

## **Greening Europe**

# **Contemporary European History**



Edited by  
Corinna Unger and Matthias Middell

## **Volume 1**

# Greening Europe

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Environmental Protection in the Long Twentieth  
Century – A Handbook

Edited by  
Anna-Katharina Wöbse and Patrick Kupper

**DE GRUYTER**  
OLDENBOURG

ISBN: 978-3-11-060965-3

eBook ISBN (PDF): 978-3-11-066921-3

eBook ISBN (EPUB): 978-3-11-066578-9

ISSN 2627-0366

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2021941879**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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Cover image: Knechtsand 1957, Archive Stiftung Naturschutzgeschichte

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

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# On the “Contemporary European History” Handbook Series

Do we need a new handbook series on contemporary European history? Asking this question leads to a range of related questions. At a time when the idea of “Europe” and the project of European integration are being questioned by some and defended by others, what is the role of historians in writing about Europe? What kind of historical accounts do they have to offer? Should they point out the complexity of European societies and histories as reasons for the difficulties in creating a “European identity,” or should they emphasize the degree to which European integration has successfully taken place on different levels? Should they analyze the tension between national, regional, and local factors in shaping the self-understanding of individuals and social groups, or should they concern themselves more with the functioning of transnational and supranational structures of Europe? More generally, is it at all possible to cover European history in a handbook format? If so, which definition of Europe should serve as the conceptual framework connecting the various volumes, which regions should be included or excluded, and which actors should stand at the center of attention?

These questions are difficult to answer but useful to ask because they alert us to the challenges historical research on Europe currently faces. Fortunately, we do not stand empty-handed in front of these challenges. For one, the field of European history has developed remarkably over the past two or three decades, not only within Europe but also in many other parts of the world where Europe has become an increasingly interesting object of investigation since it suggests itself to comparisons and presents an important hub in a connected world. Secondly, the traditional identification of Europe with Western Europe has been challenged by a new generation of historians who are writing histories that leave behind narrow dichotomies like East and West, North and South. Thirdly, European history is no longer presented as a loose bundle of national entities and their predecessor states but is seen more as an assemblage of various imperial structures. These developments have resulted in a research perspective that looks at the interaction between the metropolises of the European empires as well as their colonies and other seemingly peripheral regions. European history is now understood as having been profoundly shaped by empires “striking back.” Relatedly, many historians have replaced diffusionist approaches with concepts like circulation and reception. Finally, the dialogue with global history has challenged traditional periodizations of European histo-

ry. While the Eurocentric view privileged inward-looking perspectives, the integration of transregional comparisons has produced more nuanced ideas about the relevant timeframe. Contemporary history as the history of trends familiar to contemporaries is not necessarily the history of present times. It has been argued that the history of modern globalization dates back to the mid- or late nineteenth century. Europe has played an important role in such processes, and in many ways its current shape is a product of those processes. This is not to deny the relevance of caesuras like the two World Wars and the end of the Cold War, but it highlights the complicated relationship between politics, economics, the cultural, and the social in the history of a large space like Europe. Not all pieces of this puzzle are following the same logic, as we have learned from recent historical research that has gone through the postmodern school of accepting fragmentation as a crucial feature in society.

The Contemporary European History handbook series responds to this situation and draws on it as inspiration and opportunity. Instead of lamenting the difficulties of neatly defining “Europe,” the series consciously embraces a multifaceted approach to studying contemporary European history, one which is driven by an understanding of “Europe in the world” rather than considering Europe a closed entity. Without giving up the belief that some historical accounts are more accurate and persuasive than others, the series emphasizes the multiplicity of approaches and interpretations available and presents them as possibilities to be tested against future research.

To live up to this agenda, this series avoids the more conventional structure of handbooks as it has been common in the past, when volumes were built on categories like “nationalism,” “violence,” “economy,” “social movements,” and “gender.” Contrastingly, the Contemporary European History series puts human activities at the center of attention: “Reading,” “cooking,” “administering,” “communicating,” “protecting,” “selling,” “working,” “protesting,” and “musicking,” to name just a few. This allows the volumes to reach across regional and temporal divides, to include a variety of methodological and conceptual approaches, and to provide the basis for comparisons that promise to shed new light on European history. In avoiding narrow and, at times, artificial categorizations, and by promoting an activity-centered view, this handbook series aims to offer a fresh view of European history that reflects the rich body of research available and the methodological diversity that mark the field.

