

The 5th ELDP Workshop: The Record of Human/Climate Interactions in Lake Sediments

PALLANZA, ITALY, 7–12 OCTOBER 2000

The European Lake Drilling Programme (ELDP) is an ESF (European Science Foundation) Scientific Programme aiming to achieve a better understanding of the regional dimension of past environment changes in Europe through high-resolution lake sediment studies (see PAGES newsletter Vol. 7, No.1, 1999). The theme of the 5th ELDP workshop, held in Pallanza, was the record of human/climate interactions in lake sediments. 39 participants from 12 European countries and from Israel and Japan presented their data in 28 contributions demonstrating the wide range of topics within this overall theme. Some presentations emphasized recent human impact on lake ecosystems through reconstructing the eutrophication history of both large circum-Alpine lakes and high altitude lakes in the Alps. Other contributions focused on the pre-historic period, discussing the relations between cultural and climate changes as well as on the causes and dates for the beginning of agriculture. Prehistoric human impact on the environment from Neolithic times onwards, most clearly reflected through forest clearance, has been documented right across Europe from the Atlantic fringes of Ireland to the areas of early agriculture in Turkey, Syria and Israel. The Pallanza workshop stimulated a lively discussion on the possible impact of climate change on past cultures and economies, a proposition currently discarded by most social scientists. It was shown that the major cultural changes in much of Europe at the beginning of the Iron Age probably followed a strong climatic deterioration at about 850 cal BC, a possible indication of the important influence of climate on human societies. The discussion also revealed that disentangling climatic and human influences within any single sediment record is a difficult task because there are no proxies available which can



be clearly interpreted in either one way or the other. Consequently, most studies mainly focus on evidence for either climatic or human impact on lake ecosystems. One approach to solving this problem was demonstrated by the example of the Mezzano crater lake in central Italy. There, a combination of high-resolution studies on a well-dated sediment record, combined with archaeological investigations at the same site, showed that the impact of Bronze Age settlements started shortly after a dry climatic phase. The need to combine data from different scientific communities was recognised as the key to solving this type of question in the future.

An extended abstract volume has been published as *Terra Nostra* 2000/7 "The record of human/climate interactions in lake sediments" (ISSN 0946–8978) and can be ordered online from the Alfred-Wegener-Stiftung <http://www.aw-stiftung.de/publikationen.htm> More information about the Pallanza and previous ELDP workshops are available from the ELDP homepage at <http://www.gfz-potsdam.de/pb3/pb33/eldphome/>.

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INSIDE PAGES

New Office Manager

The PAGES office is pleased to announce that Ms. Elke Bergius has taken up the vacant position of Office Manager. Elke received her 'diplom' degree from the Botanical Institute at the University of Bern in 1999 and has scientific interests in numerical modeling of biological systems. Elke takes over office administrative and financial oversight duties from Niklaus Schranz, who has elected to continue to work at the PAGES office in a reduced capacity as technical editor and graphics coordinator.

Call for contributions to PAGES News

In the next issue of PAGES News, due to appear in March 2001, we plan to highlight and overview the role of numerical modeling in paleoclimate research, especially those aspects most relevant to the problem of future climate prediction. We encourage scientists from the PAGES community to submit material relevant to this theme. Types of contributions to PAGES News, include (1) research highlights of 1 or 2 pages based on recently published peer reviewed literature or (2) Program announcements which are meant to inform and engage the international community in national or regional research efforts. The deadline for the receipt of submissions is January 31, 2001. See www.pages-igbp.org/products/newsletters.html for details.

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