



Environment & Society Portal



The White Horse Press

Full citation: Myllyntaus, Timo, and Mikko Saikku. "Editorial" for *Environment and History* 2, no. 1, Lammi Symposium special issue (February 1996): 1–2. <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/2863>.

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Editorial

Soon after discovering the Northeast Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the Finnish explorer and mineralogist Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld in 1880 opened public discussion on conservation in the Nordic countries with his proposal to establish national parks. Drawing from his experience on several scientific expeditions, Nordenskiöld concluded that human activities might fatally damage the fragile boreal landscape. Honouring the 160th anniversary of Nordenskiöld's birth and keeping with the long tradition of Nordic environmentalism, Finnish environmental historians organised an international and interdisciplinary symposium on environmental history at the Lammi Biological Station of the Helsinki University.

Ever since the establishment of the European Association of Environmental History, a growing number of Finnish historians, social scientists, and biologists have recognised the importance of international networks for the emerging field of environmental history. Various scholarly contacts were called into play, and an organising committee was formed in order to arrange an international meeting in Finland. The Lammi symposium aimed to survey the latest research in environmental history, not only in the Nordic countries but also on a wider international scale. In addition to Nordic researchers and graduate students, prominent scholars from Western Europe (Peter Brimblecombe, Frank Oldfield, and Joachim Radkau), the United States (William Cronon, J. Donald Hughes, and Donald Worster), and even Australia (A.R. Main) participated in the workshop. Thirty papers were presented for discussion: 13 presentations dealt with general and methodological issues, 9 with forest history, 6 with landscapes, and 2 with climate history. The distribution of papers accurately reflects the interests and research topics of current environmental historiography in the Nordic countries. The role of forests in environmental history, however, emerged as the dominant issue during the symposium.

Multidisciplinary debates characterised the Lammi symposium as scholars from different disciplines met each other, and discussed and compared various approaches to environmental history. The disciplines of the over 50 participants ranged from the humanities and social sciences to biology, geology, and forestry. In addition to highlighting different approaches to environmental history, this multidisciplinaryity led to the demonstration of the uses of various data sources and a wide spectrum of research methods. Opportunities to synthesise research results contributed by dissimilar disciplines were often subjected to a lively debate when environmental historians with their background in the humanities met their counterparts from the natural sciences. Discussion on the future of our environment was joined as well by the Finnish Minister of the Environment, who firmly expressed the belief that it is possible to reorient national economic policies in a less anthropocentric direction.

The symposium gave the impression that despite their openness to interdisciplinary discussions, Nordic—and other European—environmental historians often retain narrower approaches to their discipline and are more specialised than their non-European, especially American, colleagues. While environmental historians from the United States tend to address broad questions in a multi-layered social context, their European counterparts prefer to focus on narrowly defined issues and smaller geographical areas, offering less comprehensive explanations. These differences, however, proved surmountable in an amicable atmosphere.

This special issue of *Environment and History* provides a by no means comprehensive selection of issues covered at the symposium. Nevertheless the following articles still illustrate a variety of national approaches to environmental history, with contributions from six different countries. The noticeable emphasis on forest history reflects the considerable popularity of this topic in the symposium, reminding us that the history of human use of forested landscapes remains of prime importance to current environmental history. Many of the papers presented in the meeting on other (especially strictly Nordic) issues have been published elsewhere in the form of anthologies or single articles.

Environmental history has been a relatively small and under-recognised discipline in Finland and the Scandinavian countries, and the Lammi symposium proved to be a trailblazing effort, giving a significant boost to research efforts in the field. It opened new horizons for all the participants, providing them opportunities to establish new international contacts. In such a small discipline as environmental history, we need regular triennial or quadrennial symposia to form and maintain functioning networks between scholars of different nationalities and different disciplines. Continuing cooperation between environmental historians from all continents should be a permanent goal.

We wish to acknowledge the valuable support of our colleagues in arranging the symposium. We especially want to thank Yrjo Vasari and Yrjo Haila for their efforts. The financial assistance provided by the Academy of Finland and by the Nordic Collegium for Ecology proved indispensable. We also gratefully acknowledge the interest shown by the editors of *Environment and History* in publishing selected results of the symposium. Finally, it should be noted that the enthusiasm expressed by the participants fully rewarded the efforts of the organising committee for the Lammi Symposium on Environmental History.

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