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Patrick Kupper and Anna-Katharina Wöbse

# 1 Introduction: Writing a European History of Environmental Protection

On a chilly and cloudy September morning in 1957, a huge flag was hoisted on a sand bank far out in the German Wadden Sea. It displayed a large green E upon a white field: the emblem of the European Movement. Accompanying the flag were some 300 women and men, many of them barefoot and wearing mackintoshes, who had set out to occupy this barren and uninhabited sandbank. They were protesting against the site's use as a bombing range for British and American air forces stationed in England (see book cover). The occupation of the sandbank reveals a curious moment in European history. What had started as a local campaign by local fishermen worried about their safety and the future of their fisheries in the early 1950s had gained wider attention when some bird lovers had discovered that large numbers of waterfowl were falling prey to the military exercises. Of particular concern was the fact that the dying birds were not just ordinary resident species, but shelducks, migratory birds that came to the area for their seasonal molting. Every summer large flocks travelled from Ireland, Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Denmark to the shallow waters of the Knechtsand area of the Wadden Sea. A local and private interest in preservation now turned into a transregional affair. Backed by growing networks of activists and ornithologists, a campaign was launched to draw attention to the terrible consequences of the bombing for the "European" shelduck population. The horde of rebels who now assembled under the European flag were a heterogeneous lot: youth and naturalists' organizations, left-wing peace activists, conservative politicians, delegates from the regional tourist trade, traditional bird watchers, and envoys of animal welfare groups had joined forces to urge for putting an end to the bombing and turning the sands into a nature reserve. Just as their flag signalled the campaign's pan-European ambitions, so too did the icon of the shelducks

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**Note:** We would like to thank all authors for sharing their expertise and ideas. We are also indebted to the inspiring networks of environmental historians: The Rachel Carson Center in Munich was the place where the very first concept of this book was presented and discussed in May 2018. The European Society for Environmental History gave us the opportunity to discuss first drafts at the ESEH conference in Tallinn in summer 2019. We are grateful to Tabea Rittgerodt and Jana Fritsche of de Gruyter/Oldenbourg; Brenda Black and Katharina Middell have supported and expedited our work immeasurably with revising and editing our manuscripts. Finally, we thank Matthias Middell and Corinna Unger for initiating the handbook and for their constructive commenting.

represent European ecological relations and dependencies. To be sure, not all of the activists were enthusiastic proponents of a united Europe, but the framing seemed to help their (local) cause. The flag attached to the issue of the birds provided a convincing narrative about shared responsibilities and heritage. Its transnationality even offered an alternative interpretation of European relations and identities in times of growing geopolitical tensions between East and West. Within that very same year, the area was declared a nature reserve by the German state of Lower Saxony, and Allied forces moved to new bombing ranges. This early European environmental initiative subsequently drifted into obscurity. Some decades later, however, the site would be integrated into a large national park system. Today, the Dutch, German, and Danish Wadden Sea is protected within the framework of several European directives and international agreements such as the World Heritage Convention.<sup>1</sup>

The snapshot of the Knechtsand occupation exemplifies the multifaceted past of actors and “non-traditional” activities which were part of the emergence of what we perceive as “Europe” today. It also shows how actors and their activities made environmental protection an issue beyond their own region and nation-state: by connecting to like-minded women and men in other parts of Europe or even beyond, by building transregional and transnational networks, which they sometimes labelled European, and by framing their concerns as being of European and sometimes global relevance. Furthermore, the example highlights how environmental activists aligned nature with political agendas in their campaigns. It was the migrating habits of the “European” shelducks, which both encouraged the activists to reach out and to make their cause European and provided them with convincing arguments to finally triumph over a powerful opponent.

As this book will show, the history of the Knechtsand is just one of many historical episodes in the twentieth century which can only be fully grasped when considered in both a contemporary European and an environmental history perspective. To this end, the authors trace how people all over Europe framed natures and environments over the course of the twentieth century, and the ways their societies used, consumed, and protected them as matters of European relevance and concern. This provides us not only with insights into what certain people thought of as needing to be addressed at a European level but also how these people conceived of Europe. Indeed, some of the issues that were perceived as “European” at the time appear in a historical analysis as questions that were either much narrower (local and provincial) or broader (global and international).

