

BOOK REVIEWS

The Conservation of Cultural Landscape

by M. Agnoletti (Ed.)

Oxford University Press, 2007, 320 pp.
ISBN 978-1-84593-074-5 (HB)

The Conservation of Cultural landscapes edited by M. Agnoletti has emerged as recognition that much of the present vegetation and biodiversity of Europe have a cultural legacy. This book acknowledges that conservation of cultural landscapes are endangered by the loss of traditional farming, forestry practices, and by inappropriate policies in agriculture and nature conservation. *Conservation of Cultural landscapes* is an interdisciplinary book, separated into three thematic chapters: analysis, management and case studies. It presents an array of methods: paleoecology (pollen, macro and microcharcoal analyses) dendrochronology, historical and archaeological records, old maps and photographs and GIS, aiming to show how knowledge of the past can help manage, maintain and restore the cultural landscapes. The book encourages movement from previous thinking of conserving only pure nature, to a new direction in which peoples and their cultural landscapes are an essential component in application of a sustainable development and close to the needs of modern society. This new orientation is becoming increasingly embraced by a number of national and international initiatives, Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, World Heritage Convention of UNESCO, European Landscapes Convention, just to name a few of them. I will therefore call this book a useful update for understanding the historical background of present landscapes, which should be read by people working in paleoecology, forestry, managers, planners, nature conservation, rural development, as well as students from the environmental studies.

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Natural climate variability and global warming: a Holocene perspective

by R.W. Batarbee & H.A. Binney (Eds.)

Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, 2008, 276 pp.
ISBN 978-1-4051-5905-0 (HB)

Global warming is an important subject on both the scientific community as well as on public and politic agendas. In the recent years the debate over this issue have focused on explaining the causes of the phenomenon, *i.e.*, whether it is caused (or amplified) by human activities or it

is part of natural climate variability. In this respect, a long list of reference books became available, one of the most recent being the book by Batarbee and Binney (Eds.): *Natural climate variability and global warming: a Holocene perspective*, published by Wiley-Blackwell in August 2008. It addresses “one of the key questions facing climate scientists today: how important is natural variability in explaining global warming?” (Batarbee, 2008).

The book has 10 chapters, based on the keynote lectures presented at the HOLIVAR 2006 Open Science Meeting, held in London, in June 2006. The first one, by Rick Batarbee provides a general overview of the book, followed by a chapter by John Birksin, in which a much-needed history of Holocene research is provided. Further, Frank Oldfield, makes a short account on the role of people in the Holocene, stressing out that “it would seem important to use the record of past human-environment interactions [...] as part of the basis for planning a sustainable future in the face of projected climate change”. In Chapter 4, Michel Crucifix deals with climate modeling, describing the general principles of it and then providing two examples of its use: the determination of the possible length of the Holocene and the ocean stability during the Holocene. The following two chapters, by Eystein Jansen et al., and Jürg Beer and Bas van Geel, deal with the forcing of the climate system and its internal variability, showing that climate variability (during the mid-Holocene “climate optimum”) may be influenced by the internal dynamics of the climate system, (Jansen et al.); or *au contraire*, that external (*i.e.*, solar) forcing is partly responsible for it (Beer and van Geel). Hugues Goose, Michael Mann and Hans Renssen, defend the “hockey-stick” model of temperature changes in the Northern Hemisphere during the past 1000 years, using both proxy and model data, and show that the warming over the past decades is unprecedented over the analyzed period. Dirk Verschuren and Dan Charman analyze the relation between hydrologic variability in Europe and Africa and solar activity, and Martin Clausen presents evidence for rapid climatic changes and unstable mid-Holocene climate in North Africa. In the final chapter, Ray Bradley gives an overview of the Holocene climate change, pointing out the importance of understanding the causes of these changes.

While it generally gives a good overview of some key issues in Holocene climate change (*e.g.*, the past 1000 years, the role of people, solar forcing etc.), the book has some drawbacks, in the fact that it gives mostly an Europe and neighboring regions (North Africa, North Atlantic) perspective, and some time slices are less or not at all presented (*e.g.*, early Holocene, 0-1000 A.D.). Overall, the book is a good reference for students and researchers, as it introduces ones of the most important subjects in climate change science: the perspective of the natural variability of the climate, in the context of recent global warming.

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