

Experts and the Global Environment in the 20th Century: A History of Coproduction and Negotiation

Tuesday, January 19th, 2016.

In the 20th Century, an increasing group of people believed nature to be under threat – not only locally, but worldwide. In light of this state of affairs, many were convinced that the only efficient response thinkable was to be *international* and *science-based*. Despite a relatively broad agreement on this general point, there was still ample room for debate within the conservation and the environmental community. Which nature was seen as internationally valuable and which experts could count as its spokespersons was, after all, a continued matter of negotiation. In this negotiation, the definition of the problem went hand in hand with the description of the type of expertise needed for the solution. Both were in this sense coproduced. It is the history of these processes of coproduction and negotiation that will be addressed at the conference.

The rise of the international conservation expert triggers a wide range of questions. Which roles were deemed suitable for such experts? Were they to be pure scientists, or could they also act as activists or technocrats? Did there exist competition between different types of experts when it came to framing conservation and environmental problems? How did experts translate their local research experience into international policy recommendations? How did they select particular species, ecosystems and habitats as objects of international protection? And how did global categories such as the biosphere or the world climate alter the international dynamics?

The conference will study these questions with an eye for specific historical contexts – marked, amongst others, by colonialism, the Cold War or globalization. At the same time we are also interested in long-term continuities. In this way we hope to uncover how the history of the environmental expert still resonates in our present-day discussions.

Convenors:

Raf De Bont

Ernst Homburg

Hans Schouwenburg

Simone Schleper

The conference will be organized as part of the Project 'Nature's Diplomats', sponsored by NWO.

<http://www.maastrichtsts.nl/?project=natures-diplomats-ecological-experts-and-the-conservation-policy-of-international-organizations-1920-2000>

PROGRAM

'Experts and the Global Environment' Tuesday, January 19th, 2016.

Academic Conference

Participation to the conference is free, but registration required by sending an email (before January 12th) to

r.debont@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Venue : Spiegelzaal, Soiron Building Grote Gracht 90-92, Maastricht, Netherlands

10 h15-11h20

Welcome by Raf De Bont

Session 1

Chair : Anna-Katharina Woebse
(Independent scholar)

William Adams (Cambridge University)
Our Man in Africa: Amateurs as Experts in Colonial Conservation

Raf De Bont (Maastricht University)
Internationalizing Nature: The Case of the Albert National Park (Belgian Congo), 1925-1961

11h35-12h35

Session 2

Chair : Henny van der Windt
(Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)

Mark Barrow (Virginia Tech)
Creating an Inventory of Extinction: The American Committee for International Wild Life Protection and the First Endangered Species List

Zoe Nyssa (Harvard University)
Field Advocacy: Episodes from the Attempts to Make a Science of Conservation

13h30-15h

Session 3

Chair : tba

Simone Schleper (Maastricht University)
Negotiating Ecosystem Stability - Drafting the *World Conservation Strategy*, 1975-1980

Helen-Anne Curry (Cambridge University)
Contested Collections: Conservation Biology, Global Development, and Preservation of Genetic Diversity in Agricultural Plants, 1965-1975

Stephen Macekura (Virginia University)
Of Limits and Growth: Environmental Activism, the Global South, and Sustainable Development in the Twentieth Century

15h15-17h

Sesion 4

Chair : Marianne Schlessler (Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences)

Hans Schouwenburg (Maastricht University)
Expert Roles and the Making of Sustainable Development, 1980-2000

Iris Borowy (RWTH Aachen University - Birkbeck University)
Doomed to Agree against all Odds: The Brundtland Commission

Concluding Discussion :

'What (present-day) Purpose for Histories of Conservation ?'

Launched and moderated by Piet Wit (Chair Committee on Ecosystem Management, IUCN)

Public Lecture

20h-21h30

Christian Schwägerl (journalist/biologist)
'The Anthropocene Challenge'

Venue: Aula, Minderbroedersberg 4-6, Maastricht, Netherlands.

Humanity is changing planet Earth and its future so fundamentally that a new chapter in natural history is beginning: the "Anthropocene". This is a new geological epoch that begins when human activities started to have a significant global impact on Earth's ecosystems. It is now capturing the attention of policy-makers, philosophers, environmentalists, economists, artists and many others worldwide. What is the essence of this bold new idea? Is the Anthropocene the sum of all environmental havoc or an opportunity for change? What would this mean for our ways of life? And how relevant is the Anthropocene to the global conservation of biodiversity?