The book title *Greening Europe: The Protection of the Environment* evokes the idea of people getting involved. Taking up on the series editors’ idea of putting activities at centre stage, the volume focuses on the many ways people have in-

teracted with nature and made it an issue of European concern. As will become clear in the course of this book, European environmental engagement is the outcome of a many diverse activities, including counting, visualizing, tracking, contextualizing, signing petitions, erecting fences, writing, networking, protesting, and anticipating. In their investigation of such activities, the book chapters ask who these actors were, what were their motives and means, and how notions of Europe mattered in these environmental activities. As such, each chapter exposes some of the many entanglements of activists across the subcontinent who set out to connect, network, and exchange knowledge, worldviews, and strategies beyond their national horizons. However, the actors and activities that this book traces are not limited to humans. Indeed, taking into account the agency of nature or the environment is at the heart of what environmental history can contribute to our understanding of European history. Thus, this book includes the eminent role nature played in “making” and “doing” Europe and “being” European. It asks how the changing physical environment affected both human and non-human activities and, conversely, how those activities affected the European environment.

## 1 European Environmental History

Writing European history in a truly transnational and European manner that goes beyond comparative studies is challenging. Almost every scholar of European studies has been struggling to get hold of the subcontinent’s geographical, cultural, political, and socioeconomic character. Europe’s fluidity and its ever-shifting meanings are a constantly recurring theme in the historiographic literature.<sup>2</sup> As soon as we try to nail it down it fades, blurs, and starts to change. It is always ready to elude our definitions. Thus, most historians of Europe avoid giving a definition in a strict sense but instead point to the fluctuating nature of the subject. To the editors of *European History Online*, for instance, Europe is a “constantly changing communicative space which witnessed extremely varied processes of interaction, circulation, overlapping and entanglement, of exchange and transfer, but also confrontation, resistance and demarcation.”<sup>3</sup> Such a framing describes the need for an open and process-orientated approach towards researching European history. It cannot be fixed to stable geographies or territories and the idea of Europe extends beyond a mere physical space in many ways. Recent historiographical accounts of “Europeanization” have likewise emphasized that this process should be understood as being non-linear, consisting instead of parallel and often fragmented developments.<sup>4</sup>

The key feature of environmental history is its inclusion of nature in the historical analysis. It asks how societies have interacted with ecological processes in the past and how humans have related to the rest of nature.<sup>5</sup> This means that humans are understood as being at once part of nature and separate from nature, and that societies are intimately connected to their environments. Environmental history explores how these dialectic relationships between humans and nature and between societies and environments evolved over time. It is most interested in the reciprocal influences that shape both societies and environments. Two basic approaches to environmental history can be distinguished: a materialist and an idealist one. The materialist approach focuses on the reconstruction of past environmental conditions and material interactions between societies and the environment. The idealistic approach is interested in how people perceived and evaluated their changing environments and how these perceptions and evaluations are reflected in the discourses, symbols, and actions of societies and individuals. While the materialist approach reconstructs and analyses human-environment relations on a structural level, the idealistic approach focuses on the human actors and how they attribute meaning and to what. In the early years of environmental history, extensive debates were held as to which of these approaches should have priority. But as the field has established itself, these debates have ebbed away and made way for the insight that not only is there room for both approaches, but both approaches are a necessary part of a comprehensive environmental history. Only by combining the two can the vision of environmental history be realized: to represent past societies in the interactions with their environments. “That vision is inclusive – neither simply idealist nor only materialist, but always necessarily both.”<sup>6</sup> With its focus on human activities, this handbook leans towards the idealistic side, but it also takes into account the material dimensions of past environmental interactions as well their non-human participants.

