



Editor's Note on the 50th Anniversary of Human Ecology: An Interdisciplinary Journal

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This volume marks 50 years of continuous publication for *Human Ecology: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. The past year, 2021, was a significant milestone in terms of submissions received, academic impact, and in the scope of both readership and the diversity of authors. Five years ago Springer Academic completed its merger with Macmillan Academic, thereby placing the Journal on the same media platform with *Nature*, arguably the foremost journal in biological sciences. The Springer-Nature home page displays the features offered academic users by this association: www.springernature.com. Meanwhile, our Journal continues with its mission unchanged in the environmental sciences, but reaching an ever-increasing and diverse global academic audience.

In 1972 the founding editors' Introductory Statement described their intention to publish research on "... the role of social, cultural, and psychological factors in the maintenance of ecosystems; effects of population density on health, social organization, environmental quality; new adaptive problems in urban environments; interactions of technological and environmental change; and the genesis of maladaptation in man's biological and cultural evolution ..." (1971:1). The first issue contained four articles: Stewart Oden'thal on the bioenergetics of Indian cattle, Clifford Geertz on traditional irrigation in Bali and Morocco, Bernard Nietchmnn on fishing among the Miskito people of Nicaragua and Kenneth Clark on environmental decision making, each of which became widely cited. Ignoring the occasional linguistic anachronism, taken with papers in the

subsequent four numbers published that year they make a fine introduction of the interdisciplinary study of environmental interactions as framed in 1972. The 2021 December number contains a special issue guest edited by Luis Pacheco-Cobos and Bruce Winterhalder with nine papers on the domestication and use of dogs as well as three unrelated submissions dealing with medicinal plants in Afghanistan, pastoralism in Mongolia and feral cat management in Australia. Taken with the previous five issues that came out in 2021, the cumulative research would be an excellent introduction to the breadth of environmental studies today. While the last five decades have witnessed great intellectual and technological changes in the scientific community, we still see considerable continuity with this initial vision. The focus on social and cultural variables in local environmental interactions is an important line of continuity. Foremost in terms of evident long-term continuity is the preponderance of published research rooted in close, empirical observation. Not infrequently scholars report on field research of long duration, often conducted under arduous conditions. Many, if not most, *HE* contributors can be aptly characterized as the foremost experts in their particular region of study, especially where their work entails participant observation. In many ways research appearing in the Journal resembles "slow journalism."

The main difference in the perspective now generally embraced by the term "human ecology" is that it is part and parcel of the larger scientific field of ecology and evolution not simply analogous to it. The term "cultural ecology," once common in the 1960s and 1970s, is now rarely used. While very much aware of the distinctive cultural nature of human environmental interactions, we nevertheless recognize that humans ultimately succeed, flourish, or fail in the same manner as other species. Given the cumulative nature of intellectual capital, researchers today routinely use concepts and instruments of measurement unformulated 50 years ago. In contemporary ecology there is never an assumption of timelessness or isolation. While historical change and external

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influences might once have been regarded as annoying distractions from or distortions of indigenous systems, they have now become the focus of attention. Earlier ecologists tended to ask how traditional behaviors enabled a population to maintain itself in a specific environment. Today we are more likely to ask: What are the problems confronted by the populations in this place? How do individual actors deal with them? And we are far more likely today to be aware of the fact that not all members of the group may share the same problems to the same degree. Contemporary human ecology emphasizes the role of decision-making at the individual level as people strategize and optimize risk, costs, and benefits. Ecologists draw on demographic and evolutionary theory as well as upon new biological models derived from field ecology. Advances in digital mapping and measurement, new techniques for data presentation and analysis, and the widespread employment of both micro-biological analyses including DNA sampling and satellite imagery has transformed and expanded research practices.

A number of recent articles illustrate current thinking and concerns. For example, the special theme section edited by Cindy Isenhour, Jessica O'Reilly, and Heather Yocum "Accounting for Climate Change: Measurement, Management, Morality and Myth," is extensively covered in three methods and theory papers and three country studies. The theory and methods contributions deal with research design, measurement and socio-ecological assessments in studying climate change at the local level. Other recent studies treat carbon accounting (REDD+¹) in Malawi, rural migration in Mexico, and climate induced changes in animal husbandry in Tibet and Mongolia, sacred forests in India, urban growth in Tulsa, Oklahoma, threats to carrion eating birds of Greece, "little fire ant" infestations in the Solomon Islands, and a variety of reports on the indigenous peoples of the Amazon.. Five years ago Philip Loring used "coexistence theory" and data from the Cook Inlet salmon fisheries, Alaska, to understand conflict and coexistence among stakeholders with diverse interests using shared resources. In an intellectually related paper Jane Addison used "resource defense theory" to address what amounts to the same underlying problem - access to a shared natural resource - using data from the Gobi desert of Mongolia and China. While communicating in a readable manner that is largely accessible to both an academic and general audience, these articles all illustrate a wide range of interdisciplinary approaches of inquiry and breadth of interest that characterize the research papers, brief communications, reports and commentary that

have regularly appeared in the journal over the last 50 years, and we trust will continue for years to come.

