

## **The Great Acceleration: International Organisations and the Environment**

On December 4, 2018, Greta Thunberg gave a speech at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poland, just three months after holding her first school strike in front of the national parliament in Stockholm. This speech raises several interesting historical questions, which offer a starting point for entering the fascinating field of the history of international environmental politics. When and why did intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations become involved in questions of environmental politics? Who was held responsible for studying, governing, and solving climate and biodiversity crises in the past? While today it is common to think of environmental problems as worldwide and a topic of international governance, this was not always the case. In fact, the environment was not considered a concern of party politics at all until the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, the history of international environmental politics, which emerged in tandem with national environmental politics, is not necessarily a progressive history. Whereas some international environmental historians argue that there was a distinctive period after World War II where idealistic visions of a shared world shaped political agendas, others trace continuities with imperial conservation projects, rooted in the dispossession of colonial peoples' land, removing rights of hunting and agriculture, and even the violent removal of people from their land. Nature conservation in this guise had nothing to do with human wellbeing and everything to do with ensuring that natural resources would flow to industrial regions in the northern hemisphere.

Research projects at the MA level might critically engage with the history of international environmental politics, organizations, movements, and science by focusing on an individual international organization or on the context of diplomatic history, focused on a national scale.

They might examine such themes as:

- The relationship between international environmental politics and popular environmentalist movements and politics at an international, national, regional or local level.
- Scientific research and experts and their role in international environmental politics.
- Decolonization and the rise of post-colonial nation states.
- The role of the Eastern Bloc countries and Cold War competition in international environmental politics.

- The conservation of individual commodities and natural resources (i.e. rubber, nickel, timber, etc.) or animals.
- The impact of international initiatives on land use, indigenous livelihoods, and local politics in colonial, postcolonial, and decolonial contexts.
- International civil servants and experts and their engagement with environmental questions.
- The communication of international environmental programs to the public and/or public opinion.
- The emergence of environmental aid as a type of development aid.

Research on Norwegian involvement in international environmental organizations and programs and the use of Norwegian primary sources is encouraged. However, supervision will take place in English. Interested students are invited to get in touch to discuss their research interests. Drop me an email!