Environmental history, still a rather new field, has grown considerably over the past few decades. Inspired by the “environmental turn” in the early 1970s, it emerged in the United States and developed into a solid field of research in the 1980s, historicizing contemporary environmental problems like resource depletion and the pollution and degradation of air, water and land. In Europe, the discipline began to flourish in the 1990s and saw considerable growth of research that led to the launching of the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH) in 2001. Although the ESEH’s biannual conferences encompass a rich variety of research fields that examine the many European entanglements of human-nature relations on a regional, national, and sometimes transnational level, a truly European environmental history has yet to be written.<sup>7</sup> This is also true for the history of European nature protection and environmental acti-

vism. Accounts of European environmental history have emphasized the tremendous difficulties of writing anything like a *grande histoire* due to the heterogeneous nature of the subcontinent.<sup>8</sup> The splendid encyclopaedic book series *Making Europe* tackled this challenge by viewing European history and its continuities and transformations through the lens of technology.<sup>9</sup> Volume 3 of the series, which looks at Europe's infrastructure transition, in particular explores how infrastructure projects fundamentally transformed the natural environments of Europe and points to some initiatives and activities that set out to channel, manage, and sometimes even stop such transformations.<sup>10</sup> Our book takes a similar approach, which draws on the strengths inherent to environmental history, namely, offering a perspective that not only transcends traditional national historiographies but also thinks in different spaces, timeframes, and chronologies and refers to other turning points than those marked by political history.<sup>11</sup> When looking at a European environmental chronology, the most fundamental shifts in human-nature relations are not necessarily found in events on the world stage, but in changes in energy systems, exploitation of natural resources, and land-use patterns. The global transfer of species since 1500 ("Columbian Exchange"), the multiple agrarian and industrial revolutions from the eighteenth to twentieth century, and the oil-fuelled "Great Acceleration" since the 1950s are key entries in such a chronology. Looking at conservation and environmental movements, we find strong evidence of turning points at around 1910 and in the early 1970s. During the decades around 1900, there was a tremendous acceleration in the exchange of concepts, scientific knowledge, terminology and strategies. International and European conferences increased, as did the output of publications and campaigns. While the World Wars hindered collaboration and networking of activists, they did not stop these activities in the long run. The late 1960s set the stage for a new global environmental awareness, which fostered initiatives that were fundamentally European in their conception. In both cases, the preceding decades had witnessed a steady growth in activity which was then translated into political programmes and action.

## 2 Conceptual Approaches

Conceptually, this handbook is, first, not just about environmentalism, but rather about the broader history of how women and men have protected their environments. Environmentalism generally refers to the political and ethical movement that evolved in the 1960s and incorporated various types of efforts to change human-nature relations. The history of environmentalism is part of this handbook, but it reaches beyond a genealogy of a social movement and

is instead interested in the larger picture of how European environmental relations today are historically framed by the many ways people have questioned and managed nature in the past.

Second, the focus is on contemporary history, but it does not stop there. A *longue durée* perspective helps to understand how environmental relations and interactions evolved over time. This becomes evident when realizing that modern European concepts of dealing with nature have their roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> For example, the term “sustainability” was coined in the period of mercantilism in the early eighteenth century, while nature conservation as a moral endeavour and an organized enterprise emerged at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century but was influenced by earlier Enlightenment and Romantic thinking and feeling. The term “environment” was established in the early decades of the twentieth century by the zoologist Jacob von Uexküll to describe the specific settings of all living creatures including all the relations between them. It was only roughly 50 years later, in the late 1960s, that the term was endowed with socio-political connotations and became a key concept in the global ecological discourse.<sup>13</sup> These examples illustrate that when thinking and writing about contemporary European history of environmental protection we would be well advised to not narrow our focus on the time post-1945, but to include the long twentieth century, starting in the late nineteenth and reaching into the twenty-first century, and to occasionally extend the analysis even further back.

Third, given the heterogeneous and changeable historical character of the subcontinent, we do not attempt to cover all environmental issues in all parts of Europe throughout the twentieth century. The chapters of this book display not only the diversity of European natures but also the variety of ways that actors chose to approach these natures. The chapters also highlight the actors’ search for a European nature and how they related such a nature to the one on their doorsteps as well to the ones they may have experienced outside of Europe. Most chapters have more to say about Western and Northern Europe and less on Eastern and Southern Europe. On the one hand, this mainly reflects the state of research in environmental history, which has been pursued more extensively in some parts of Europe than in others. On the other, almost all of the chapters also demonstrate how environmental issues transcend the East-West and North-South divide still common in European historiography and anticipate what new findings might derive from future research.

