

Study Week FBK – ISIG (Italian-German Historical Institute) 2020

June 18, 2020

The health emergency forces us to postpone the awaited event entitled "Environment and infrastructures from the early modern period to the present: challenges, knowledge and innovation" to next year.

Since the seventies environmental history has emerged on the international scene increasingly gaining interest. Initially dominated by American historians, it quickly spread to other continents and involved the interest of scholars of different backgrounds and nationalities. The definition accepted to a greater extent by the scientific community identifies it as “the history of mutual relations between human societies and the rest of nature” which is due to well-known historian JR McNeill. Three major fields of investigation are open to scholars: material history, political history and cultural history of the environment, fields that have no rigid limits and naturally cross one into the other. It is today among the most popular and lively research areas internationally, partly thanks to its strongly interdisciplinary vocation. At the same time, the history of technology has also profoundly changed, with the development of new research approaches such as the theory of Social Construction of Technology, that of the Actor Network Theory and the development of the multidisciplinary line of research of Science and Technology Studies (STS).

In recent years, communication between these two disciplines has become increasingly intense, due to the development of the debate on the Anthropocene, namely the proposal for a new geological era characterized by the transformations caused by human action on planet Earth. The most obvious examples of this impact concerns those processes and situations in which environmental and technical data are now inseparable, so much so that they are often identified as hybrids, envirotechnical systems or components of a more general technosphere. These aspects have prompted numerous historians to explore the relationship of mutual redefinition between environmental and technological transformations in different eras and regional contexts.

Currently these approaches are very vital worldwide, but if we get into different national contexts we can observe how they have developed in different ways from various points of view: identification of these academic research themes and relationship with other disciplines. In Italy these reflections have found little space so far, as emerges if compared with the North American academic context; this is true though also for many European countries, including German language speaking ones.

Today, the climate emergency, the issue of planet sustainability and, in recent months, the Covid-19 pandemic have overwhelmingly put the need to rethink our lives and economic and social relations at the center of the political agenda with a view to reconciling human beings with the environment, which can no longer be postponed. Based on these reflections, Isig has long expanded its study interests to include these issues, which will be covered during the upcoming Study Week dedicated to Environment and Infrastructures from the Early Modern Period to the Present: Challenges, Knowledge, and Innovation organized in collaboration with the Rachel Carson Center in Munich. The conference, initially scheduled for September 2020, will be devoted to the interaction between the environment and infrastructures in a wide chronological span ranging from around the 15th century to our day. The topics identified for reflection concern: the use of resources, the problem of sustainability, environmental conflicts, global ecological crises, technological transformations, industrial transition, urbanization and environmental governance.

The health emergency obliges us today to **postpone our event to next year, precisely to September 23-25, 2021**. To find out more, please visit our [website](https://magazine.fbk.eu/en/news/study-week-fbk-isig-italian-german-historical-institute-2020/). We will keep you posted!

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TAGS

- #ecological crises
- #environment
- #historicalstudies
- #history
- #industrial transition
- #infrastructure
- #resources
- #sustainability
- #technological changes

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