

## **Wilko Graf von Hardenberg**

### **The Alps as a Contested Environment: Germany, Austria, and Italy, 1860–1960**

This project represents the second phase of a larger work examining the history of the relationship between nature and society in the Alps. At this stage, I will conduct a comparative analysis of the symbolic role of the Alps and of the use and conservation of alpine resources in Germany, Austria, and Italy.

An effective environmental historical analysis must go beyond traditional periodizations. Therefore, I will examine the history of the Alps within a time frame that may be referred to as the “long twentieth century” (Maier 1998). The history of the environment cannot be fully understood if national and general histories of the region since the second Industrial Revolution and the Europe-wide nation-building process are not taken into account therein. The growing level of industrialization; disrupting political and ideological experiences, such as the two world wars and fascism; the development of new models of consumption, production, and interpretation; and rising levels of development and economic welfare occurring during this period all had a marked impact on the Alps, their symbolic role, and their environment.

Historically, the Alps have been an exemplary arena of confrontation between nature and man, as well as between humans over resources. Thus, the Alps have repeatedly been used as political symbols of power and identity. These symbols represent the peculiar relationship between societies and places, and have had a specific impact on the way in which alpine environments have been both contested and used. These representations are central to understanding the ways in which modern nation-states have attempted to take control and reshape the social and environmental conditions of the Alps. Symbols are an easy way to make complex realities more manageable by superimposing a sort of virtual reality and making the illegible legible (Scott 1998).

Since I have conducted most of the archival research and analysis regarding the Italian case during my doctoral and postdoctoral studies, the core of the research that I will perform as a Carson Fellow will focus on gathering data regarding the German and Austrian cases, paying particular attention to the following three research issues:

1. The cultural debate surrounding the alpine environment, its symbolic value, and the relationship between edenic and utilitarian views represented in mass media outlets such as magazines and newspapers;
2. The history of nature conservation in the Alps and the related conflicts between the state, conservationists, and local communities;
3. Historical trends of animal population stocks in the alpine region, innovative means and proxies used to determine historical game stocks (archives of national parks, hunting fines, historical scientific reports, articles from tourism journals), and the implementation of methods inspired by the natural sciences.

## **References**

Maier, C.S. “Secolo Corto o Epoca Lunga? L’Unità Storica dell’Età Industriale e le

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