



# ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY IN THE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN LOW COUNTRIES

25-26 October 2024 - Leiden University

Friday 25 October 2024

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10:00 Welcome, **Claire Weeda** (Leiden University)

## Morning session: Approaches

10:15 – 10:45 Resilient Societies, Vulnerable People: The Impact of Extreme Natural Events on Past Societies  
**Cécile Bruyet, Stef Espeel, Arnoud Jensen, Kathleen Pribyl, Wout Saelens, Tim Soens** and **Reinoud Vermoesen** (University of Antwerp)

10:45 – 11:15 Early Modern Perspectives on Global Sea Level Changes  
**Mathijs Boom** (Utrecht University and Huygens Institute for History)

*Break (15 min.)*

11:30 – 12:00 Holy Mountains: Commemorating Francis in the Natural Landscape  
**Marianne Ritsema van Eck** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

12:00 – 12:30 The Otter Paradox. Merchant Capitalism, International Trade and Wildlife in Late Medieval Europe, c. 1350 – c. 1450  
**Thijs Lambrecht** (Ghent University)

*Lunchbreak (45 min.)*

## Parallel afternoon sessions

### Session I: Environment and Institutions

13:15 – 13:45 Agriculture, Environment, and Institutions in the Reclaimed Wetlands of the Low Countries, c. 1000-1700  
**Piet van Cruyningen** (Wageningen University)

13:45 – 14:15 Drought and Urban Water Provisioning in the Early Modern Eastern Netherlands: The Cases of Deventer and Zutphen, 1500-1800  
**Dániel Moerman** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

*Break (15 min.)*

14:30 – 15:00 Dig, Lagomorph!!! Dig!!! Rabbits, Humans, and Power in Early Modern Guelders (c. 1475 – c. 1700)  
**Jim van der Meulen** (Ghent University)

15:00 – 15:30 The Urban Environmental History of the Medieval Low Countries: a Historiographical Perspective  
**Arie van Steensel** (University of Groningen)

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## Session II: Interactions and Biodiversity

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13:15 – 13:45 Why Not Eat Locust? The (Dis)continuity of a Tested Food-Safety Strategy in the Mediterranean Middle Ages and Beyond  
**Willem A. Flinterman** (University of Amsterdam)

13:45 – 14:15 Sparrow Persecutions: Agricultural Ecology and Pest Management in the Early Modern Low Countries (1700-1850)  
**Paulien Daelman** (Ghent University)

*Break (15 min.)*

14:30 – 15:00 Living with Difficult Neighbours: The Prosecution of Nonhuman Animals in Late Medieval Burgundy  
**Sven Gins** (University of Groningen)

15:00 – 15:30 Hidden in Plain Sight: Mosquitoes, Malaria and Herbs in the Medieval Low Countries  
**Nina Witteman** and **Claudia Moreira Calzadilla** (Leiden University)

### End parallel afternoon sessions

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*Break (30 min.)*

16:00 – 17:00 Round table  
**Richard Hoffmann** (York University), **Petra van Dam** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), **Johannes Müller** (Leiden University), **Sander Govaerts** (Ghent University)

*Drinks*

## **Saturday 26 October 2024**

### Morning session: Human and Nonhuman Inhabitants of Wetlands

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10:00 – 10:30 A Multifocal and Multidisciplinary Perspective on Wetlands  
**Lena Walschap**, **Pieter-Jan Reynaert**, **Seb Verlinden**, **Maïka De Keyzer** and **Bart Vanmontfort** (KU Leuven)

10:30 – 11:00 Sturgeon on the Move – Medieval and Early-Modern Fisheries, Trade and Transport of NW-Europe's Most Iconic Fish  
**Rob Lenders** (Radboud University Nijmegen)

*Break (15 min.)*

11:15 – 11:45 Reading the Medieval Material Culture of the Wetlands Geometrically  
**Teunis M. Klapwijk** (Kavli Institute of Nanoscience Delft and Descartes Institute Utrecht)

11:45 – 12:15 Decoding Wetland Toponyms: Ecology, Knowledge and Power in Flanders (16th – 20th Centuries)  
**Christophe de Coster** (University of Antwerp)

*Lunchbreak (75 min.)*

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13:30 – 14:30 'Bringing in the Catch': Three European Fisheries Evolutions of the Later Middle Ages  
Keynote by **Richard Hoffmann** (York University)

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15:00 – 16:00 **Hortus Botanicus** – guided tour by **Paul Keßler**





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**Keynote by prof. dr. Richard Hoffmann (York University), 26 October 2024**

## 'Bringing in the Catch': Three European Fisheries Evolutions of the Later Middle Ages

An overview of medieval European experience with fisheries shows how 'ecological revolutions' ('regime changes') occur only after very long unintentional, even often unnoticed background processes. These necessarily include not only fish production (biological and cultural capture/preservation) but also human consumption.

Briefly to summarize the situation and development between the 6th and early 13th century: while local subsistence fishing fed some households throughout, during early medieval times as an increasingly self-conscious Christian culture banned eating meat, fish became an accepted substitute. Population growth and urbanization from the 10th century enabled emergence of artisanal commercial fishing to supplant subsistence fishing while still relying on natural local stocks of fishes. Markets, however, increasingly intervened between capture of wild creatures and their consumption. By around 1200 limits to these supplies were becoming visible.

Subsequently and by about 1500 three portentous changes had emerged in relations between Europeans and surrounding aquatic ecosystems, namely carp aquaculture, distant-water marine resources, and recreational angling. In contexts of perceptibly constrained traditional local inland and coastal resources, and some adaptation to environmental change, culturally defined dietary needs continued to drive the first two processes, which resulted in significant expansion of European supplies of fish protein. The third innovation also arose from traditional subsistence 'work', but in settings where other developments were mitigating subsistence needs some people turned this activity into 'play'. All evolutions have long term legacies. Human manipulation of aquatic environments encouraged viewing fish as artifacts. So did the preserved state of fisheries products from afar. A frontier ethos postulated 'infinite fish' to be found over the horizon. Recreational values of social and psychological quality could supplant other uses of certain species and the environments which supported them.





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The **keynote** by **Richard Hoffmann** and the **guided tour through the Hortus Botanicus** on the 26 October are open to the public.

If you would like to attend, please register by filling in the form (accessible by scanning the QR code) or by sending an email to [ehlc@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:ehlc@hum.leidenuniv.nl).  
Registration is open until 23 October.



For more information or questions, please contact [ehlc@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:ehlc@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

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Address **HB (Hortus Botanicus)**: Rapenburg 73, 2311 GJ Leiden



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