

Preface

The field of environmental philosophy has its base primarily in North-America, and many of its central topics and approaches clearly reflect a North American perspective on environmental issues, for instance regarding the importance of the concept of wilderness, a concept the relevance of which is not obvious in Old World contexts such as Europe.

Since 2004, the *International Society for Environmental Ethics* and the *International Association for Environmental Philosophy* organize their annual joint meeting in Allenspark, USA, in the heart of the Colorado Rocky Mountains. The Rockies are a beautiful location for an environmental philosophy conference, but locations tend to direct the attention to certain issues while ignoring others. Therefore, in 2010 it was decided that henceforth the meeting should be held biannually on alternating locations.

The intended establishment of a European Network for Environmental Ethics in 2011 provided an excellent opportunity for us to volunteer and organize the 2011 joint meeting in The Netherlands. We hoped the conference would result in a stronger involvement of European environmental philosophers to the field. Central theme of the conference was “Old World and New World Perspectives on Environmental Philosophy.”

Luckily, the choice for Europe as a location did not put off many US-based scholars. On the contrary, the location proved to be one of the factors that made this into one of the largest and most diverse environmental philosophy conferences of the last few years.

The city of Nijmegen, in the Netherlands, is over 2,000 years old, and lies close to the German border at the borders of the Rhine River. The venue itself, ‘De Holthurnse Hof’, is a former estate that is surrounded by a centuries-old cultural landscape with a mix of farmland and woods, and a designated Natura 2,000 area. The hilly terrain was formed by a glacial moraine in the last ice age and contains many signs of history: ancient Roman clay pits, roads and aqueducts, remnants of mediaeval castles and villages, signs of nineteenth century romanticism, and remains of the Second World War, when one of the biggest WWII battles, Operation Market Garden, took place in these surroundings.

The venue provided a perfect location to discuss a wide variety of topics in their real life context. The program featured site visits to a demonstration project of the ‘Dutch Society for the Conservation of the Cultural Landscape’ (showing how landscapes can be improved making use of traditional land use practices) and to an experimental rewilding project along the borders of the Rhine: ‘new wilderness’. The conference program contained sessions on topics ranging from rewilding in old European cultural heritage landscapes, to animal ethics, environmental virtue ethics, but also dealt with the new challenges posed by rapid changes in the world: ethics of climate change, land grab, fresh water ethics, and environmental justice.¹

The conference program featured several themed sessions on differences and commonalities between Old World and New World perspectives on environmental philosophy. The essays in this book are reworked versions of some of these papers.

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¹The contributions that focused on environmental aesthetics are collected in M. Drenthen & J. Keulartz: *Environmental Aesthetics, Crossing Boundaries and Breaking Divides*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.

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