



Although the essays in this issue of *Global Environment* focus on a variety of themes and geographical areas, some common threads can be discerned. Certainly what many of these articles have in common is an historical approach to current environmental problems, that is, an interest in the processes that led up to them. In his interview by Idamaria Fusco, Piero Bevilacqua shows how the way in which world agriculture industrialized from the late nineteenth century onward – with an excessive use of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, water, etc. – has led to the present farming practices that are undermining our environment and health. The theme of water is to the fore in Desiree Quagliarotti's article on World Water Day 2012, whose focus was the relationship between water and food. Water consumption is increasing steadily, especially under the impulse of a rising demand for livestock products.

In their article, Jeff Grischow and Holger Weiss demonstrate the historical character of droughts in northern Ghana. This article is an example of how environmental history can make major contributions to decision makers' understanding of an area and

its past. Maria de la Luz Ayala and Edith Jiménez Huerta show us how some Mexican villages near the city of Ghadalajara are gradually losing the rich cultural and environmental diversity they had enjoyed in the course of history, a process that has begun at the end of the twentieth century with the rapid and unregulated expansion of urban sprawl.

While the above essays focus on the historicity of environmental problems, this issue also includes some studies containing proposals and suggestions for fighting the dissipation of natural resources and the upsetting of environmental balances. Max Bourke addressed the subject of the flourishing of philanthropic private investment in biodiversity conservation in Australia. The article presents the case of the Thomas Foundation. By 2010, philanthropic associations managed at least 4 million hectares of land protected for conservation purposes. Mario Pansera's article, instead, looks at eco-innovation as a major challenge for the future. Industrialized countries will be forced to develop eco-compatible technologies to meet the growing demand for more sustainable products.

In their dialogue, Mauro Agnoletti and Vandana Shiva underscore the inadequacy, from a sustainability perspective, of the concept of biodiversity conservation informing natural area protection policies, inspired by the US "parks versus people" model. A model that has not proved effective as a means to counter the processes destroying environmental equilibria. Policy makers hence need to broaden their horizons. The notion of biodiversity should also include that of "cultivated biodiversity". "What is called agro-biodiversity, – states Vandana Shiva – has been cultivated, but this does not mean that it is not wild".

Bearing witness to the importance in environmental historiography of typically socio-historical themes, Fei Sheng narrates the major contribution of Chinese migrants lured by the Australian gold rush to the transformation of the local landscape. The experience also had its downsides, such as the serious social conflicts that broke out between Chinese and white miners. Fei Sheng's article addresses a subject that is on its way to becoming important in global environmental history, namely, that of the relationship be-

tween human migration and environmental change. Which will be the monographic theme of the next issue of Global Environment, to be edited and promoted in its entirety by the Rachel Carson Center.

Mauro Agnoletti and Gabriella Corona