Fourth, we would like to emphasize environmental history’s focus on mutual relations between humans and the rest of nature. This implies taking physicality seriously. An environmental historian’s perspective on European history embraces historical aspects of materiality and spatiality and the many ways people



have interacted with the continent's physical features and attributes and vice versa. In order to understand the particular trajectory of Europe's environmental regimes and values we have to consider Europe as both a shared social and geographical space. We have to correlate spatial dimensions with political, socio-economic, technical, and cultural aspects to find out how humans, animals, plants, and microorganisms as well as environmental ideas, concepts, and concerns travelled across and beyond the continent, and thereby created both a European environment and the endeavour to protect it.

By correlating these activities, it becomes possible to understand the fundamental tension in European developments with regard to the environment. Consider, for example, the dichotomy evident in EU politics: We can literally watch the environmental degradation caused by European policy instruments – the EU's system of agricultural subventions is just one of many. Yet, simultaneously the EU has created instruments to contain or at least regulate ecological degradation – like the Natura 2000 network. In order to demonstrate these ambivalences and irritations it is therefore essential, fifth, to avoid simplistic stories of either progress and consolidation or degradation and loss, but rather to look for stories of the paradoxical and the incommensurate and of the simultaneous and conflicting, which are decisive for understanding the complexity and non-linearity of European history.

Sixth, this handbook follows the paths taken by historical actors involved in diagnosing and framing fundamental problems that evolved from the use of the environment. It sets out to write environmental history by looking at those approaches which used Europe as a frame of reference for protecting the environment and by identifying those initiatives which developed Europe-wide momentum. Who were the actors who watched, measured, and questioned changes in the human-nature relation and examined the fundamental shifts in using and exploiting, exploring and protecting nature in a European context? While politicians, bureaucrats, experts, and scientists are obvious participants in these histories, who else was involved? What about hunters, birders, tourists, teachers, foresters, people living along major transit routes or near nuclear power stations, what about people who wanted to be able swim in rivers again? What about non-human participants such as eels, beavers, and quails? The activity-centred approach can help to overcome the vagueness that often comes with attempts to write histories of Europe. Looking for human and non-human actors in European environmental history makes it possible to reveal not only the diversity of ways of dealing with nature but also the many inconsistencies and asynchronities in the making of modern Europe. Another advantage of the activity-centred approach is that it keeps us from receding behind the passive voice that is so widespread in narratives of Europe. Europe might be an “imagined community” but

from an actor's point of view it is much more than just a metaphor, but a reality whose contours can be seen and traced.

Seventh and finally, the chapters endeavour to identify European moments of contact and collaboration across borders and regions that were rooted in environmental concern and action. European moments may embrace individuals as well as groups of women and men who interacted across national borders, created regulatory mechanisms for their transnational cooperation, and founded organizations or established other forms of European networks. Of especial interest are those contact zones and paths of exchange of knowledge, strategies, and agendas that allowed an environmental agenda to emerge. Such agenda-building often resembled a sedimentation process. Bilateral or multilateral relations allowed for cooperation that was increasingly oriented towards Europe and understood European integration as a frame of reference. "Europe" or arguing in terms of the "European" became a kind of hallmark or promise that endowed efforts with legitimacy and helped to create a sense of something like European solidarity in civil society, but also promoted competition and rivalry among actors. This process never went uncontested and was anything but a smooth and direct journey towards European unification, modernization, and liberalization. Rather, the activities and negotiations always stirred protest, caused misunderstandings and had to confront criticism and scandals.

### 3 Structure of the Book

This volume is about the European history of protecting the environment. It is not meant to be encyclopaedic in nature. Rather, the individual chapters offer insight into some of the key issues that proved crucial for the European history of environmental debates and activism. The 15 chapters are divided into three sections representing the main fields of activity of environmental protection: I. Conserving Nature, II. Sustaining Livelihoods, III. Preserving Environments. While the chapters of section I and II cover all of the long twentieth century, the chapters of section III focus more closely on the "environmental" decades since the 1970s.

