

## Stockholm and the Rise of Global Environmental Governance

This unique history examines global environmental governance through the lens of Stockholm, which has played an outsized role in shaping its development. Fifty years before Greta Thunberg started her School Strike for Climate, Swedish diplomats initiated the seminal 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment that propelled Stockholm to the forefront of international environmental affairs. Stockholm has since become a hub for scientific and political approaches to managing the environmental and climate crisis. Utilizing archival materials and oral histories, Sörlin and Paglia recount how, over seventy years, Stockholm-based actors helped construct the architecture of environmental governance through convening decisive meetings, developing scientific concepts, and establishing influential institutions at the intersection of science and politics. Focusing on this specific yet crucial location, the authors provide a broad overview of global events and detailed account of Stockholm's extraordinary impact. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Sverker Sörlin is a public intellectual, policy advisor, professor at KTH Royal Institute of Technology and a leading name in environmental history. He is a recipient of the August Prize for Non-fiction.

Eric Paglia is an environmental historian at KTH Royal Institute of Technology researching global environmental governance, the 1972 Stockholm Conference, the Anthropocene, and the Arctic.

## Studies in Environment and History

### Editors

J. R. McNeill, *Georgetown University*  
Ling Zhang, *Boston College*

### Editors Emeriti

Alfred W. Crosby, *University of Texas at Austin*  
Edmund P. Russell, *Carnegie Mellon University*  
Donald Worster, *University of Kansas*

### Other Books in the Series

- Zozan Pehlivan *The Political Ecology of Violence: Peasants and Pastoralists in the Last Ottoman Century*  
Matthew P. Johnson *Hydropower in Authoritarian Brazil: An Environmental History of Low-Carbon Energy, 1960s–90s*  
Ellen Arnold *Medieval Riverscapes: Environment and Memory in Northwest Europe, c. 300–1100*  
Richard C. Hoffmann *The Catch: An Environmental History of Medieval European Fisheries*  
Samuel Dolbee *Locusts of Power: Borders, Empire, and Environment in the Modern Middle East*  
Andy Bruno *Tunguska: A Siberian Mystery and Its Environmental Legacy*  
Lionel Frost et al. *Cities in a Sunburnt Country: Water and the Making of Urban Australia*  
Adam Sundberg *Natural Disaster at the Closing of the Dutch Golden Age: Floods, Worms, and Cattle Plague*  
Germán Vergara *Fueling Mexico: Energy and Environment, 1850–1950*

*A complete list of books in the series is at the back of the book.*

# Stockholm and the Rise of Global Environmental Governance

*The Human Environment*

SVERKER SÖRLIN

*KTH Royal Institute of Technology*

ERIC PAGLIA

*KTH Royal Institute of Technology*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,  
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of  
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009177801](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009177801)

DOI: [10.1017/9781009177825](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009177825)

© Sverker Sörlin and Eric Paglia 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of  
relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception of the Creative Commons  
version the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part may take  
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at [doi.org/10.1017/9781009177825](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009177825)  
under a Creative Commons Open Access license CC-BY 4.0

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI [10.1017/9781009177825](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009177825)

First published 2025

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress*

ISBN 978-1-009-17780-1 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence  
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this  
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will  
remain, accurate or appropriate.

COVER IMAGES:

**Top:** Indira Gandhi and Olof Palme. © Scanpix Sweden/AFP/Getty Images.

Gordon Goodman. © Lars Kristoferson.

Greta Thunberg. © Wiktor Badkowski/DPA/Alamy.

Hans Palmstierna. © TT bildarkiv.

**Middle:** Barbara Ward. © UN Photo Library.

Maurice Strong. © Scanpix Sweden/AFP/Getty Images.

Bert Bolin. © Curt Dahlgren.

Birgitta Dahl. © TT bildarkiv.

**Bottom:** Johan Rockström. © TT bildarkiv.

Inga Thorsson. © TT bildarkiv.

Sverker Åström. © TT bildarkiv.

Will Steffen. © TedXCanberra.