A Brief History of the Journal

In 1970, Andrew P. Vayda–Pete to all and sundry–was recruited by Seymour Weingarten, a senior editor at Plenum Press, to initiate a new form of academic publishing. Seymour's vision was for a journal that explicitly disavowed discipline-limited approaches as self-defeating. Pete was very much aware of the birthing difficulties that any new academic journal must face, let alone one with such a mission that was not attached to an existing professional discipline. At that time (just as now!) ecology and the environment were very much growing concerns among social scientists and the general public. The challenge was to bring together research that would normally be apportioned among discipline-rooted venues. To overcome this, Pete drew on his extensive personal network to attract distinguished scholars to the editorial board and to persuade them to submit articles. The initial board of editors included not only internationally renowned researchers but also individuals who were very much the public face of environmental awareness, such as Rene Dubos and Barry Commoner. Very rapidly the journal attracted more acceptable submissions than it had a page budget to print. In short, it lived up to the promise of providing a forum for problem-oriented, empirically research articles.

In 1976, Pete asked Susan Lees to take over the editorship as he was increasingly involved with overseas projects. Susan, due to her own commitments, in turn invited me to be co-editor with her. By that time *Human Ecology* was an established, peer-reviewed journal, and with this appointment it became housed in a dedicated office in the Department of Anthropology at Hunter College, City University of New York. The journal grew steadily even though by the late 1970s ecological treatment of social or cultural behavior was seemingly declining. Mainstream disciplinary journals, in anthropology at least, such as the *American Anthropologist*, were publishing fewer articles based on research rooted in empirical evidence utilizing environmental variables. As a consequence social scientists committed to empirical studies found *HE* a particularly welcome venue, perhaps even a relief from the prevailing often ideologically driven discussions.

In 1988, Susan became co-editor of the *American Anthropologist* and I remained editor-in-chief of *Human Ecology*. Since its inception, the journal has critically relied on a number of very talented editorial assistants, mostly working part-time while pursuing graduate studies.

In 1992 Ludomir Lozny, a professional archaeologist and environmental scientist joined the journal and shortly

¹ REDD+ is the acronym of "reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation"—a global initiative to mitigate climate change through forest carbon maintenance.

thereafter was named Managing Editor, creating the basis of the current editorial team. During his tenure the journal, as noted, moved from four to six issues a year, a significantly increased page budget, larger tear size, and with the ability to publish author-supplied four-color photographs. In 1998 Judith Tucker, who holds a degree in anthropology and linguistics from the University of London, took on major responsibility for editorial services. She continues to oversee the copyediting, line editing, and language aspects of submissions, important components of the editorial process since many of our authors are not native speakers of English. The unsung heroes of the enterprise then as now are the academic reviewers without whose unpaid and usually unacknowledged efforts the journal could not maintain its standards.

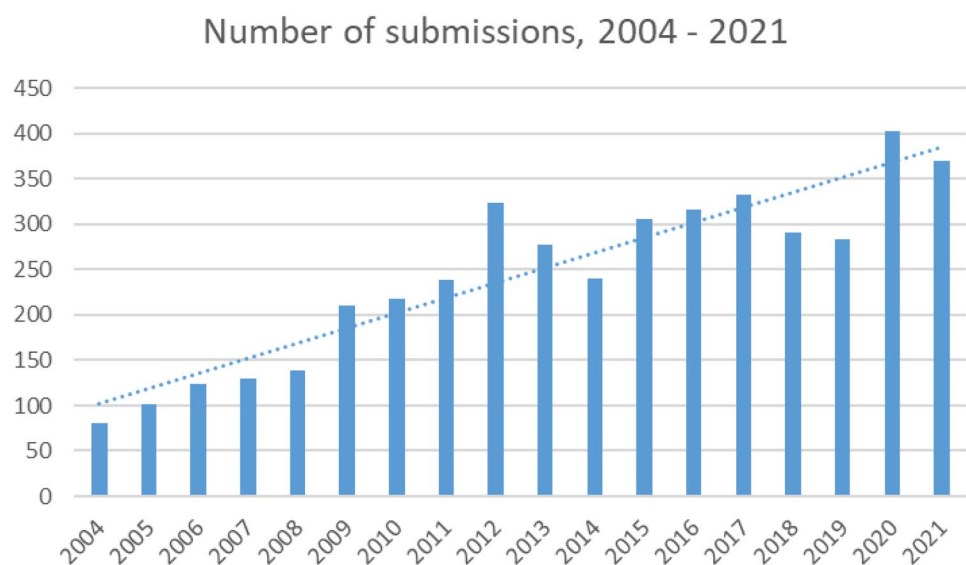
The journal has maintained an active book review section from the beginning, starting with editors Edwin Cook and William Davis, followed by Bonham Richardson, Larry Grossman, Nancy Flowers, Flora Lu, Tanya King, and Yancey Orr to name only those who served lengthy terms, and frequently themselves published in the journal. Our current book review editor is Chelsey G. Armstrong. Plenum Press was acquired by Kluwer publishing in 1999, which in turn was taken over by Springer Academic in 2005. In 2007 Springer agreed to bring out a Book Series under the general editorship of Ludomir Lozny and myself: *Studies in Human Ecology and Adaptation*, which shares an Editorial Board with *HE*. Seven volumes have appeared in this series to date, with most going into multiple printings. Another new series under the same editorship was approved in 2011: *Springer Briefs in Human Ecology*, which publishes shorter volumes in paperback of ca. 40,000 words. From 1999 onward Teresa

Krauss was our enthusiastically supportive editor on the publisher's side with Mary Sue Daoud coming on board in 2021. We anticipate a very constructive relationship! Our distinguished Editorial Board members have been critical in maintaining the high standards of the journal through regular peer review although they often do not get the individual credit they richly deserve.

