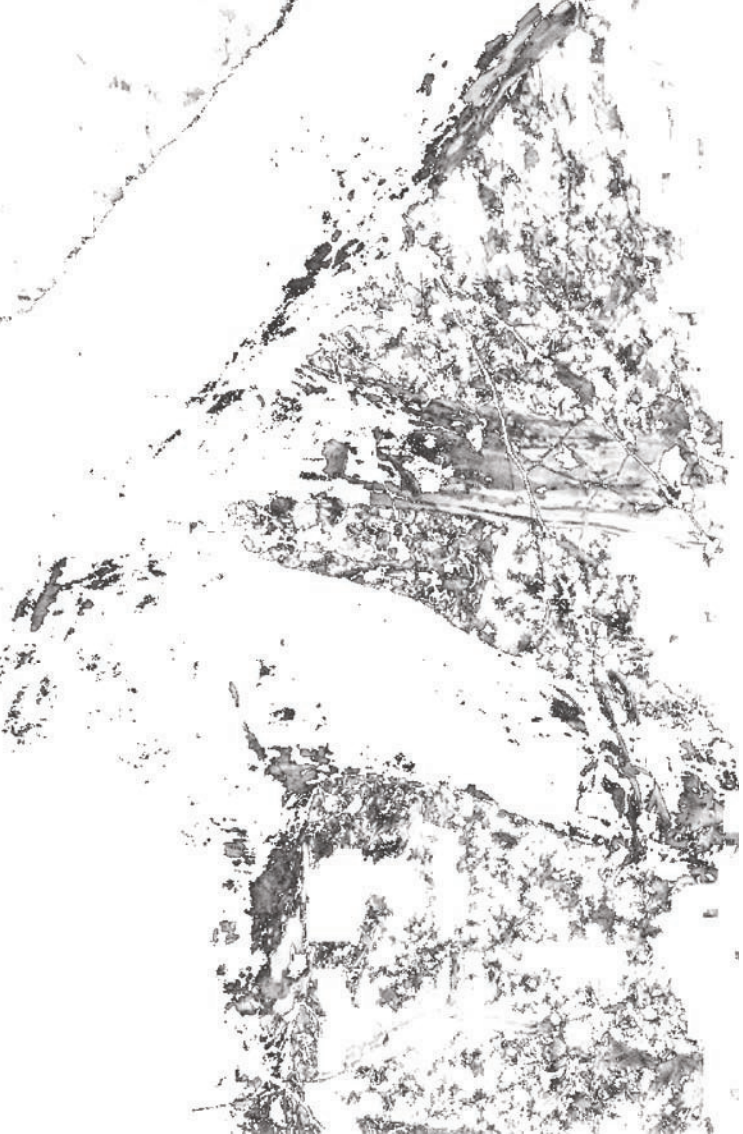




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his new issue of *Global Environment* brings a further contribution to the reconstruction of how modern environmental systems, analyzed in their planetary dimension, have changed over time. Most of the articles focus on the last two centuries of our history. In his interview, Joachim Radkau stresses that the diffusion of environmental history will depend on its ability to establish a dialogue with world history; this, he argues, is mainly the task of contemporary historians, since using political interpretive keys in the study of environmental transformations, along with social-research methods such as interviews, biographies, and photographs, helps to spread an interest in environmental themes among generalist historians. Stephane Frioux's review of a book by Jean-Marc Moriceau on the history of wolf attacks in France illustrates the need for the incorporation of the environment in social history. Jan Kunnas and Timo Myllyntaus' essay on the growth and consumption of energy in Finland in the nineteenth and twentieth century confirms the existence of an intimate connection between environmental history and history of energy. It is also true that global environmental history, although it is based on the transcending of local and national boundaries, must necessarily also adopt a micro-analytical approach. Much more than issues 1 and 2, the present issue features case-studies that are not representative of the Western world and, further, regard countries that have experienced colonization processes. These provide a prime illustration of the fact that, in spite of the universal character of the

dynamics involved, global environmental history cannot overlook the local dimension; indeed, it puts new stress on the significance of local phenomena and the active role of local populations. The terms “global” and “local” thus appear to be inextricably connected. This is especially evident in Ranjan Chakrabarti’s article about the conflict of the British colonial state with the man-eating tigers of the Indian Sundarbans, and the effects of the introduction of Project Tiger. In Jason Davis’ study on the establishing of a protected area around Monteverde in Costa Rica, local communities are seen not as passive victims, but as active agents of their histories. Greg Bankoff’s article shows how under Spanish colonial rule state management practices and indigenous customary rights competed in Philippine forests, transforming them from a resource into the object of a commercial enterprise. Laura Hollsten’s review of Reinaldo Funes’ book on the transformation of Cuban forests into sugar cane plantations also highlights the dramatic environmental impact of the transition to a market economy in various areas, especially from the nineteenth century onward. In her essay, Regina Duarte looks at environmental changes in a southeast Brazilian city in the nineteenth and twentieth century, analyzing the transnational character of the transformation of urban environmental systems and the importation and local adaptation of European urban civilization models relating to public hygiene. Other articles, instead, investigate national responses to globalization processes. Liu Jinlong’s reconstruction of the history of forestry in a region of northwestern China describes the environmental impact and intensification of social conflict determined by changes in forest policies preluding to China’s openings to the market in the Eighties and Nineties, which resulted in a change in the relationship between the state and an expanding economy. In Vimbai Kwashirai’s Zimbabwe, the debate on land redistribution in the post-independence years – 1980 to the present day – went hand in hand with the discussion on environmental issues – poverty, erosion, deforestation – and the relationship between the global and the local. This last theme is very much to the fore in Micheline Cariño and Mario Monteforte’s article on the world history of nacre and pearl fisheries, and especially on the role of capitalism in the intensifica-

tion of pearl cultivation and the process that led the wild resource to rapid exhaustion.

Global environmental history looks at the world as a whole and studies the planet as a single environmental system. This means that it is its task to investigate the global in the local, and vice versa. This objective calls for a constant comparing of interpretive tools, an exchange network involving scholars from both geographically and culturally different regions, and the adoption of a common historiographic language. The global environmental historian must be able to look beyond his or her cultural and national identity and accept differences. Global environmental history may thus become an exercise in democracy and, to a certain degree, a vehicle of democracy as well. We believe this issue of the journal, like the previous ones, makes a significant contribution in this direction.