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In this fourth issue, *Global Environment* continues its exploration of the scientific paradigms of global environmental history. The geographical variety of the regions the articles deal with – from Kansas to Latin America, from Austria to Spain, from India to parts of the African continent – is paralleled by the variety of the authors’ methodological and historiographic approaches. Geoff Cunfer and Fridolin Kraussman offer an interesting comparative study of two areas very distant from one another, examining the historical evolution of energy balances to analyze the impact of farming on land fertility and environmental sustainability. Their results are original and of great interpretive usefulness, and their methods applicable to studies on other places and contexts. Sashi Sivramkrishna traces back to the late nineteenth century the historical roots of the connections between macroeconomic policies and the environment in colonial India, which already appears to have been a part, at this time, of a broader global context. The article co-written by Manuel Gonzales de Molina, Antonio Herrera, Antonio Ortega and David Soto reflects on the need to re-examine the history of environmentalism from the perspective of social conflict. Along with an interesting casuistry, this essay provides important interpretive keys for the role of conflicts over resources, such as the difference between “environmentalist” and “Green” conflicts.

In his review of Swan William Miller’s book on the relationship between man and the environment in Latin American countries before and after the coming of the Europeans, Reinaldo Funes

Monzote points out some new themes for future historical research on this geographical region, viz., the ultimate causes of environmental deterioration over the last decades, and the integration of Latin America into the world system from 1492 onward. Eugenia Ferragina reports on the activities and debates of the world forum on water held at Istanbul in March 2009. This forum is a testimony of the centrality of this theme and the planet-wide issues it is connected with, such as social inequalities and water as a denied right, the effects of climate change, water security, and water management and policies. It saw the participation not only of major international organizations such as the United Nations, Unesco and FAO, but also of financial institutions such as the World Bank.

In the present issue we inaugurate a new section entitled “Historiographies”, where we intend to present general overviews of studies, especially from countries for which linguistic barriers have so far hindered our knowledge of their scholarly production. Antonio Ortega Santos retraces the development of Spanish environmental historiography from the late 1980s onward, highlighting its connections with Latin America and strong civic commitment, as well as the thematic and methodological variety of its inspiration: from agrarian studies and studies on land ownership to forest history, ecological economic history, and the study of environmental conflicts in a historical perspective.

This issue, like the previous ones, reaffirms the multiform character of global environmental history’s methods, contents, interpretive categories, and research fields, and the vastness of its temporal and spatial scope. Global environmental history offers a wide spectrum of cognitive approaches to environmental issues seen in a historical perspective, opening up boundless research scenarios and fields. It offers a truly fertile soil for the development of the paradigm of *complexity*, which is becoming increasingly influential in the historical sciences. This paradigm sheds light on the intricate interconnections between man and the environment. Global environmental history can explore the environmental implications of globalization processes and the transnational aspects of the construction of ecosystemic realities; or it can study national responses to globalization;

or, vice versa, the effects of local phenomena on global ones. This last perspective also includes histories of the resistance of colonized populations and of how they reclaimed their cultural identities. But global environmental history can also be regarded merely as a specific methodological approach, employing comparative analyses of often very remote areas of the planet to provide broader global interpretations of all historical periods and the central role of issues of environmental sustainability within different social organizations and at different historical times.

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