Environmental Scholarship at Times of Crises

When looking back at 2022, there is no doubt that the armed conflict in Ukraine marked a development that none would have expected. From the European perspective, the long lasting peace brought by the strengthening of the collaborations among States on the European continent had made a war seem so unlikely. The prospective of an armed conflict so unreal. This armed conflict is now felt in all of Europe, with Ukraine facing the horrors of the armed conflict and the other States feeling the consequences of the geopolitical instability the armed conflict has bought. The energy crisis that we are facing risks of becoming an economic and social crisis. The importance of concepts as energy security, energy affordability and energy poverty & justice gained in significance on the political agenda of all European countries.

In light of such developments, we can ask ourselves what is the role of academia. What is the role of environmental scholarship. To an extent, environmental scholarship is used to act in times of crises. The ecological crisis, the climate crisis and the energy crises characterize the work of environmental scholars. In the fifteen years that I have been working as an environmental scholar, I cannot remember a presentation or paper authored by me or another colleague who did not aim at redressing or preventing environmental damage, climate change or energy crises. Environmental scholarship is shaped by crises.

The manuscripts in this issue are, in this light, an exemplary confirmation of the role of environmental scholarship, with specific attention on the protection of nature. First, Elien Verniers's manuscript focuses on animal rights in Europe. Echoing the ‘One Health’ and ‘One Welfare’ discourse, Verniers pleas for the introduction of a ‘One Right’ approach to address legal rights for (non-human) animals in Europe. Building upon the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), she depicts

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a possible legal framework for enhancing the protection of (nonhuman) animals. Second, Edward Brans’ manuscript provides a prospective research agenda linking climate change liability, negative emissions and biodiversity restoration. Brans discusses how negative emissions can benefit both the fight against climate change as well as biodiversity restoration. He also discusses liability regimes in case nature is destroyed that is financed with carbon credits and which results in the release of stored CO2. Third, Aleksey Pavlovich Anisimov, Natalia Voronina and Alla Milovidova’s manuscript focuses on the protection of specially protected natural areas (SPA) in Russia and the need of improving the protection of such areas. Following a comparative analysis, which also touches upon EU nature conservation law, they plea for a Ecological Network Approach to protect Russian’s SPAs.

The issue if completed by the service reports on case law by Ludwig Kramer and on policy and legislation by Matteo Fermeglia, both facilitating the challenge of coping with the ever developing body of case law, policy and legislation in environmental matters in the European Union.

We wish the reader a pleasant reading!

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