

were foreign. What was it about the two cities that accounted for such a disparity? Labor historians and historians of contemporary Germany no longer have any excuse for not considering the experiences of Turkish migrants in the period “after the boom.” Turkish migrants and their descendants are intrinsically part of German history, and Stefan Zeppenfeld has written a marvelous book about how a city shaped their opportunities and how their own choices actively reshaped that city.

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Saving Nature under Socialism: Transnational Environmentalism in East Germany, 1968-1990

By Julia E. Ault. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. 300. Hardback \$99.99. ISBN: 978-1316519141.

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Julia E. Ault has made an important contribution to our understanding of environmental policy and politics in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The primary theme of Ault’s monograph is entanglement. In addition to considering how the GDR, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and Poland confronted pollution that crossed borders, she especially emphasizes human entanglements. First, Ault demonstrates how environmental activists from all three states learned from and interacted with each other. Second, she reveals how the lives and work of East German activists and dissidents intersected with official GDR organizations and policies. In other words, many environmentalists were “dual participants,” (10) active in both official and church-based organizations. The benefits of focusing on such entanglements are many. In particular, Ault avoids a narrative that contrasts the environmental sins of the state with Western-influenced environmentalists well distanced from official institutions. In reality, Ault argues, many state actors sincerely hoped to reconcile socialist modernism with environmental protections and, in doing so, actually raised popular expectations for environmental policy. Furthermore, activists continued to work within official organizations. Finally, they did not just look westward; activists also sought inspiration in Poland. Rather than a foil to the “greener” Federal Republic, the GDR emerges from Ault’s narrative as a hinge or focal point of Cold War environmental politics across Central Europe.

In addition to its fascinating focus on entanglement, the book stands out as the most comprehensive English-language history of East German environmentalism yet. Previous monographs in English considered environmental policy and activism specifically through the lens of tourism, outdoor recreation, agriculture, or the cultural politics of *Heimat* (see works by Scott Moranda, Thomas Fleischman, and Jan Palmowski). German-language works by Tobias Huff and Christian Moeller also aspire to a comprehensive analysis of environmental policy and activism, but when compared to Ault, Huff more narrowly focuses on responses to air pollution while Moeller spends less time analyzing the church-based activism of the 1980s.

The book’s structure reflects its emphasis on entanglement. Within most chapters, Ault follows a west-to-east pattern, looking first at interactions with the Federal Republic before considering linkages to Poland. She also organizes her chapters more or less by chronology,

with the initial chapter beginning in the 1950s and the last chapters focusing on events after Chernobyl and ending during reunification. The book, however, primarily focuses on the 1970s and 1980s, and this chronological focus allows for an especially nuanced exploration of dual participation and the gradual transformation of official attitudes toward environmentalists in the crucial years between 1978 and 1986. The organizational choices made by Ault, however, have some disadvantages. In particular, the overwhelming focus on the last two decades of the GDR means that the book reveals less about continuities to earlier periods in the history of German environmentalism or the tensions between official environmental regulators and traditional preservationists in those early years. The first two chapters look at the very real efforts that the Socialist Unity Party (SED) made to codify and institutionalize environmental protections up to 1982. Here, Ault argues the regime had sincere environmental protection goals even if economic priorities usually triumphed. While the first chapter concentrates on policies implemented before 1972 and the second concentrates on the following ten years, these first two chapters suggest a high degree of continuity in attitudes and policy over three decades. It might have been helpful to consider the unique characteristics of GDR environmental protections in the 1950s and 1960s or say more about how those policies changed over time.

Later chapters introduce the environmental networks that emerged within the Lutheran Church and explore their relationship with a regime that failed to live up to its promises of environmental improvements. Throughout these later chapters, Ault identifies the goals and aspirations of church-based networks, but she also takes great care to avoid portraying participants as outsiders with more in common with western Greens than with anyone else behind the Iron Curtain. She always reminds readers of dual participation and entanglement described earlier in this review. The nature of that entanglement, however, changed during the 1980s. Dual participation remained particularly strong outside Berlin, while activists in the capital city increasingly found themselves at odds with the authorities. Restrictions on access to environmental data strained relationships between the state and environmentalists. Sometimes, policies created both entanglement and antagonism. Within a center for environmental development created in the 1980s, for example, scientists became suspicious of church activists but also had to rely on volunteers from church networks to collect data. At the same time, these scientists came under suspicion by the Stasi and grew frustrated with limits imposed on their research by the Stasi's restrictions on scientific data. As Poland flirted with reform, environmentalists cooperating with Polish activists came under increased Stasi scrutiny. The Chernobyl disaster in 1986 only increased antagonism between church activists and the state. Growing interaction among activists from the FRG, the GDR, and Poland also led to the emergence of a younger generation of protesters sometimes at odds with an older, more conservative generation of environmentalists more likely to continue the tradition of dual participation.

The networks and experiences developed through the 1970s and 1980s came to an abrupt end after 1989 and reunification. As the final chapter shows, environmental reform in both Poland and the GDR became an increasingly top-down affair stressing liberalization and privatization and rarely consulting veterans of church-based networks. The CDU and West German institutions guided post-1989 cleanup efforts, "neglecting the existence of traditions and practices in the GDR that could have benefited all Germans with their inclusion" (223). By ending on this note, Ault only reinforces her argument that environmentalism did not just emerge in the liberal democratic West, but also had forgotten roots in socialist experiences and ideas. Indeed, thanks to Ault, readers now have a more complete picture of post-war environmentalism in Central Europe.