Peer Review

Human Ecology exists as an academic publication of significance only due to the unheralded efforts of thousands of reviewers worldwide who take time from their research and teaching responsibilities to review and evaluate submissions. The editorial office screens incoming submissions as to their appropriateness to the Journal, but only those deemed appropriate are sent out for “double blind” review. While there is reason to debate just how “blind” this process is, we have rarely seen *ad hominem* responses; to the contrary, many senior scholars, often anonymously, devote much time to improving articles submitted by junior or hitherto unpublished scholars. The review process is onerous but usually rewarding for all concerned. Given the demanding work loads of our reviewers, not to mention their own research, there are times when, unfortunately, manuscripts may appear to be languishing as we wait for reviews to be returned. While we aim for three solid appraisals for each full-length submission, we have to approach, on average, about 8 or 9 reviewers to achieve this. As of December 2021 we have ca. 3000 active reviewers in our database.

Fig. 1 The number of submissions, January 2004 – November 2021



Submissions by country, 2017 - 2021

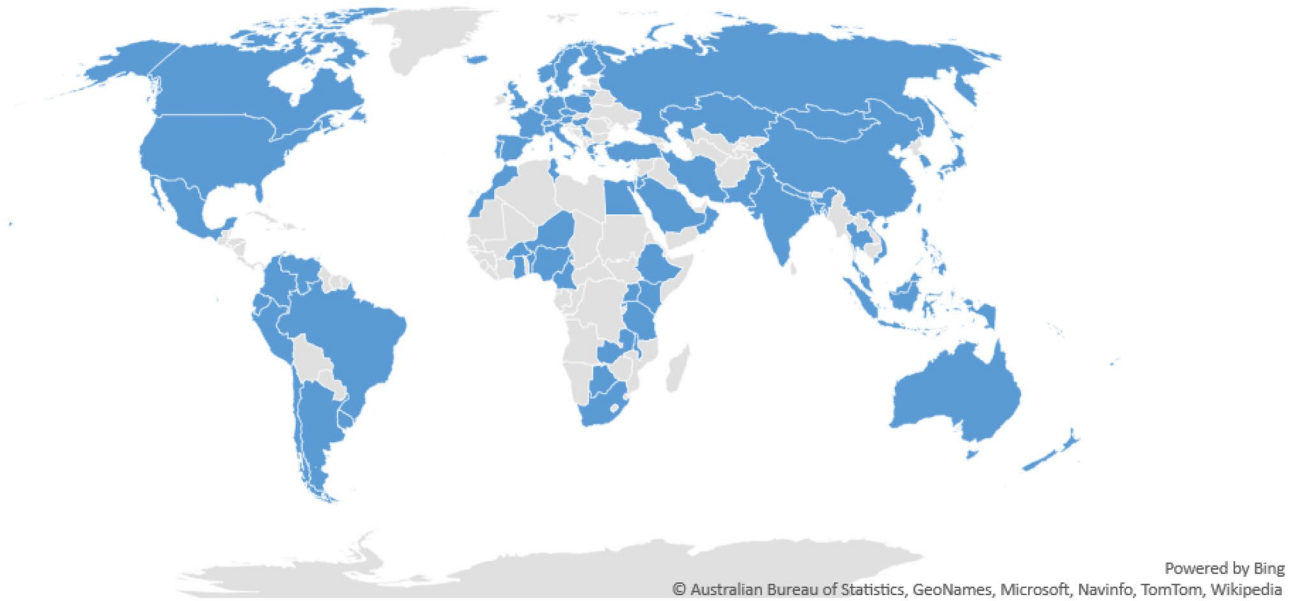


Fig. 2 Submissions by country of corresponding author, 2017 – 2021

Facts and Figures from the Managing Editor

Submissions

For the past 18 years, the increase of submissions has been steady, and the number of submissions in 2020 more than

quadrupled those of 2004. We project receiving over 370 ms by the end of 2021 (Fig. 1).

