

THE PATH TOWARD THE *DINARIC REGION* OF THE *EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY*¹

PUT PREMA DINARSKOJ REGIJI EUROPSKOG DRUŠTVA ZA POVIJEST OKOLIŠA

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Summary

Close international cooperation in the field of environmental history within today's Dinaric Region of the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH) has a two decades long tradition. It involves projects, conferences, workshops, roundtables, publications, university and transdisciplinary courses, summer schools, and social media. The ESEH Dinaric Region was created by merging the regions of Croatia and Serbia, which were joined by Slovenia and Montenegro on the basis of their expressed interest. Neighbouring Dinaric countries are welcome to join the region. Environmental history scholarship, teaching, and outreach in the ESEH Dinaric Region are active, growing, they are increasingly interdisciplinary and embedded in international networks and contexts. This paper focuses on collaborative environmental history work in the ESEH Dinaric Region.

Key words: environmental history, European Society for Environmental History, Dinaric Region, Dinaric Alps

Ključne riječi: povijest okoliša, Europsko društvo za povijest okoliša, Dinarska regija, Dinaridi

In the world recently facing disintegration of some long-term forms of fruitful cooperation—cooperation that resulted in new forms of conviviality and helped foster some initiatives toward sustainability—environmental historians in the Dinaric Region are doing their best to strengthen cooperation, rising above divergencies.² Within our region, international cooperation between environmental historians “stared in the early twenty-first century.”³ It has been fostered by projects, conferences, workshops, roundtables, publications, university and transdisciplinary courses, summer schools,⁴ and social media as a tool of cooperation in the field of presenting environmental history topics.

At the sixth biennial conference of the *European Society for Environmental History* (ESEH) held in 2011 in Turku, Finland, the ESEH regions Croatia and Serbia were established.⁵ The region Croatia initiated the cooperation with Slovenia on the one hand and with Serbia on the other, then fruitful cooperation between environmental historians from all three countries developed. In 2019, at the tenth biennial ESEH conference in Tallinn, Estonia, the ESEH regions Croatia and Serbia, together with Slovenia, founded the region Croatia–Serbia–Slovenia (Fig. 1) “to foster the cosmopolitan environmen-

¹ The author acknowledges support from the research program *Slovene History*, Slovenian Research Agency, P6-0235. Gratitude is expressed to Hrvoje Petrić for the photographs.

² Compare Zwitter et al., 2024, 2.

³ Fuerst-Bjeliš et al., 2024, v.

⁴ Fuerst-Bjeliš et al., 2024, v–vii; Zwitter et al., 2023; Zwitter et al., 2025.

⁵ Gratitude is expressed to regional representatives Jelena Mrgić and Hrvoje Petrić for these pieces of information.

tal history in the region and beyond.”⁶ Based on the expression of interest by historians from the Historical Institute of Montenegro who joined the ESEH, Montenegro was added to that region at the thirteenth biennial ESEH conference in Uppsala, Sweden, in August 2025 (Fig. 8). Thus, the ESEH Dinaric Region was born, named after the Dinaric Alps, the environmental macroregion “that connects all countries in this ESEH region and beyond”⁷ in line with John McNeill’s and Ruth Sandwell’s comments on frequently optimal regional framing in environmental historiography.⁸ The Dinaric Region has so far been the only ESEH region in Europe transformed and named after an environmental and not political or cultural region – a good practice with the potential to inspire other ESEH regions, as emphasized by Kati Lindström from the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, the chair of the ESEH Council of Regional Representatives, in her plenary report on regional activities at the ESEH Ordinary General Meeting in Uppsala.⁹ The Dinaric Region hopes to be joined by the neighbouring Dinaric countries in the near future. Everyone is welcome, including, for instance, researchers from the Dinaric countries who work abroad – the ESEH has long acknowledged the option of belonging to more than one region, like the one of origin and the region of institutional affiliation, as expressed so clearly at several meetings of the Council of Regional Representatives attended by the author of these lines.