Section I *Conserving Nature* assembles five chapters that mainly deal with the conservation of habitats and species and refer to the concept of shared agency. All of them explore cases in which men and women started to frame species and spaces as being of European significance and what role flora and fauna played in such debates and discourses. Chapter 2 by Anna-Katharina Wöbse looks into the environmental history of European bird politics and shifting human-animal relations over the twentieth century. The activities, habits, and

routes of migrating birds forced scientists, activists, hunters, farmers, and politicians to take into account spatial and ecological dimensions that lay beyond their spheres of influence. Birds triggered activities that were European in scope: efforts to count, watch, monitor and protect migrating birds were joined by the negotiation, and drafting of laws concerning pan-European species. Thus, the history of bird politics provides insights into the Europeanization of routines, practices and regime building that were shaped by natural dynamics as well as human-made processes. In Chapter 3, Raf de Bont explores the ways European and non-European nature were contrasted with one another, which played a prominent role in early conservation organizations that defined themselves as “international”. The European actors involved in those organizations had specific images of the wilderness in distant places abroad, which influenced the approaches they developed when framing ideals of European landscapes and the corresponding management plans and protection schemes. De Bont demonstrates how European nature was (both literally and figuratively) constructed *through* its others. Chapter 4 looks at the meandering narratives of “European” nature through the trajectory of rewilding and reintroduction schemes. By following the tracks of charismatic quadrupeds like beavers and wolves and anonymous molluscs like the European oyster, Anna-Katharina Wöbse and Hans-Peter Ziemek capture the tension between controlling wild nature and acknowledging or even promoting its specific agency. In Chapter 5, Peter Coates embraces a truly European perspective on animal-human relations. By following the fascinating story of the European eel, he sheds light on the extra-European and global dimensions of the European eel’s contemporary history, in which Europe’s disparate water bodies are shown to be particular varieties of a shared bioregion and animal landscape: the “eelscape”. The mobile creature affects multi-scalar stakeholders who have an interest in the recovery and sustainable use of the eel population as well as the conservation of local eel heritage. The complex set of animal-human relations include political schemes like the EU recovery plan and intersections with transboundary protection regimes for other “European” species of wildlife. Concluding the section, Chapter 6 by Astrid M. Eckert and Pavla Šimková turns to the spaces where the Iron Curtain once divided Europe. The military confrontation along the East-West border produced particular environments and preserved sensitive habitats. A phalanx of activists set out to use the opportunity of the end of the Cold War and the push for European integration to create the so-called Green Belt, an ecological corridor running from the Arctic Circle down to the Balkan peninsula. Their campaign coincided, as the authors demonstrate, with a paradigm shift in nature conservation that favoured the creation of ecological networks and corridors and required transboundary and pan-European cooperation.

The chapters of Section II *Preserving Livelihoods* are concerned with activities mainly aimed at creating, maintaining, or restoring a healthy environment for the human population. The legal protection of forests looks back across an extraordinarily long history in Europe. In Chapter 7, Richard Hölzl and K. Jan Oosthoek survey the deep roots and many branches of modern European forestry and they show how actors, concepts, and practices travelled all over Europe and beyond. By pointing to continuities and turning points as well as communalities and particularities, they connect a rich and diverse European history of forest protection to today's European and international policies. In Chapter 8, Ute Hasenöhl and Robert Groß explore the close but often tense relationship between tourism, regional development, and nature conservation. Over the course of the twentieth century, ever larger numbers of Europeans began crossing borders to spend their holidays abroad. Focusing on mass tourism, the authors elaborate on the fundamental tension between consuming and preserving nature in the form of recreational landscapes and how actors in different parts of Europe have tried to accommodate these conflicting goals on the local, national, and international level. Chapter 9 by Romed Aschwanden, Maria Buck, Patrick Kupper, and Kira J. Schmidt investigates the environmental history of Alps. Arguably both Europe's most sublime landscape and its most central periphery, the Alps have been the subject of considerable attention far beyond the region itself. In the twentieth century, the Alps became a hotspot of European tourism, a major source of European hydroelectricity, and prominent artery in the transport of goods across Europe. Through their efforts to protect Alpine nature from these international threats, several generations of nature conservationists and environmental activists contributed to the transformation of the Alpine mountain range from a European landscape into a European political space. Chapter 10 by Simo Laakkonen and Tuomas Räsänen turns to the Baltic Sea as a prime example of a historical European maritime commons. The authors show how contemporary environmental regimes emerged from industrializing coastal towns and cities. Starting in the 1960s, with the Cold War's frontline running right through the Baltic Sea, actors on both sides of the Iron Curtain succeeded in coordinating their efforts to reduce water pollution. This cooperation later on facilitated the adoption of environmental standards of the European Union in Eastern Europe. Chapter 11 by Heike Weber explores everyday practices of recycling, and disposal to tackle the question of a distinctive European way into mass consumerism. When environmental consciousness entered political agendas and consumers' mentalities in the 1970s and became a potent environmental movement, mass consumption had profoundly transformed Western European societies, while Eastern Europe – i.e. socialist mass consumption – took a different path alto-

gether. Recycling provides a pertinent example of distortions between environmental hopes and everyday consumption practices.

