

## **Does the Danube have an Environmental History? Doing history at the nexus of places and people.**

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### **Abstract**

Environmental history has come of age over the last 25 years. Journals, book series, PhDs and academic programs show the maturity of the field. Histories of pollution, regulation and environmental protest, histories of land use and land degradation, histories of urban environments, environmental histories of diseases, domestication, and even environmental histories of war are now abundant. The roads less travelled are those for which knowledge of several languages and scripts is necessary, which is true for large parts of Eurasia. Long-term studies are an important part of environmental history, with Eurasia a case in point, which adds to the challenge. Limited funding and period specializations do not help in this regard. Environmental Histories are built on knowledge about past environments and their natural and human-altered dynamics as much as they are built on knowledge about actor's practices and in particular, about the interaction between those two realms. In Europe, this has led to interdisciplinary teams, but the challenge of integration remains.

Each environmental history is place-specific, so it is important not to generalize on a national or continental scale, therefore a nested approach is useful. Approaching environmental histories as the transformation of (nested) socio-natural sites is a promising conceptual tool, which will be introduced in this presentation using the Danube's environmental history to illustrate the concept.

### **Bio**

Born 1961 in Vienna, engineer for technical chemistry, studied history and journalism, habilitated human ecologist, professor for environmental history at the Institute for Social Ecology of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences; co-founder of the Center for Environmental History, founding president of the European Society for Environmental History, as well as of the Umbrella Association for International Environmental History, ICEHO (until 7/19). She has chaired the Commission for Interdisciplinary Ecological Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, of which she has been a full member since 2016. Since 2019, she also chairs the Council of Environmental Experts of the City of Vienna. Together with Hans-Rudolf Bork she wrote, *Geschichte unserer Umwelt. 66 Reisen durch die Zeit*. The book, published in 2019 in its 3rd, expanded and updated edition, was Science Book of the Year in Austria in 2015, Environmental Book of the Year in Germany. The book "Wasser-Stadt-Wien" (published by the Center for Environmental History's and available for free download as a pdf), which was compiled under her direction, is a synopsis of more than 10 years of interdisciplinary research. She has received numerous awards including "Scientist of the Year 2013" (Club of Educational and Scientific Journalists), Grand Decoration of Honor of the Province of Carinthia 2015 Honorary Doctorate Aalborg Universitet Denmark (2019). Since 2020 she is also a member of Academia Europaea. She is an active member of Scientists for Future Austria.