

МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ
Національний авіаційний університет
Aix-Marseille Université (France)
TESOL – Ukraine

**НАЦІОНАЛЬНА ІДЕНТИЧНІСТЬ
В МОВІ І КУЛЬТУРІ**

Збірник наукових праць

Київ 2017

УДК 821.09(100)(082)

НЗ5

Національна ідентичність в мові і культурі: збірник наукових
НЗ5 праць / за заг. ред. А.Г. Гудманяна. О.Г. Шостак. - К.:Талком, 2017. -
343 с.

ISBN 978-617-7397-36-5

Збірник містить тексти доповідей Х Міжнародної конференції з питань національної ідентичності в мові і культурі, що відбулася 17-18 травня 2017 року на кафедрі іноземних мов і прикладної лінгвістики Навчально-наукового Гуманітарного інституту Національного авіаційного університету (м. Київ, Україна).

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*Рекомендовано до друку Вченою радою Гуманітарного інституту
(Протокол № 3 від 19 квітня 2017 р.)*

ISBN 978-617-7397-36-5

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SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF DEFORESTATION

Forests cover 31% of the land area on our planet. They produce vital oxygen and provide homes for people and wildlife. Many of the world's most threatened and endangered animals live in forests, and 1.6 billion people rely on benefits forests offer, including food, fresh water, clothing, traditional medicine and shelter.

But forests around the world are under threat from deforestation. Deforestation comes in many forms, including fires, clear-cutting for agriculture, ranching and development, unsustainable logging for timber, and degradation due to climate change. This impacts people's livelihoods and threatens a wide range of plant and animal species. Some 46-58 thousand square miles of forest are lost each year - equivalent to 48 football fields every minute.

Deforestation is a particular concern in tropical rainforests because these forests are home to much of the world's biodiversity. For example, in the Amazon around 17% of the forest has been lost in the last 50 years, mostly due to forest conversion for cattle ranching.

Deforestation is one of many issues that plague the world's environment today. Some potential environmental problems, such as climate change, are difficult to evaluate. Vanishing forests are something that can be readily observed. Perhaps this is what makes deforestation such a disturbing and serious problem.

Every day, large volumes of agricultural products connected to deforestation are sold on the EU market as food products, animal feed and cosmetics. European banks and financial institutions often fund foreign projects contributing to forest loss, like the conversion of forest for palm oil or pulpwood plantations. Shiploads of illegal timber also continue to enter the European market routinely.

European leaders have repeatedly endorsed the objective of ending deforestation and reducing forest degradation by 2020. Due to their vital role in fighting climate change, protecting forests is also part of discussions at the ongoing UN Climate Conference in Paris. Despite Europe's good intentions, the EU's forest footprint remains significant and the EU is still doing too little to reverse global forest destruction.

Since 2003, EU efforts have focused on the implementation of the EU FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) action plan to tackle illegal logging and related trade. Ten years later, much remains to be done, as the European Court of Auditors recently pointed out.

Ultimately, partner countries will be authorized to issue FLEGT licenses to guarantee that any wood exported to the EU has been legally harvested. Yet, with increasing pressure to show progress, there is a real risk that the EU will give countries the go ahead before good forest governance is put in place, and before policy reforms are implemented to ensure that forests are protected and the rights of forests people are respected.

Poland has started logging in the ancient Białowieża forest, which includes some of Europe's last primeval woodland, despite fierce protests from environmental groups battling to save the world heritage site. Białowieża is the unique place of towering hornbeam and fungi the size of dinner plates is Europe: 1,500 sq km of woodland on the border of Poland and Belarus is the last lowland remnant of what covered our continent after the ice age. It is home to 20,000 species, including 12 carnivores such as lynx and wolves, 120 species of breeding bird such as the three-toed woodpecker and rare insects and invertebrates that were lost to the rest of Europe a century or more ago.

The forest boasts Europe's tallest trees and largest mammal, the bison. It is a national treasure for Poland and an international treasure for us all. Białowieża is a natural laboratory for the study of species and climate, providing globally useful insights into how we've changed our environment and how it is changing afresh. Only a small portion (16%) is a national park and parts are protected by the EU and as a UNESCO world heritage site.

However, the only published inventory shows that nearly half of the trees earmarked for logging may be non-spruce varieties, which have been unaffected by the beetle outbreak. And environmental campaigners warn that the tree chopping will destroy an ecosystem unspoiled for more than 10,000 years that is home to the continent's largest mammal, the European bison, and its tallest trees.