The chapters of Section III *Sustaining Environments* centre on the idea of the environment, which integrated elements of the concern for the conservation of nature and for the preservation of livelihoods into a common conceptual framework. Chapter 12 by Silke Vetter-Schultheiss sheds light on the visual history of European conservation and environmentalism through the series of stamps issued by national institutions to celebrate the European Conservation Year of 1970. The initiative became a decisive moment in promoting the idea of “Europe”, as the accelerating process of integration and unification of (Western) Europe met with heated debates on the state of its environment. The stamps reflect the many diverse national visual strategies to not only represent Europe’s natural heritage (or what was felt to be such) but also to raise European awareness of the need to preserve it as a common goal. In Chapter 13, Astrid Kirchhof und Jan-Henrik Meyer explore the European history of the promises and conflicts connected with nuclear power. After the Second World War, European politicians successfully promoted the vision of nuclear power as the energy source of the future and a unifying force that would create a strong, secure, and peaceful Western Europe. However, starting in the 1970s, a growing number of men and women began to challenge this vision. Nuclear technology became increasingly divisive, both within societies as conflicts between promoters and opponents intensified, and between nation-states as some opted out of nuclear power, while others adhered to it. Some environmental problems notoriously disregard political borders and create their own topographies, connecting emitters and recipients of environmental pollution in uneasy transnational relations. In Chapter 14, Arne Kaijser looks at one such problem, namely polluted air, and details the patterns that emerged as the result of power plants and industries all over Europe emitting large quantities of sulphur dioxide. Transported over vast distances through the air, the particles came down as “acid rain” in places far away from where the emissions had originated. After the identification of this mechanism in the late 1960s, scientists, policymakers, and diplomats engaged in international collaborations and negotiations which gradually progressed into a joint understanding and approach to protecting the shared European atmosphere from pollution. In Chapter 15, Elke Seefried shows how in the 1970s and 1980s international networks of politicians, diplomats, and environmentalists gave the century-old idea of sustainability a new meaning and succeeded in establishing “sustainable development” as the new leading concept of environmental policy in Europe and the world. Although grassroots environmental movements initially greeted this concept with suspicion, they increasingly adopted the term and set in motion bottom-up processes, which complemented and

sometimes contrasted with the top-down programmes developed by experts in the United Nations and the European Union. In the last of the case studies, Chapter 16, Liesbeth van de Grift and Wim van Meurs discuss the historical evolution of the idea of biodiversity, which plays such a prominent role in today's European environmental regimes and policies. By looking at debates by international organizations and the many stakeholders involved, they explain how a concept of nature protection that focused on species and their habitats developed into an understanding of biodiversity as a crucial and yet contested feature of healthy and resilient ecosystems as something fundamental for contemporary Europe. The volume concludes with a brief outlook by the editors.

## Notes

1 Anna-Katharina Wöbse, “*Knechtsand: A Site of Memory in Flux*”, *Global Environment* 11 (2013): 160–183; Karsten Reise, *A Natural History of the Wadden Sea: Riddled by Contingencies* (Leeuwarden/Wilhelmshaven: Waddenacademie, 2013); Anna-Katharina Wöbse, “Space, Place, Land and Sea: The Ecological ‘Discovery’ of the Global Wadden Sea”, in *Spatializing the History of Ecology: Sites, Journeys, Mappings*, eds. Raf de Bont and Jens Lachmund (London: Routledge, 2017), 204–222.

2 See the recent discussion in the *Journal of Modern European History*: Jörn Leonhard, “Comparison, Transfer and Entanglement, Or: How to Write Modern European History Today?”, *Journal of Modern European History/Zeitschrift für moderne europäische Geschichte/Revue d’histoire européenne contemporaine* 14, no. 2 (2016): 149–163, doi:10.2307/26266233 (accessed 22 July 2020); Michel Espagne, Jonas Kreienbaum, Frederic Cooper, Christoph Conrad, and Philipp Ther, “How to Write Modern European History Today? Statements to Jörn Leonhard’s JMEH-Forum”, *Journal of Modern European History/Zeitschrift für moderne europäische Geschichte/Revue d’histoire européenne contemporaine* 14, no. 4 (2016): 465–491, doi:10.2307/26266258 (accessed 22 July 2020).