Several important research projects, conferences, and publications with an emphasis on environmental history were carried out, held and published in the countries of today’s Dinaric Region or they contain contributions by authors from our region. Only those that contributed most prominently to the networking within the Dinaric Region are mentioned here. These are (1) the journal *Economic- and Ecohistory: Journal for Economic and Environmental History* (*Ekonomska i ekohistorija: Časopis za gospodarsku povijest i povijest okoliša*; since 2005; now Scopus-indexed, thanks to the editor-in-chief’s efforts),¹⁰ (2) the globally most relevant environmental history conference ever held in the region – the ninth biennial ESEH conference *Natures in Between: Environments in Areas of Contact among States, Economic Systems, Cultures and Religions* (Universities of Zagreb and Zadar, 2017: 292 lectures, 9 round tables,



Fig. 1 Foundation of the ESEH Croatia–Slovenia–Serbia Region at the ESEH Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) in Tallinn in 2019. Photo: Hrvoje Petrić

⁶ Zwitter, 2019a; Fuerst-Bjeliš et al., 2024, vi (including the quote).

⁷ Compare Fuerst-Bjeliš et al., 2024, vii.

⁸ McNeill, 2003, 6–9; Sandwell, 2022 [2008], 208–209.

⁹ Lindström, 2025.

¹⁰ See Fuerst-Bjeliš et al., 2024, v. The journal is mentioned in the list of globally relevant environmental history journals in McNeill’s paper *The State of the Field of Environmental History*, 2010.



Fig. 2 Guest lecture by Žiga Zwitter in Zagreb in 2023. Photo: Hrvoje Petrić

and a poster session),¹¹ (3) the international conference *The Environmental History of the Regional Park Mura-Drava* (Koprivnica, 2012),¹² (4) the international conference *Man, Nature and Environment between the Northern Adriatic and the Eastern Alps in Premodern Times* (Ljubljana, 2014) and its proceedings,¹³ (5) the international symposium *History of the Drava River – Link between Regions* (Koprivnica, 2016),¹⁴ (6) the international *Conference on the History of Environmental Movements and Development of Environmental Thought* (Zagreb, 2014) and the related volume *Environmentalism in Central and Southeastern Europe: Historical Perspectives* published by Lexington Books (2017),¹⁵ (7) the bilateral projects *Socio-Economic History, the Present Day and the Future of Alpine Pastures and Temporary Settlements in Montenegro and Slovenia* (2016–2017) and *Role of Mountains in Determining the Identity of Slovenia and Montenegro* (2018–2020),¹⁶ (8) the international conference *Environmental History of the Drava (Drau) River* (Koprivnica, 2019),¹⁷ (9) the workshop *Environmental Historical Topics in Pre-modern Context* for PhD students (Zagreb, 2020), (10) the roundtable *Environmental History in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia: Developments, State and Perspectives* (online during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021),¹⁸ (11) the multi- and interdisciplinary volume *Environmental Histories of the Dinaric Karst* (2024; Fig. 6) published in Springer's series *Environmental History*¹⁹ and presented in the regional ESEH *Environmental History Today* webinar ses-

¹¹ *European Society for Environmental History: Biennial Conference 2017*, 2017; Zwitter, 2017. See also Fuerst-Bjeliš et al., 2024, vi.

¹² Martan, 2012 (gratitude is expressed to Hrvoje Petić for recommending this reference); Zorn, 2012.

¹³ Štih and Zwitter (eds.), 2014; see Fuerst-Bjeliš et al., 2024, v.

¹⁴ Kadija, 2016; Zorn, 2016.

¹⁵ Petrić and Žebec Šilj (eds.), 2017; Fuerst-Bjeliš et al., 2024, v. See, e.g., Kupper, 2021, 182.

¹⁶ Gratitude is expressed to Peter Mikša for sharing this information.

¹⁷ Cik, 2019 (gratitude is expressed to Hrvoje Petić for recommending this reference); Zorn, 2019.

¹⁸ The program is available on the ESEH website: *Environmental History in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia: Developments, State and Perspectives*.

¹⁹ Fuerst-Bjeliš et al. (ed.), 2024. See the positive review: Matthes, 2025.

sion in October 2024 (Fig. 7),²⁰ (12) the volume *Entire of Itself? Towards an Environmental History of Islands* published by White Horse Press (2024),²¹ (13) the recent volume *Habsburg Natures: Imperial Governance and Environment in Central Europe, 1850–1918* published in Berghahn Books's series *The Environment in History: International Perspectives* (2026),²² and (14) the volume *Discourses on Mountains of Montenegro and Slovenia* (2026) published in Springer's series *Historical Geography and Geosciences*.²³ (15) Among several international and Slovenian environmental history conferences and publications recently organized by or published by the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana,²⁴ cooperation within the Dinaric Region was strengthened by the volume *Droughts in History and Their Impact on the Environment, Society, and Population (Suše v zgodovini in njihov vpliv na okolje, družbo in prebivalstvo, 2025)*.²⁵ (16) Biennial ESEH conferences and *World Congresses of Environmental History* which take place every fifth year have regularly been attended by a few researchers from our region as speakers and discussants listening to each other's lectures and networking.²⁶

