

Editor's Farewell

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Dear *Ecozon@* community,

The time has come. With this issue, I am stepping down as Editor in Chief, after more than fifteen years. Moreover, I would like to officially welcome Margarita Carretero González, one of our founding managing editors, as the new Editor in Chief.

It has been a long, arduous yet wonderful journey. Allow me to review a few details of our initial history. Early in 2008, my friends and colleagues from the recently founded research group, GIECO, Imelda Martín and Margarita Carretero came to me with the suggestion of creating a journal on ecocriticism. The three of us brainstormed and put it to the whole group during a research seminar in Monfragüe in April 2008, agreeing to work on the project. Our dear friend Nacho Oliva came up with the name, *Ecozon@*, one workable in several languages. We explored platforms for online journals and in October 2008 made the formal proposal to the EASLCE community at the conference in Alcalá. Thanks to seed money from the Instituto Franklin, we were able to enlist the help of a wonderful “techy” student, Almudena Bernardos, who studied the OJS system and set up the skeleton of the journal. With EASLCE’s backing, we started to work and presented a draft at the conference held at Radboud University, Nijmegen, in January 2010. I will admit, its reception was rather skeptical and there were many doubts; there was a lot of well-founded criticism but thanks to that, many aspects of the proposed journal were amended and the initial editorial board and advisory board formed. Axel Goodbody joined us as Associate Editor, Isabel Hoving as Creative Arts Editor, and Hannes Berghaller in charge of book reviews, Irene Sanz as editorial assistant together with Imelda and Margarita as Managing Editors. While as academics we were all familiar with the basic elements of a journal and its peer review process, we discovered many other hurdles on the way. Hundreds of decisions on apparently simple issues, anywhere from type and color of font, page design and layout, descriptive texts on the focus and scope, or naming sections, the requirement of registration, and so forth daunted us daily. And that is not to mention the more obvious major issues of open access, getting submissions, finding reviewers, editing and dealing with five languages.

April 28, 2010, our inaugural issue, “New Ecocritical Perspectives: European and Transnational Ecocriticism” came out. We need to thank all those ecocritics and academics who generously contributed their essays, trusting a promising but

unproven project, as well as a very special thanks to the whole editorial board who worked so hard to bring out the first issue. Also key during the first two years were the guest editors, Christa Grewe-Volpp, José Manuel Marrero Henríquez and Franca Bellarsi, who put forth their enthusiasm in soliciting submissions for an unknown journal, finding peer reviewers, and editing the themed section, making a dream become reality. After that, things started flowing, albeit with lots of glitches and moments of panic. Furthermore, our international Advisory Board has been crucial in acting as reviewers, providing suggestions, on both journal policies as well as themes and guest editors for special sections. Slowly we all learned and grew together with the journal. We attended seminars on editing journals, learned the obscure language and rationale of quality controls and indexing, and built up a pool of reviewers that keeps growing with each issue. More importantly, we now have volunteers and proposals for special topics several years in advance, numerous submissions, not only for the themed section but for the general section, which in fact has a small backlog given the numbers, a large array of book reviews and more and more contributions of artists, some very well known, for the Creative section.

This issue, "Anthropocene Sublimes" constitutes our 32nd issue, 15 years of publication and two prior years of preparation. Up to date we have published 31 issues and close to 400 research articles, receiving an average of 80 submissions each year. Although English clearly continues to be the dominant language, we are slowly increasing the number of articles in other languages. We have an acceptance rate of around 70% (since our policy is that of giving promising submissions a chance to significantly improve with detailed feedback from reviewers and editors). We have an average of 6000-9000 views of the pdf files each month and more so when a new issue is published. There are some 1300 registered readers and some 700 authors. These numbers contribute to illustrate the rising success of our venture.

The editorial board members over the years made this possible. There is no way I can list the tasks of each one, but allow me at least to name them. Axel Goodbody and, as of 2020, Heather Sullivan, as Associate Editors shared the brunt of decision-making with me. We were fortunate to be able to count on the numerous and excellent section editors responsible for so many tasks over years: Imelda Martín, Margarita Carretero, Isabel Hoving, Hannes Bergthaller, Diana Villanueva, Serenella Iovino, Lorraine Kerslake, Damiano Benvenuto, Astrid Bracke, Isabel Pérez, Gala Arias and Elizabeth Tavella. Likewise, an effusive thanks goes to the many assistant editors, past and present, who have performed unseen yet necessary tasks such as copyediting, translating journal headers and informative texts to their languages, and assisting editors: Roman Bartosch, Margot Lauwers, Louise Squire, Christopher Schliephake, Adele Tiengo, Sean Matharoo, Alejandro Rivero, Giulia Disanto, Sofie Schrey, Madeleine Hugai, Vanesa Roldán, Laura op de Beke, Beatriz Lindo, Clara Contreras, Sara Familiar and Xiana Sotelo. We have also had help from a number of editorial assistants, usually students, performing one-on tasks as needed: Kristin Ladd, Sara Rincón, Victoria Barrigüete, Alberto Montenegro, Paloma Villamil, Katherine Huber, Lisa Wulf and Roberto Interdonato. To the editorial board we must add the guest

editors for each issue. Although it is impossible to name and thank individually each one, in addition to their introduction to the themed section, a listing of the guest editors responsible for each issue can be seen under the top tab, [“About”](#) and the changes in the editorial board can be seen in the Journal History at the very end of that section. It has been a pleasure to meet and work with so many academics from different countries who generously contributed their time and expertise and I have learned so much from all of them. As you all know, all work on *Ecozon@* is unpaid yet all editorial board members devoted an average of 3-5 years, and some much longer, to *Ecozon@*. The invaluable guidance of the Advisory Board and the faith put in us by authors submitting their research have made *Ecozon@* a reality. In addition, my special thanks to EASLCE and its executive board. Whenever a problem arose, they were ready to help; EASLCE has also financially supported the journal with the costs of hosting, OJS updates and the renewal of its design and image for our anniversary. However, before I finish, I would like to give a very special thank you to a person who has always been there, behind the scenes, plodding away with rarely recognized work, but at the center of the journal. Irene Sanz has been with the journal since its beginning and now remains the last of the initial board. She is our secretary and our main liaison to the publisher, University of Alcalá, handling among other things the assignment of the DOIs. She also coordinates the copyediting phase and works with the production team for the final layout of each issue. Moreover, all issues dealing with copyright, certificates for authors, board members or reviewers as well as the final credits and back up files are in her able hands. Perhaps no one knows more about the small quirks and glitches of the platform, or the panic and frustrations of the editors. Her role may not be highly visible, but she has constituted one of the bridges between changing board members, always providing support for new comers. Without her steady support, *Ecozon@* would not have thrived.

I know you will all continue to support *Ecozon@* into its next phase and I wish to reiterate my thanks to all the community for trusting me as Editor and contributing so generously to our joint “baby” who is now leaving behind its adolescence and moving into adulthood. Although I am finally stepping down, I will continue to help as needed by Margarita Carretero, Editor in Chief and the Editorial board. I am confident that Margarita, together with Heather, and the whole board will make *Ecozon@* flourish and reach even higher goals. It has been a wonderful journey, one I will always be proud of and one of the most satisfying roles of my academic career.

Carmen Flys-Junquera