In the mid-1980s, Human Ecology received relatively few submissions from authors not affiliated with American or UK research institutions. This has changed dramatically. In the last five years, from January 2017 until November 2021 (Fig. 2), we received a total of ca. 1500 submissions

Pareto distribution of frequencies of submissions by country, 2017 - 2021

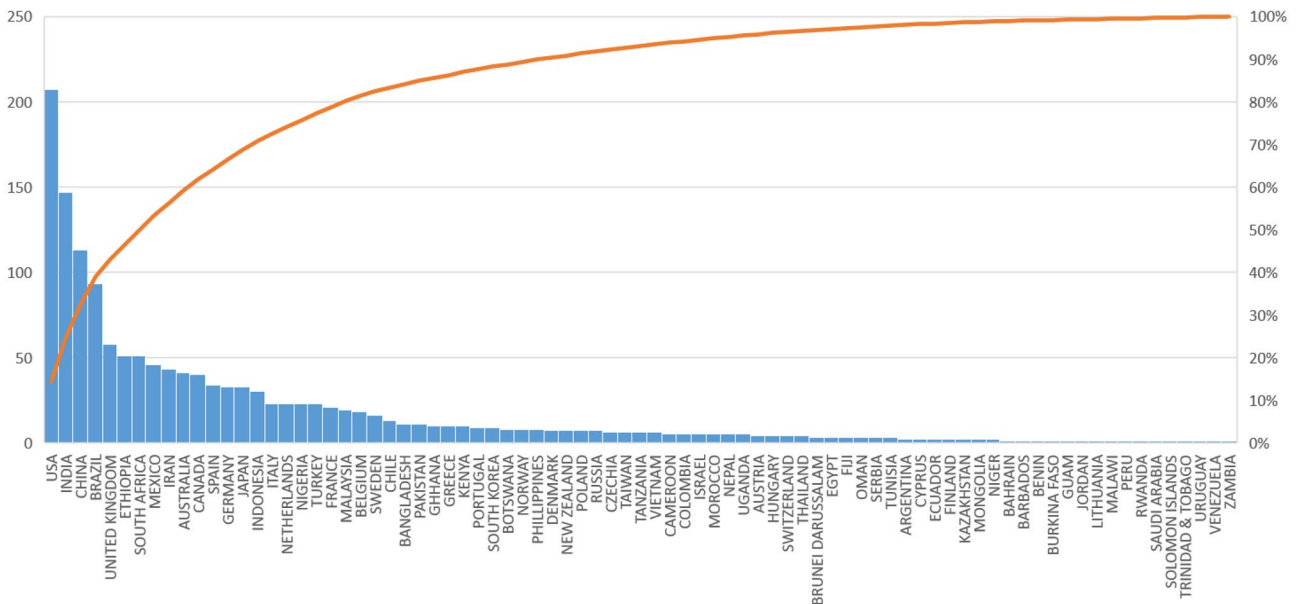


Fig. 3 Pareto distribution of frequencies of submissions by country of corresponding authors, 2017 – 2021 (due to size limit, not all names of countries are visible)