"We're calling on the European commission to intervene before the Polish government allows for the irreversible destruction of the Białowieża forest," said Greenpeace Poland activist Katarzyna Jagiełło. "We need to halt this bark beetledisease in its tracks," said Poland's environment minister Jan Szyszko. "We need to ensure that there is a healthy logging of trees, something that is planned. We only want to fell an area of 188,000 cubic meters. We want to protect priority habitats for the EU. We are trying to improve and correct the situation."

Spain has lost an area of forestry twice the size of Luxembourg in just over a decade.

According to a new global map on deforestation, the country has lost 690,815 hectares of tree cover from 2000-2012.

Global Forest Watch, a map which is monitoring deforestation in ‘real time’, claims that at least 448,188 hectares have been gained through reforestation and plantations in the same period.

The map uses information from millions of satellites as well as people on the ground to provide data on the loss and gain of tree cover.

As Spain carries out reforestation, it tries to avoid past mistakes. «In previous reforestation attempts, a single species was planted in a monoculture. And on many occasions, exotic plants were introduced, also for commercial production», Sanjuanbenito said.

One of the most popular commercially planted trees is eucalyptus, a species which is imported from Australia. It grows exceptionally fast, which is appealing for private landowners. But eucalyptus requires a lot of water, which is less than ideal in an arid country.

Spanish authorities are also increasingly interested in protecting forests for their carbon credit value - forests are one of the main carbon dioxide sinks on the planet.

In Hungary due to urban development projects all over Budapest, thousands of healthy trees are in danger of being cut down. Civic organizations and environmental groups are protesting, but the government does not care.

The mischief which the Hungarian government is causing has been covered extensively in the international press during the last few years, but Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s notoriety is mainly due the government’s anti-humanitarian behavior during the refugee crisis, inability to compromise on the issue of refugee quotas – regardless the political disruption it brings to the integrity of the EU – and shameless attempts to repress the free media.

The cutting down of large numbers of trees is not limited to Budapest. In the southern Hungarian city of Szigetvár, the government recently annihilated a dozen trees as part of plans to restore the castle – again, illegally. Civil society organizations estimate that another 1,500 trees are in danger of being cut down as part of yet another project – the Roman Beach rampart project in Budapest’s northern end. ZoltanIlles, a former Fidesz secretary for environmental protection until 2014 gave a rather logical explanation to the Magyar Nemzet newspaper: “The political authorization ends in 2018, and it’s quite certain that they (Fidesz) will try to tie down all EU budgets in different types of developments by then.”

Unfortunately, those in power in today’s Hungary can do whatever they want to trees as well as activists trying to save the environment, and it seems that only a handful of people are standing in the way of their corrupt and destructive practices.

Over the past two years, the forest cover in the Carpathian Mountains of western Ukraine has been thinned drastically by human cutting of the trees. Environmentalists warn of impending disaster, but officials assure that the situation is under control.

In the opinion of some experts, the native mountains could become even more thinned out because authorities want to allow the free export abroad of cut timber. The government of President Petro Poroshenko has proposed that the Verkhovna Rada cancel the ten-year moratorium on the export of unprocessed timber (roundwood) that was approved in 2015. This has caused mixed reaction among experts.

“The timber export moratorium was aimed to protect forests from destruction and to support the domestic wood processing industry, which is breathing its last,” says Igor Sheludko, an expert on forestry. In Ukraine, the rate of cutting has reached some 300,000 hectares per year. At this rate, in a couple of years will be no more forest in the Carpathians. A cubic meter of timber on the black market fetches 600-700 dollars. Every year, tens of thousands of cubic meters of wood are trafficked from the Carpathians.

Meanwhile, despite an official ban on exporting timber, dozens of trains with illegally logged wood daily cross Ukrainian west border – going to the EU. So, the EU demand to lift the ban on exporting timber is just a demand to legalize the practice of grabbing natural resources.

Solutions to Deforestation

1. The best solution to deforestation is to curb the felling of trees, by employing a series of rules and laws to govern it.
2. Clear cutting of forests must be banned. This will curb total depletion of the forest cover. It is a practical solution and is very feasible.
3. The cutting must be replaced by planting young trees to replace the older ones that were cut. Trees are being planted under several initiatives every year, but they still don't match the numbers of the ones we've already lost.