

“Can the Subaltern Speak” through the Environment? At the confluence of Environmental History and Subaltern Studies

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In 1988 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak published her most influential essay in post-colonial studies and critical theory. Spivak went behind the scene of academic scholarship on colonialism and beyond its issues at stake: she argued for historical accounts explaining why a single-narrative of reality was established as normative and also opened pathways to overcome such normalization (Spivak, 1988). “Can the Subaltern Speak?” posed questions about silenced, colonised, unheard, invisible and unrepresented groups and, since its publication, it has been cited, invoked, imitated, and critiqued (Morris, 2010).

Spivak’s questions seem to us crucial and topical in emerging research foci in environmental history and urge environmental historians to be critical, to speak to and through current ecological emergencies, to reconnect with the environmentalist roots of the discipline (Egan, 2002; Offen, 2004; Armiero, 2008; Barca, 2014). Indeed, recent trends of nature-culture and environmental history research highlight the past of human beings whose perspectives have been neglected and not stored in official archival files, the agency/role of ecological subjects in shaping pasts, potential ways to decolonise research practises and philosophies (Thorpe, Rutherford and Sandberg, 2017).

Moreover, any colonial and imperial enterprise – which is an essential component of subaltern studies – is inseparable from the history of global environmental change. Historians have explored, among other phenomena, flows of raw materials; new methods of farming; displacement of indigenous peoples; the foundation of colonial cities (Beinart – Hughes, 2007; Beckert, 2014).

With this special issue we aim at redirecting and broadly interpreting the term subaltern in relation to the environment and we envision this issue as a forum for ideas and discussion within the subfield of colonial and post-colonial environmental history. We expect contributions addressing these two overarching issues: What does a specific environmental history focus add to the debate on subalternity? What kind of methodological and theoretical implications do subaltern studies have for environmental history as a discipline?

Within this frame, we welcome proposals for contributions interrogating these issues, the list not being exhaustive:

- unsettling the idea of the environment as a *subaltern* category in history;
- exploring colonial and post-colonial times through the lens of the environment (Sluyter, 2001; Sen, 2009);
- unveiling the colonial and the *subaltern* in uneven socio-ecological dynamics in non-colonial settings;
- stressing the political ecology dimensions of environmental histories (Hornborg, 2007);
- fighting for environmental and climate justice: community responses to environmental hazards (Ziglioli, 2016; Dawson, 2017; Malavasi, 2018);
- (un)gendering nature: eco-feminist and queer-ecology: (Scharff, 2003; Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, 2010);
- interpreting the nexus environment-indigeneity (Heatherington, 2010);
- bridging environmental history and public history (Melosi, 1993).

How to send an article

Interested authors should submit an abstract of 250 words or less (maximum 1000 characters), a short bio of max 100 words (maximum 500 characters) and contact information by email attachment to redazione.diacronie@hotmail.it by **April 15 2020**.

The abstract must include information about the topic, methodology and expected results of the research. Standard article should generally not exceed 6.000 words (paper length in words: between 35.000 and 55.000 characters, spaces included) and must respect the journal style.

To prepare your manuscript please follow the instructions: [here](#).

Authors will be notified whether their proposal has been accepted or not by **April 30 2020**. The complete article must be submitted by **June 30 2020**. All proposals will be subjected to a double-blind peer review. Publication of this issue is scheduled for **December 2020**.

Abstracts and articles may be submitted in Italian, English, French, Spanish, German, Greek and Portuguese. Contributions in German, Greek and Portuguese will be translated into Italian by the editorial board.

For any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at: redazione.diacronie@hotmail.it

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