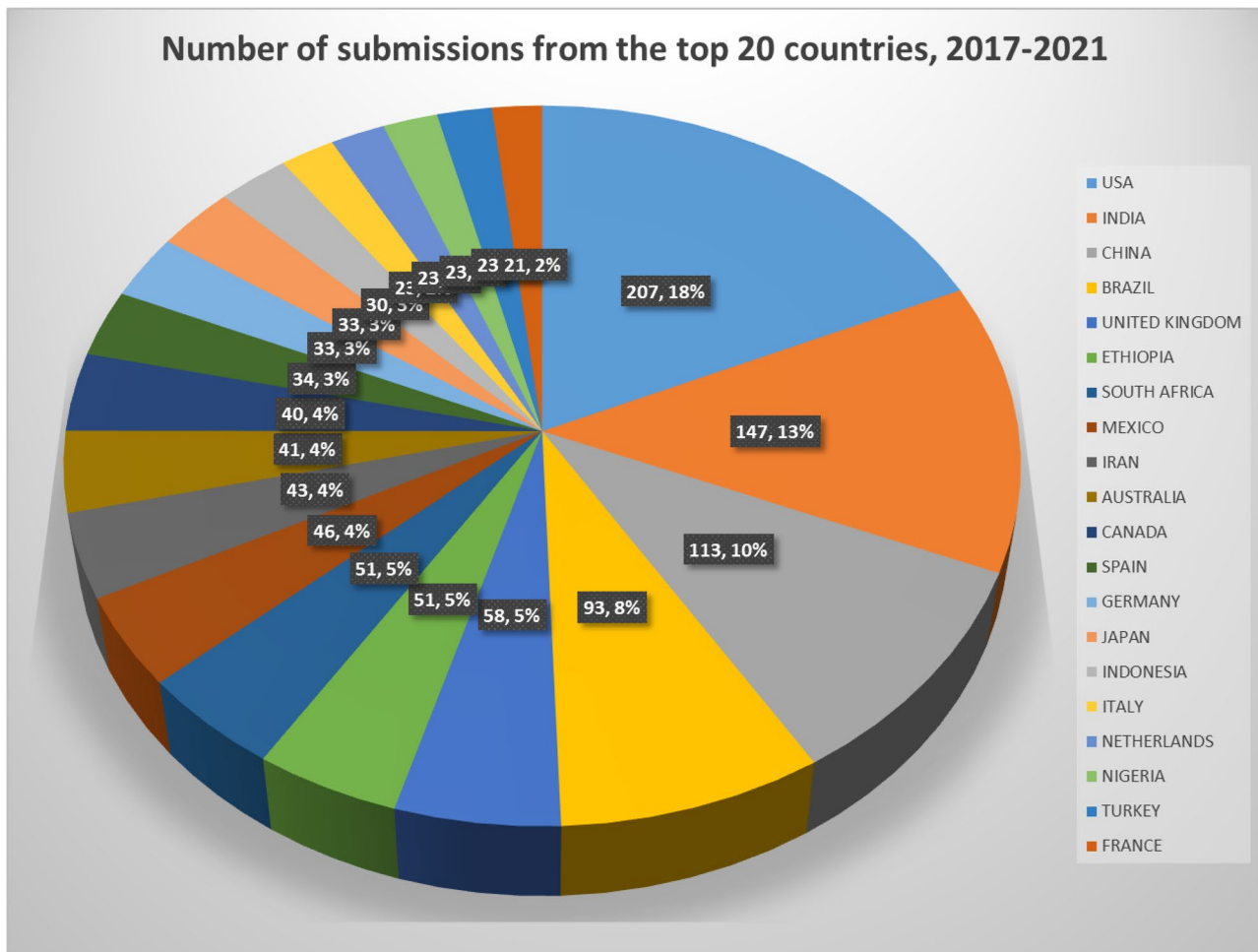


Fig. 4 The number of submissions by corresponding authors in the 20 top submitting countries

from authors from 82 different countries, most notably still North America, including Mexico and Canada, but those from South America (Brazil in particular), Western Europe, East Asia, India, and Australia have greatly gone up. As the map indicates, *Human Ecology* is a global intellectual concern. Some countries or regions indicated on this map, according to our records while not necessarily being the source of submissions may be the subject of research reported on in the journal (Fig. 3).

The Pareto distribution allows identification of differences in submission frequencies by country of corresponding author and indicates that authors from 20 countries contributed 78% of submissions.

Between January 2017 and November 2021 we received 11,133 submissions with the top 20 countries (Fig. 4) constituting 78% of all submissions. Submission rates for India and China closely follow those of the US. Within this period, we also received a large number of submissions from Brazil (93), Ethiopia (51), South Africa (51), Iran (41), Indonesia (30), and Nigeria (23) (Fig. 5).

Most accepted manuscripts were from authors from the US and UK, although often collaborating with colleagues from other countries. Accepted submissions from Brazil and Canada were also high. Interestingly, the number of accepted submissions from Ethiopia, South Africa, Brazil, India, and Iran is rising. As noted earlier, our acceptance depends on peer reviews, in-house reviews, and assessment of the quality of language. Thus, high submission numbers do not necessarily correlate with a high rate of acceptance.

Acceptance/Rejection Rate

Average acceptance rate calculated from January 2017 until November 2021 is approximately 19% (18% in 2020 and 16% in 2021). Our acceptance rate fluctuates from year to year depending on the number of submissions and the number of accepted manuscripts within the same year (which is not the same as the number of published manuscripts within a year).

