

History and Sustainability

Call for Papers (abstracts) for *Temp* 24

Since the publication of the Brundtland report on “Our Common Future” in 1987, sustainability has developed into a key concept in the global political discourse. In the field of academic history this growing awareness of the importance of the human-nature nexus has found its expression in the development of environmental history as a dynamic new field. However, to a high degree environmental history is still perceived as yet another of the many sub-disciplines that history has split into, and thus, also, a niche field.

The point of departure for this issue of *Temp* is that the concept of sustainability has the potential to give analyses of the human-nature nexus the central position in history where, in our opinion, it belongs in the 21st century. The growing understanding that climate change, loss of biodiversity and ever stronger demographic pressures can result in catastrophic consequences is currently changing our future horizons. However, this will also change the gamebook for writing history that is relevant for the contemporary public. We need to reflect upon how nature and human engagement with nature is a crucial part of the human experience over time. And we need to rethink and maybe also reframe nature-culture and time-space relations as well as the relations between the specific and the general.

A central inspiration for this avenue of thinking is, unsurprisingly, the United Nations’ 17 “global goals for sustainable development”. These goals are to a high degree focused on the human-nature nexus but the list also includes economic, social and political aspirations. However, even a superficial analysis demonstrates that the individual goals easily can become conflicted. Finding solutions to these conflicts is one of the most crucial challenges we face today.

Using sustainability as a frame offers the potential to link environmental history to the classic fields of our discipline such as political history, national history, social history, economic history, the history of technology and cultural history. What happens when you introduce a historical perspective to the concept of sustainability. And what happens if you introduce sustainability as a perspective on history?

The importance of this approach is, perhaps, most evident for the period when the human imprint on the globe became highly visible through industrialization, urbanization and demographic growth. This occurred in the Western world from the 18th Century but clearly changed radically from c. 1950 with a strong growth on all parameters in what has been labelled The Great Acceleration or The Anthropocene. However, neither reflections

on the human-nature nexus nor examples of dramatic societal consequences of unsustainable human practices are found only in the modern, Western world. Therefore, the ambition of this issue will be to present articles that cover a broad selection of themes, chronologically, geographically and theoretically, but all engaging with human-nature relations in a historical perspective.

Deadlines:

Deadline for submissions of abstracts (minimum 300 words): 25 November 2020

Writers Seminar: Late May 2021 (deadline for papers will be a month before the seminar)

Deadline for submissions of articles: Ultimo August 2021

Submissions and questions to be sent to temphist@cas.au.dk

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