckin, and Genevieve Massard-Guilbaud’s edited volume *Resources of the City* (2005).\(^\text{155}\) Specific narratives framed around themes like fire, climate, animals, food, or disease further highlight the potential of transnational frameworks.\(^\text{156}\) Studies on disease, in particular, remain limited, as rightly noted by Sverker Sörlin and Paul Warde in


\(^{154}\) M. Cioc, *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography, 1815-2000*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 2002. See also recent projects of the Center for Environmental History in Vienna, Austria.

\(^{155}\) See also American Society of Environmental History, conference 2012, panel: “Waste Scavenging in London, Berlin, and Cairo”.

2005. As they put it: “for Crosby the coming of smallpox and other diseases to the New World was part of ‘ecological imperialism’, yet to our knowledge no-one has seriously analysed the Black Death as the result of reconfigured trade relationships, social mobility, or a phenomenon related to environmental history”. This is also true of discussions of war and imperialism, although both themes have seen some encouraging new conversations. In sum, European environmental history shows a promising trend towards interdisciplinary, increasingly transnational, and certainly exciting inquiry.