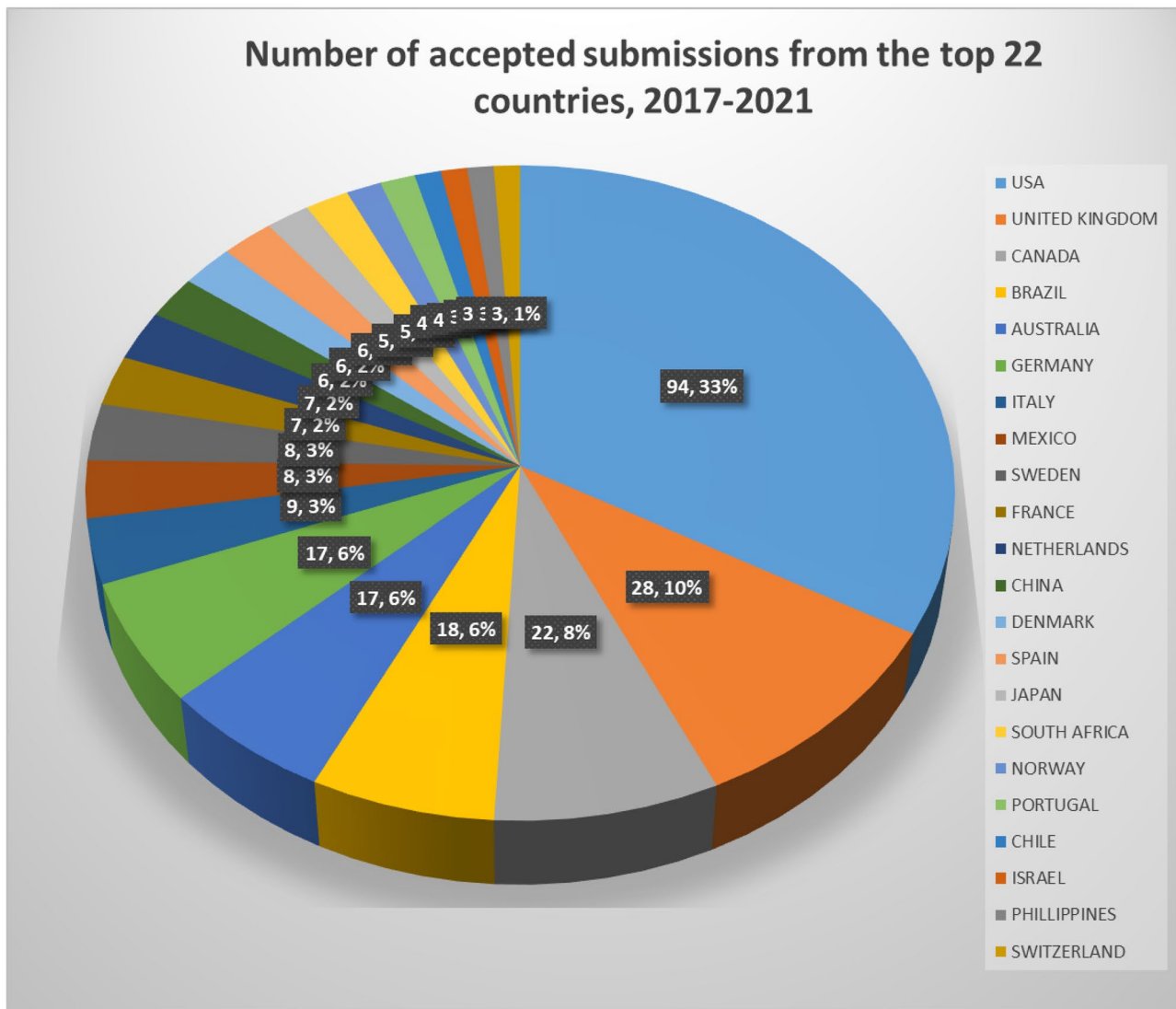


Fig. 5 The number of accepted submissions from corresponding authors affiliated with organizations in the top 22 countries, 2017 – 2021. (We established three manuscripts as a cutoff point for this analysis.)

Among the countries with a high acceptance rate of submissions during the period 2017 – 2021 were: Denmark, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, and Sweden (over 50%), Finland, Mongolia, the USA, Australia, Canada, The Netherlands, France, Portugal, Israel, and the UK (up to 50%), Italy (45%), Chile (25%), Brazil, Spain, Japan, and Mexico (ca. 20%).

Impact Factors and Rankings

Our JCR impact factor (IF) more than doubled between 2004 and 2020 (Figs. 6, 7 and 8).

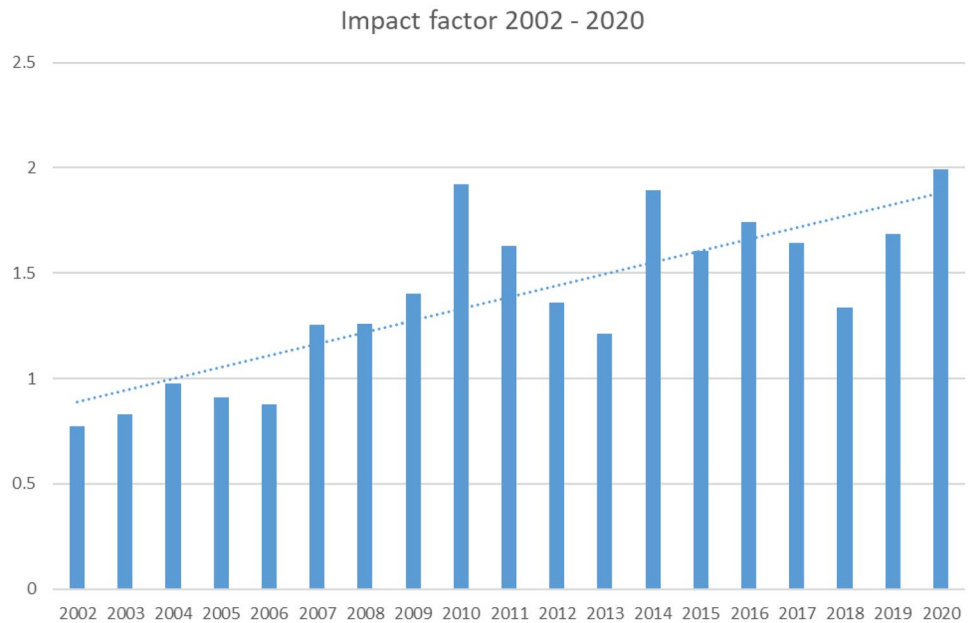
The JCR Impact Factor is produced by *Journal Citation Reports*, Web of Science Group – Clarivate and analyzes journals worldwide in the social and life sciences.

In 2020 (2019), JCR reported *Human Ecology* as ranking 6591 out of 15,212 journals in all categories, with an IF of 1.683, better than *Ethnos*, *Social Anthropology*, and *Antiquity*,

In 2021 (2020), JCR reported *Human Ecology* as ranking 7813 out of 12,982 journals in all categories, with an IF of 1.993, better than *Ethnos* and *Antiquity*.

The JCR ranking of *Human Ecology* for 2020 provided by Springer-Nature appears below (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6 JCR or Journal Citation Report’s Impact Factor, 2002 – 2020



The Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) measures relative prestige among life science and social journals based on citation links, Thomson-Reuters Research Gate.

It is notable that *Human Ecology* has not been in the bottom quartile of any of the listed fields over this period.

Our most consistently high area of ranking is in Anthropology—the first quartile from 2001 until 2019 (possibly 2020)—followed by Sociology and Political Science, and Environmental Science.