Beyond the ESEH frame, environmental history cooperation in the Dinaric Region has been strengthened by the multi- and interdisciplinary biennial conferences *Long-Term Environmental Changes (Dolgoročne spremembe okolja, Ljubljana, eight conferences since 2011)*,²⁷ the multi- and interdisciplinary



Figs. 3–5 Summer school *Environmental History and Historical Ecology of the Dinaric Karst, Slovenia, 25–30 September 2023*. Photo: Hrvoje Petrić

²⁰ *Environmental History Today Webinars 2023-2025*.

²¹ Prokić and Šimková (eds.), 2024. See the positive review: Coates, 2024.

²² Daheur and Lučić (eds.), 2026.

²³ Zorn, Pelcer-Vujačić, and Mikša (eds.), 2026. Gratitude is expressed to Peter Mikša for sharing information on this forthcoming volume.

²⁴ See Zwitter et al., 2023; Zwitter et al., 2025.

²⁵ Dobaja (ed.), 2025.

²⁶ See e.g., Đurđević, 2013; Zwitter, 2014; Zwitter, 2017; Zwitter, 2019a; Zwitter, 2019b; Krnjeta, 2023b; Šifrar Krajnik, 2025.

²⁷ All programs and abstracts are available at *Palinologija: conference* – the conference is organized by palynologists warmly inviting all kinds of research dealing with palaeoenvironmental sciences and/or environmental history to be presented there (participants from more than one country of today's ESEH Dinaric Region presented environmental history papers in 2013 (Zorn, 2013), 2023, and 2025).

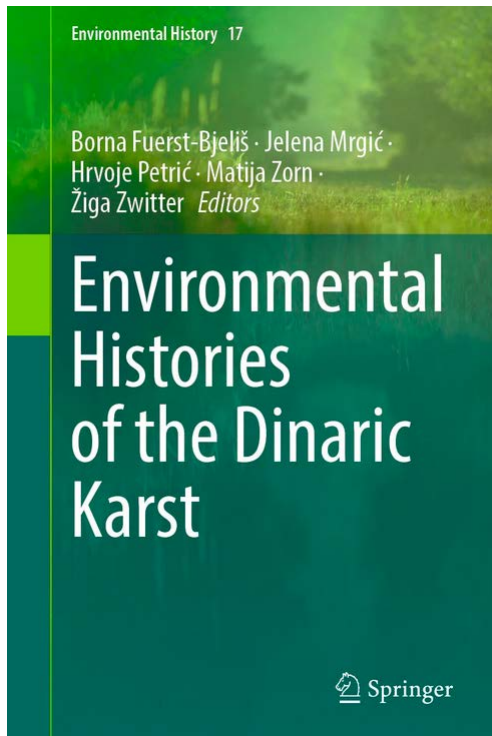


Fig. 6 A joint book produced as part of the activities of the ESEH region, published in 2024.

conference *Habsburg Animals* (Ljubljana, 2024),²⁸ the interdisciplinary doctoral and postdoctoral workshop *Bridging History, Archaeology, and Natural Sciences: New Perspectives on Identity, Mobility, and Social Organization in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Ljubljana, 2025),²⁹ and the science outreach project *Transaquam Medium* presenting history of “the Adriatic region and its wider hinterland in the pre-industrial era on selected social media networks.”³⁰

Fundamental for environmental history university studies are good textbooks. Regionally relevant are the Croatian translation of J. Donald Hughes’s textbook *What is Environmental History? (Što je povijest okoliša?)* – a volume by one of the founding fathers of the *American Society for Environmental History*,³¹ the Croatian translation of Ian G. Simmons’s *Global Environmental History (Globalna povijest okoliša)*,³² and Jelena Mrgić’s textbook *Zemlja i ljudi: iz istorije životne sredine Zapadnog Balkana [Land and People: From the Environmental History of the Western Balkans]*.³³ Regular environmental history courses are carried out at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History (the course *Introduction to Environmental History*, by Jelena Mrgić), at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of History

