

In This Issue

This issue of *HAHR* presents current work on environmental history in Mexico and Peru. While the essays explore several cases of major state-based environmental initiatives, they also pay careful attention to how different social groups interacted with and thought about their natural surroundings. In so doing, the essays shed light on the complex relationships among environmental change, class and ethnic relations, state building, and economic development in the region.

Vera Candiani examines the two-century history of the Desagüe, the colonial public works project that sought to drain the lakes surrounding Mexico City. Before the Spanish conquest, the indigenous peoples of the Valley of Mexico had developed practices and institutions—*chinampa* and swamp-based agriculture, canoe transport, dams and causeways—that enabled them to live successfully amid the lakes' seasonal ebbs and flows. Spanish understandings both of agriculture and of urban life were much less flexible, demanding clear and fixed boundaries between the realms of dry land and wet rivers and lakes. Unable to enforce such boundaries during the first century of colonial rule, in 1607 Spanish officials began the construction of a 7-kilometer-long tunnel linked to a system of canals aimed at draining the valley's lakes and rivers. Candiani traces the ecological changes produced by the project and the evolving conflicts among indigenous villages seeking to retain access to aquatic resources, haciendas claiming the lands opened up by the process of drainage, and the colonial officials responsible for mediating those disputes. She closes with a thoughtful comparison of the Desagüe and the draining of the English fens.

Matthew Vitz continues the story of the Desagüe into the 1900s. Still struggling to impose boundaries on its watery environment, and determined to demonstrate Mexico's progress and modernity, the Díaz dictatorship undertook an even more elaborate drainage project, the Gran Canal del Desagüe. Completed in 1900, the canal was largely successful in draining Lake Texcoco; but in so doing, it created a new array of problems and challenges. Fed by streams and rivers running down from the valley's surrounding volcanic mountains, the lakes collected salts and minerals that concentrated in the lake bottoms. Now

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dried out and exposed, the lands created by drainage proved poorly adapted to agriculture and during the dry season were the source of alkaline dust storms that plagued the capital. During the revolution and after, local authorities sought to reclaim the lands of the lakebed through state-sponsored programs of desalinization, fertilization, and forestation. Villages and haciendas competed for access to the resources made available by those projects, as they had during the colonial period. But the ability of state authorities to restore the fertility of the lakebed was severely limited, and by the 1950s the former lake area was being occupied by poor and working-class people seeking inexpensive urban housing. Today it is the site of one of the capital's largest working-class communities, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl.

As indigenous villages surrounding the lakebed sought access to land and state resources in the 1920s and '30s, the agrarian rhetoric and policies of the revolution helped them greatly in making those claims. Focusing on the Cárdenas period (1934–40), Christopher R. Boyer and Emily Wakild explore how environmental policy fit into postrevolutionary efforts to remake Mexican society, polity, and economy. They argue that, in formulating and implementing its vision of “social landscaping,” the Cárdenas administration was much more attentive to environmental concerns than its Depression-era counterparts in other nations. The government also sought to involve campesinos in its agrarian and environmental programs not just as beneficiaries but as active participants, through education and producer cooperatives. Forests played a central role in agrarian and environmental policy, with the result that by 1940 Mexico had more national parks than any other country in the world. This provocative article illuminates both the history of Mexican environmental policy and our understanding of the Cárdenas years.

The issue's last two articles shift focus to Peru. Mark Carey considers the case of the German Alpine Society, which during the 1930s sponsored three scientific expeditions to the Callejón de Huaylas valley in the department of Ancash. The German explorers were well received first in Lima and then in Ancash, where local authorities and elites viewed the Germans as a welcome alternative to the perceived neglect and indifference that they received from Lima. Local authorities embraced the Germans' descriptions of the region's stunning beauty and their suggestions on how to control such natural disasters as floods and avalanches. Recurring floods in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s seemed further confirmation of the Germans' knowledge and prescience. However, as Peruvian state authorities and engineers increasingly asserted their presence in the valley after World War II, they contested the Germans' monopoly on scientific knowledge. Strains of Peruvian nationalism and indig-

enous wariness of outsiders further dimmed the aura initially surrounding the German expeditions.

Carey also considers the German scientists' role in promoting mountain tourism, a topic examined in depth in Keely Maxwell's article on the Inca Trail. A hiking trail that runs from the Cusichaca Valley, near Cusco, to Machu Picchu, the Inca Trail was initially promoted as a tourist destination in the 1970s among informal networks of backpackers. By the 1990s it was receiving tens of thousands of visitors per year, and over 100,000 per year by the early 2000s. Maxwell documents the significant social, economic, and ecological impacts of the evolving tourist industry. In an effort to control and reduce those impacts, in 2000 the Peruvian government imposed a series of regulations on the trail, limiting the numbers of hikers and requiring them to travel with licensed tour operators. Those regulations in turn sparked new conflicts and negotiations among competing interests—tour operators, indigenous porters and vendors along the trail, state officials, and, not least, the tourists—and, without intending to do so, extended the reach of the tourist economy into other highland areas.

