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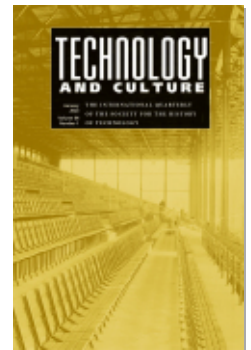
A New Ecological Order: Development and the Transformation of Nature in Eastern Europe ed. by Ștefan Dorondel and Stelu Șerban (review)

Jawad Daheur

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guides Furuhata's interpretation: "Wearing a gas mask and an oxygen tank on the battlefield is akin to creating a portable air-conditioning shelter around one's body" (p. 168). Thus, the separation of the body from environmental contamination is at the core of the generalized mode of technologized existence in modernity; according to Sloterdijk, "seeking security and comfort by dwelling inside air-conditioned and climate-controlled shelters is part of the existential condition of being modern" (p. 168). This recalls the proud claim by Lee Kwan Yew, the first prime minister of Singapore, that air-conditioning was the greatest invention of humanity and that, without it, Singapore could never have been modernized. The way the book deals with the role of technology in social change, specifically, offers us something similar to Aaron Moore's last works on Japan's technological advances and its foreign aid in Southeast Asia.

The lack of clarity on the meaning of "climatic media," mentioned at the beginning of this review, does not diminish the value of this book. With ample original materials and thorough research, particularly the transpacific historical analysis, it gives several clear commentaries on the continuity of science-based technology between the Japanese imperial era and the postwar context.

TOGO TSUKAHARA

Togo Tsukahara is a professor of history of science and STS at Kobe University in Japan. His recent work includes "Global Climate Change and Uncertainty," in *Risks and Regulations of New Technologies*, edited by Tsuyoshi Matsuda, Jonathan Wolff, and Takashi Yanagawa (Springer, 2021), and "Legacies and Networking: Japanese STS in Transformation," in *East Asian Science, Technology and Society* (2019).

Citation: Tsukahara, Togo. "Review of *Climatic Media: Transpacific Experiments in Atmospheric Control* by Yuriko Furuhata." *Technology and Culture* 64, no. 1 (2023): 285–86.

A New Ecological Order: Development and the Transformation of Nature in Eastern Europe

Edited by Ștefan Dorondel and Stelu Șerban. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022. Pp. 320.



Although it is still difficult to speak of it as a fully consolidated field, environmental history of Eastern Europe has been making considerable progress in recent years. *A New Ecological Order* provides a good example of ongoing efforts to draw scholarly attention to this part of the continent and thus to come closer to a fuller picture of European environmental history. The volume covers not only a wide area encompassing large parts of the former Eastern bloc but also quite a large chronology, spanning a period of more than 150 years from roughly the 1850s to the post-1989 era. While attempts at integrated transnational studies of ecological problems and environmentalism in the region are not completely new (see for instance Olšáková, *In the Name of the Great Work*, 2016), the emphasis put

on searching for continuities and ruptures between the pre-1918, interwar, and Cold War periods—all of which were characterized by ambitious projects of state-led modernization—is a methodological innovation that makes the book an original contribution to the field.

Convincingly applying the notions of “high modernist state” (J. Scott) and “regional modernities” (K. Sivaramakrishnan and A. Agrawal) to a dozen case studies, the volume argues that the pursuit of economic prosperity forged a new ecological order in Eastern Europe, radically transforming local environments. Ideas and expertise from the West played a major role in this story—not as a vehicle for colonial exploitation but rather as result of a convergence of interests between Eastern European nationalistic bureaucracies and Western institutions, state or private. By exploring the links between the evolving conception of nature as a “resource” and the process of developing local economies and infrastructures, the authors deal with many technological issues. They do so not only through an analysis of the “technocratic” actors in charge of the modernization projects but also of a wide range of environmental engineering tools and methods, including sewerage networks, irrigation and drainage systems, plant research stations, silvicultural practices, and animal breeding technologies. Almost all the chapters would be of particular interest to historians of technology.

One would have liked the editors to have examined the notions of “East” and “West” with the same analytical subtlety and nuance as they did, for example, with those of “planners,” “experts,” and “bureaucrats.” It seems that the East–West divide running throughout the book is modeled on the situation that prevailed during the Cold War, and the question of its relevance to earlier periods could have been better explained. Moreover, the very notion of “Eastern Europe,” here linked to the tradition of exchange and circulation across Eurasia and reinforced by the “civilizational bridge” created by socialism after 1945, was arguably not the only way to approach the area. It might have been possible, for instance, to single out a *Central Europe*—as a case distinct from that of the more eastern European countries and Russia—that has specific characteristics in terms of technological development, particularly when it comes to its relationships with the West. Recent literature on that topic (see Jan Surman’s publications, among others) could provide interesting additional reading.

With regard to the chronological depth of the study, the efforts to grasp the end of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in the same analytical framework are highly praiseworthy. One may wonder, however, whether the understanding of “modernity” used in the book is not somewhat restrictive, insofar as it largely overlooks the efforts to transform nature that occurred in the region before the 1850s and that may have provided inspiration and an infrastructural basis for later technical developments. Water management and land reclamation, for instance, have a long history in central and eastern Europe, and the influence of Dutch engineers or the Prussian achievements

of the early modern period could have been mentioned at some point. More than a criticism, this remark aims to underline that *longue durée* analysis remains a challenge that environmental historians of central and eastern Europe have yet to meet.

Nevertheless, the book makes a valuable contribution both to environmental history and the history of technology. It has been capably edited by Ștefan Dorondel and Stelu Șerban, and one can only be impressed by its analytical coherence, enhanced by frequent cross-references between the chapters, the introduction, and the epilogue. In short, *A New Ecological Order* is a ground-breaking book with much to recommend it.

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JAWAD DAHEUR

Jawad Daheur is a researcher at the Center for Russian, Caucasian, and Central European Studies in Paris. He works on the relationship between human societies and their environment in central Europe, with a focus on German-speaking areas and Poland. He recently edited a special issue for *Global Environment* (2022), titled “Extractive Peripheries in Europe: Quest for Resources and Changing Environments (15th–20th Centuries).”

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Fixing Niagara Falls: Environment, Energy, and Engineers at the World’s Most Famous Waterfall

By Daniel Macfarlane. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2020. Pp. 274.



With a natural discharge averaging about 200,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) and plunging some 150 feet over a sharp precipice in the Niagara River north of Buffalo, New York, Niagara Falls stands as one of the world’s greatest visual wonders. And for historians of electric power, Niagara Falls is also renowned in the development of high-voltage, polyphase alternating current (AC) technology.

Bringing together these environmental and technological perspectives, Daniel Macfarlane presents a captivating enviro-tech story documenting how, via “remedial works” that include an upstream diversion/control dam and a shortening of the rim at Horseshoe Falls, the sublime falls waterscape has been sublimated into a human-fabricated hydropower system. The goal of engineers has been to draw as much energy as possible from the Niagara River while maintaining sufficient flow so that a diminished falls does not disappoint tourists and honeymooners. As Macfarlane explains, “[twentieth century] technocrats concealed the industrialization of Niagara’s waterscape by helping the Falls resemble their past appearance.” Simply stated, modern-day “Niagara Falls is in fact quite *unnatural*” (p. 9).