3 EGO-Redaktion, *European History online*, <http://ieg-ego.eu/en/ego/ego-european-history-online>, Paragraph 1. For a more detailed introduction to the concept, see Joachim Berger, Jennifer Willenberg, and Lisa Landes, “EGO | European History Online: A Transcultural History of Europe on the Internet”, in *European History Online (EGO)*, published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz, 3 December 2010, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/introduction-2010-en> (accessed 4 October 2020).

4 Ulrike von Hirschhausen and Kiran Klaus Patel, “Europäisierung”, Version: 1.0, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 29 November 2010. [http://docupedia.de/zg/hirschhausen\\_patel\\_europaeisierung\\_v1\\_de\\_2010](http://docupedia.de/zg/hirschhausen_patel_europaeisierung_v1_de_2010), doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.2.313.v1> (accessed 3 March 2020); Ulrike von Hirschhausen and Kiran Klaus Patel, “Europeanization and History: An Introduction”, in *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century: Historical Approaches*, eds. Martin Conway and Kiran Klaus Patel (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1–18.

5 This formulation was introduced to environmental history by William Beinart and Peter Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1. For an introduction to the field of environmental history, see Andrew C. Isenberg, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History* (Oxford Handbooks) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Donald J. Hughes, *What Is Environmental History?* (second edn, Malden,

MA: Polity, 2016); Melanie Arndt, “Environmental History”, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.14765/ZZF.DOK.2.700.V3>; Patrick Kupper, *Umweltgeschichte*, Göttingen: UTB, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021.

**6** Andrew C. Isenberg, “Introduction: A New Environmental History”, in *Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, 14. John R. McNeill, one of the most influential environmental historians, considers political and policy-related environmental history as an additional approach. See John R. McNeill, “Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History”, *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 42, no. 4 (2003): 5–43.

**7** Martin Kalb, “Moving Beyond the Nation State? Reflections on European Environmental History”, *Global Environment* 12 (2013): 130–165; Frank Uekötter, “Gibt es eine europäische Geschichte der Umwelt? Bemerkungen zu einer überfälligen Debatte”, in: *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte*, 2009, [www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1487](http://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1487) (accessed 7 August 2020); Nils Freytag, “Nature and Environment, in Europäische Geschichte Online (EGO), 2016, [www.ieg-ego.eu/freytag-2016-en](http://www.ieg-ego.eu/freytag-2016-en) (accessed 21 February 2021); Jan-Henrik Meyer, “Nature: From Protecting Regional Landscapes to Regionalist Self-Assertion in the Age of the Global Environment”, in *Regionalism and Modern Europe: Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day*, eds. Xosé M. Núñez Seixas and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 65–82; Robert Delort and François Walter, *Histoire de l’environnement européen* (Paris: PUF, 2001); Kupper, *Umweltgeschichte* is addressing this gap.

**8** Joachim Radkau, “Exceptionalism in European Environmental History”, *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 33 (2003): 23–44, <https://prae.perspectivia.net/publikationen/bulletin-washington/2003-33-2/0023-0044> (accessed 5 May 2020).

**9** Johan Schot and Phil Scranton, *Making Europe: Technology and Transformations, 1850–2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

**10** Per Högselius, Arne Kaijser, and Erik van der Vleuten, *Europe’s Infrastructure Transition: Economy, War, Nature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

**11** Frank Uekötter, ed., *The Turning Points of Environmental History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010); Emily Wakild and Michelle K. Berry, *A Primer for Teaching Environmental History: Ten Design Principles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 39–51; Kupper, *Umweltgeschichte*, Ch. 2.

**12** Nature as a European concept stretches as far back as antiquity, denoting rather ambiguously both the opposite of culture as well as the natural surroundings people live with and are part of. See Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

**13** Georg Toepfer, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Biologie: Geschichte und Theorie der biologischen Grundbegriffe; Band 3: Parasitismus – Zweckmäßigkeit* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2011), 566–607; Paul Warde, Libby Robin, and Sverker Sörlin, *Environment: A History of the Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018).

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