The Scimago Journal Rank 2020 ranking is based on Elsevier’s Scopus database.

In 2019 *Human Ecology* ranked:

452 out of 4206 journals in Arts and Humanities: above *American Anthropologist* (478), *Ethnography* (550), and *Social Anthropology* (555).

624 out of 1467 journals in Environmental Sciences: above *Energy, Ecology, and Environment* (627), *Ecological Complexity* (633), and *Global Social Policy* (635), 3338 out of 6823 journals in Medicine: above 3000+ medical journals but just below *British Poultry Science*.

656 out of 6699 journals in Social Sciences: above *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (1660), *Harvard Law Review* (1671), *Global Social Policy* (1701), *American Anthropologist* (1817), and *Foreign Affairs* (1874).

Downloads as a Proxy for Usage

Downloads are one indirect means of assessing usage. The chart above indicates article download rates between 2017 and June 2021, showing steady growth. In March 2021,

Quartiles

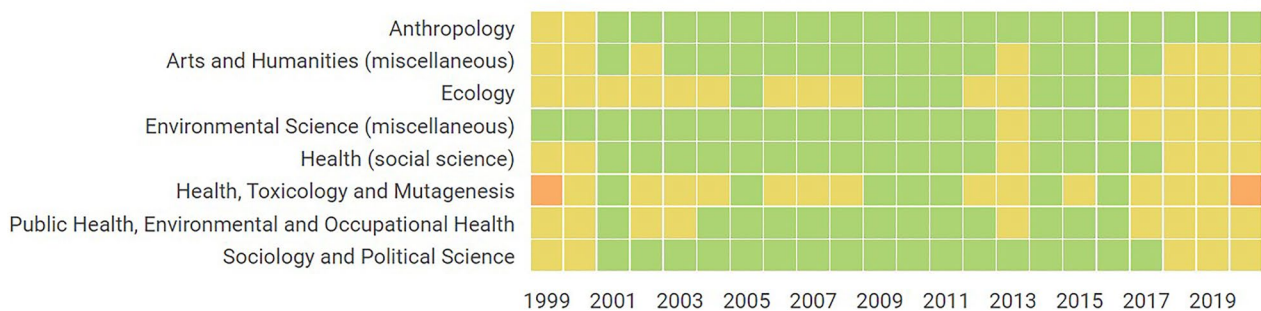


Fig. 7 The Scimago Journal Rank (SJR), 1999 – 2019 for *Human Ecology*

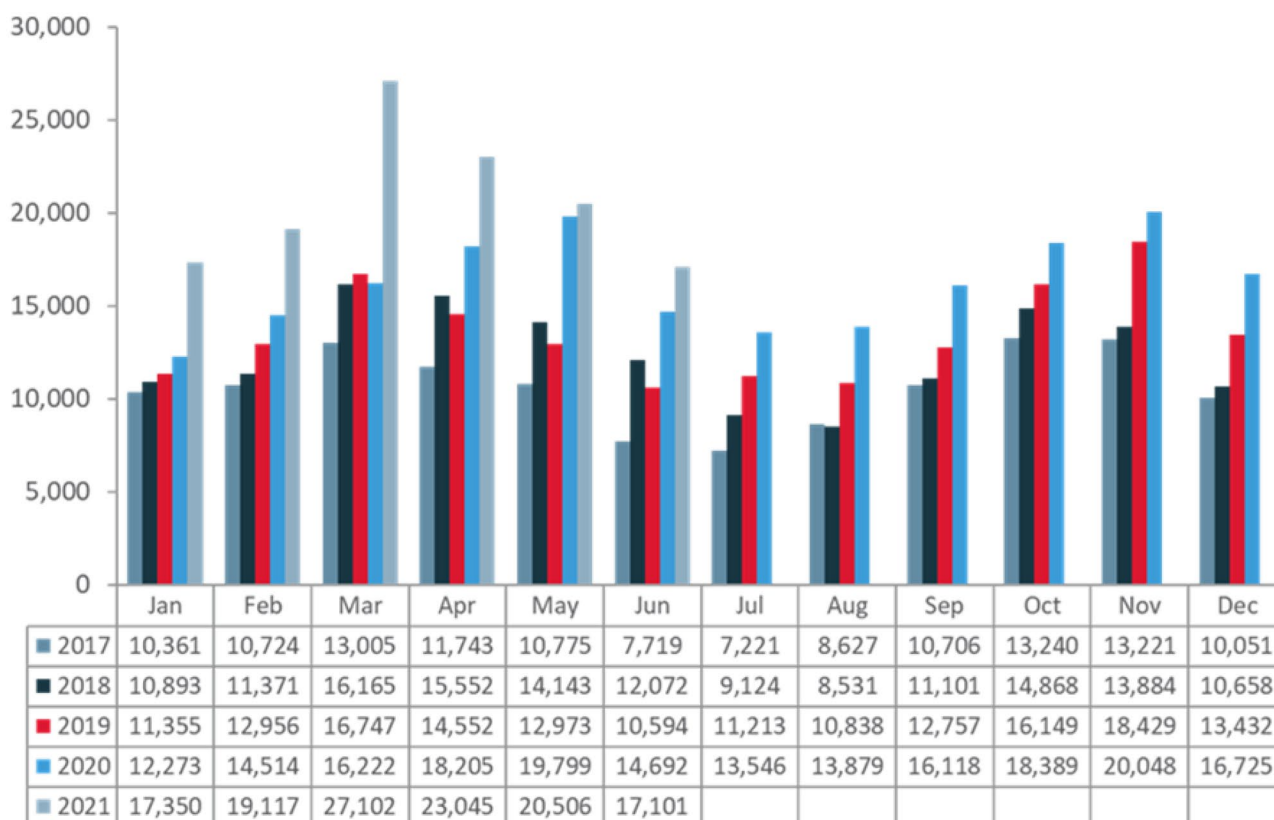


Fig. 8 Downloads of full texts 2017 – 2021 (data after Springer)

Springer recorded 27,102 full-text requests! The increase in the number of downloads indicates growing interest in the Journal.

Most Online reader access to *Human Ecology* originates in the Asia–Pacific region (30%), followed by North America (28%), Europe (22%), Latin America (9%), Africa (8%), and the Middle East (3%).

The top five most downloaded articles were each downloaded 2000 times. All are available as open access publications, and Mary Sue Daoud, our Springer liaison editor, confirmed that HE has the highest number of Open Access articles published of all Springer journals in the social sciences.

In Summary: Observable Trends

- The journal gaining in global recognition
- The volume of submissions is increasing
- New sources of submissions are emerging, especially the Middle East, east and southeast Asia (India and China), South Africa, and South America (Brazil)
- The acceptance rate ensures the highest academic standard of published submissions

- Geographic and cultural diversity of countries with high acceptance rates strongly suggests the inclusion of scholars from diverse academic traditions
- Impact factors are consistently strong
- Download requests for *Human Ecology* articles increase and are in the tens of thousands monthly and over 100 K annually.

From 2022 we will be publishing no fewer than 80 feature articles p.a. if, as anticipated, peer review allows.

Select Top Downloads