(*Environmental History* (early modern), by Hrvoje Petrić), at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Science, Department of Geography (courses *Environmental History* and *GIS Analysis of the Cultural Landscape*, both by Borna Fuerst-Bjeliš), and at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts (i.e., the humanities), Department of History (in the frame of the course *Historical Geography*, by Žiga Zwitter).³⁴ Environmental historians from the Dinaric Region and the neighbouring Dinaric countries have also carried out entire university courses abroad, such as at the Stockholm University (a course on natural resource extraction from global history perspectives by Iva Lučić),³⁵ at Beijing Foreign Studies University (the courses *Environmental Humanities* and *Welcome to the Anthropocene I and II*, all by Goran Đurđević),³⁶ at the University of Innsbruck (*Sources and Representations of Austrian History: Historical Sources in Early Modern Environmental History of Central Europe*, by Žiga Zwitter), and the Ludwig-Maximilian’s University Munich’s Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (*An Environmental History of Slovenia: The Alps and the Dinaric Karst, 1500–2025*, by Mateja Šmid Hribar and Žiga Zwitter). Further university teaching initiatives helped pave the way toward the Dinaric Region, such as the regular exchange of guest lectures between the Department of History at the University of Ljubljana’s Faculty of Arts, the Department of History at the University of Zagreb’s

²⁸ *Habsburg Animals*, 2024. Proceedings will be published in *Traditiones: Journal of the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology and Institute of Ethnomusicology at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts* 55(1) in 2026.

²⁹ Zagorc, Pavletič, and Sekne (eds.), 2025.

³⁰ *Transaquam Medium*, 2026.

³¹ Hughes, 2011 [2006]; see also Đurić, 2011; Brady, 2017.

³² Simmons, 2010 [2008], gratitude is expressed to Borna Fuerst-Bjeliš for recommending this reference. See McNeill, 2010, 354; Victor, 2010. See also the critical remarks (Regent, 2013) and author’s response (Simmons, 2013).

³³ Mrgić, 2013; see also Dedić, 2016.

³⁴ Zwitter et al., 2023; Zwitter et al., 2025.

³⁵ Gratitude is expressed to Iva Lučić for this information.

³⁶ Zwitter et al., 2023.



Fig. 7
Environmental
History Today
Webinar 2024

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Fig. 2), and the Department of Geography at the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Science (since 2019).

Milica Prokić participates in the *One Ocean Hub* research program, led by the UN Special Rapporteur for Climate Change and Human Rights, Elisa Morgera (Durham University) and Philile Mbatha (University of Cape Town). *One Ocean Hub*'s vision is “[f]air and inclusive decision-making for a healthy ocean whereby people and planet flourish.”³⁷ Their activities involve researchers, policy-makers and local communities from South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, South Pacific and the Caribbean. Prokić became a contact person for the *United Nations Decade for Ocean Science*, acting as an implementing partner for transdisciplinary research methods within the *Decade*. Prokić also became a founding member of the *UNESCO IOC Blue Thread Initiative for Ocean Literacy*.³⁸ In 2023–2025, Prokić convened and co-curated the *One Ocean Learn Platform*³⁹ dedicated to ocean governance and ocean literacy. From 2023 to 2025, she hosted the *One Ocean Hub Podcast*⁴⁰ with ocean researchers, activists, artists and coastal communities from South Africa, South Pacific, Namibia, and the Caribbean covering a range of topics of blue humanities, ocean stewardship, and ocean literacy.⁴¹ In 2024, the collaboration between the *One Ocean Hub* and the *United Nations Institute for Training and Research* (UNITAR) enabled Prokić to co-develop the ‘Art and the Ocean Stewardship’ e-course, hosted on *The One UN Climate Change Learning Partnership* (UN CC:Learn) platform.⁴² This certified e-course focuses on indigenous art and knowledge systems and importance of their integration in global decision-making processes concerning the ocean.