Downloaded articles are a useful insight into current interests. All of the following show evidence of significant or lasting value as they are among the 25 most actively accessed articles (only corresponding authors listed). Clearly, the authors are a diverse cross-section—by gender, ethnicity, and discipline – of active and engaged scholars. Since the top downloads are an aggregate or time dependent grouping they do not include recent contenders.

– Jacques Blondel.

The ‘Design’ of Mediterranean Landscapes: A Millennial Story. Vol. 34, No. 5, 2006.

- Mary C. Stiner et al.
Changes in the Connectedness and Resilience of Paleolithic Societies in Mediterranean Ecosystems. Vol 35, No. 5, 2006.
- David Pimentel et al.
The Ecology of Increasing Diseases: Population Growth and Environmental Degradation. Vol. 35, No. 6, 2007.
- M. J. Dwyer et al.
Theories of Nomadic Movement: a New Theoretical Approach. Vol. 36, No. 4, 2008.
- David Pimentel et al.
Food Versus Biofuels: Environmental Costs and Benefits. Vol. 37, No. 1, 2009.
- Jefferson Fox et al.
Politics, Political-economy, and Swidden in Southeast Asia. Vol. 37 No. 3, 2009.
- Karim-Aly Kassam et al.
Medicinal Plant Use and Health Sovereignty. Vol. 38, No. 6, 2010.
- Hua Qin.
Rural-to-Urban Labor Migration, Household livelihoods, and the Rural Environment in Chongqing Municipality, Southwest China. Vol. 38, No. 5, 2010.
- Phue Xuan To et al.
The Prospects for Ecosystem Services (PES) in Vietnam: A Look at Three Payment Schemes. Vol. 40, No. 2, 2012.
- Nancy Turner et al.
Blundering Intruders: Extraneous Impacts on Two Indigenous Food Systems. Vol. 41, No. 4, 2013.
- Margaretha Pangua-Adams et al.
Wildmeat or Bushmeat: Subsistence Hunting or Commercial Haversting? Vol. 40, No. 4, 2012.
- Louisa Evans et al.
Future Scenarios as a Research Tool: Investigating Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation Options, and Outcomes for the Great Barrier Reef, Australia. Vol 41, No. 6, 2013.
- Brian Codding et al.
Conservation or Co-Evolution? Intermediate Levels of Aboriginal Burning and Hunting Have Positive Effects on Kangaroo Populations in Western Australia. Vol 42, No 5, 2014.
- Kjersti Thorkildsen.
Social-Ecological Change in a *Quilombola* Community in the Atlantic Forest of Southeastern Brazil. Vol. 42, No. 6, 2014.

Concluding Appreciations

In closing, we wish to acknowledge again *Human Ecology's* founding editor Andrew (Pete) Vayda, and Plenum editors Seymour Weingarten and Eliot Werner. In addition of our distinguished Editorial Board we thank Yancey Orr and our book review editor Chelsey G. Armstrong. On the current Springer-Nature team we single out for appreciation Nicholas Philipson and Mary Sue Daoud, our Springer senior publication editors, Shinjini Chatterjee, senior publications editor for our Springer Book Series, Lanie Mabanán in the Journals Editorial Office, and Razel Avanzado in production.

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