Among international summer schools, the ESEH-supported four-day summer school *Natural and Cultural Heritage under Different Governments* for masters’ and PhD students, held in Dalmatia in 2017, placed the emphasis on Dinaric Karst landscapes.⁴³ Focusing on participants, the regional component was stronger in the ESEH-supported six-day interdisciplinary summer school *Environmental History and Historical Ecology of the Dinaric Karst* for MA and PhD students, held in Slovenia in 2023 (Figs. 3–5). The program combined lectures and excursions (experts from 13 institutions were involved), the school was attended by 21 students from today’s Dinaric Region and beyond.⁴⁴ Another ESEH-supported

³⁷ *One Ocean Hub*, 2026; gratitude is expressed to Milica Prokić for additional information.

³⁸ *Blue Thread*, 2026.

³⁹ *One Ocean Learn*, 2026.

⁴⁰ *One Ocean Hub Podcast*, 2026

⁴¹ Zwitter et al., 2025.

⁴² *UN CC:Learn: New Course Explores Art’s Role in Transforming Ocean Governance*, 2024; gratitude is expressed to Milica Prokić for sharing this information.

⁴³ Blaće, 2017; Schönfelder, 2017.

⁴⁴ See Dlačić, 2023; Vinković, 2023; Zwitter and Trobec, 2023; Zorn, 2023; Kotar, 2024.



Fig. 8 At the ESEH OGM in 2025 the present ESEH – Dinaric Region was established. The ESEH president Wilko Graf von Hardenberg is announcing this in the picture. Photo: Hrvoje Petrić

international summer school strengthening the regional connections was *Eastern Mediterranean coastal and island environments: natural resources, their uses and perceptions (15th-18th centuries)* (Slovenia, 2023).⁴⁵ Environmental history was also represented in the *International Summer School “Floodplain Ecology”* (Osijek, July 7th-11th, 2025), with professors and students from the Dinaric Region and beyond.⁴⁶ Several listed joint teaching activities, including a few summer schools and guest lectures, would not have been possible without the support from the CEEPUS project *EcoManAqua: Ecology and Management of aquatic ecosystems in Central, East and Southeast Europe*.

The twenty-first issue of *Economic- and Ecohistory* includes overviews of developments, state and perspectives of environmental history in selected parts of the Dinaric Region and beyond, to help internationalise the environmental history research achievements and foster further developments of the discipline. Together with the twentieth issue of the same journal, they feature upgraded papers initially presented at the workshop *Environmental History in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia: Developments, State and Perspectives*. The foreword was written by Marco Armiero, the president of the *European Society for Environmental History* and director of the *Environmental Humanities Laboratory (Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm)* when our workshop was held in 2021.

The Dinaric Region’s environmental history scholarship, teaching and outreach are active, growing, and “increasingly well embedded in the European and global networks ... The interdisciplinary cooperation between historians and life scientists from the region and beyond, as well as the cooperation between environmental historians in the region and beyond have been constantly increasing.”⁴⁷ This text focuses on fundamental achievements involving more than one country from the Dinaric Region. Research carried out within every country and international cooperation exceeding the boundaries of our region are equally important and well developed.⁴⁸ *Vivant, crescant, floreat!*

⁴⁵ *Eastern Mediterranean Coastal and Island Environments: Natural Resources, Their Uses and Preceptions (15th-18th Centuries)*; Krnjeta, 2023a; Zwitter et al., 2025.

⁴⁶ *International Summer School “Floodplain Ecology”*.

⁴⁷ Zwitter et al., 2025, [32].

⁴⁸ For a selection of main achievements in the region in 2023–2025, see Zwitter et al., 2025.

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SAŽETAK

Bliska međunarodna suradnja na području povijesti okoliša unutar današnje Dinarske regije Europskog društva za povijest okoliša (ESEH) ima tradiciju dugu dva desetljeća. Ona obuhvaća projekte, konferencije, radionice, okrugle stolove, publikacije, sveučilišne i transdisciplinarne kolegije, ljetne škole te društvene mreže. Dinarska regija ESEH-a nastala je spajanjem regija Hrvatske i Srbije, kojima su se, na temelju iskazanog interesa, pridružile Slovenija i Crna Gora. Susjedne dinarske zemlje dobrodošle su pridružiti se regiji. Znanstveni rad, nastava i javno djelovanje u području povijesti okoliša u Dinarskoj regiji ESEH-a aktivni su i u porastu, sve su interdisciplinarniji te sve snažnije uključeni u međunarodne mreže i kontekste. Ovaj rad usredotočen je na razne aspekte suradnje u okrilju povijesti okoliša u Dinarskoj regiji ESEH-a.

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