

PhD-workshop  
Friday, May 12th

## **Writing environmental history in time of the climate crisis**

PhD Workshop with Frank Uekötter (University of Birmingham)  
at the Oost-Indisch Huis (University of Amsterdam)

A deep sense of crisis has propelled environmental history to the forefront of contemporary historiography. The climate crisis, widespread environmental degradation, and the looming exhaustion of resources have invigorated the public and scholarly interest in the insights and methods of environmental historians. The acclaim for the notion of 'the anthropocene' is but one example of the intertwinement of present concerns and scholarly perspectives in recent years. But how exactly does this entanglement impact the inquiries of environmental historians? To what extent do contemporary (political) interests shape their work? What are advantages, and what are potential drawbacks, of a close link between the present and historical writing? Is it possible that while it opens productive avenues of inquiry it also produces blind spots?

Environmental historians have raised important questions about the state of historical research. First, environmental history challenges the assumptions of the new cultural history. Acknowledging the importance of non-human factors, many historians reconsider the anthropocentrism and critically reassess our understanding of historical experiences, discourses, and identities. Second, environmental perspective question the way historians conceptualize time, highlighting the layered timescales which are present in histories around omnipresent issues like energy extraction and the effects of climate change. The deeply ingrained idea of human history playing out on a timeless natural stage can no longer be held up. Third, environmental history reaffirms attempts to rethink the way in which historians define their spatial frameworks beyond the politically informed borders of states and other socio-political entities. The flows of rivers and the geography of mountains, the movement of tectonic plates and the impact of climatic zones, the interrelations between local ecosystems across different parts of the world - how do we integrate these perspectives into our historical analyses?

We invite participants of this workshop to reflect on the ways in which their work addresses – and grapples with – these problems and questions of environmental history. We welcome in particular contributions that discuss methodological questions like non-human agency as well as conceptual issues like the viability of the notion of the anthropocene and the relation of historical research to the contemporary politics of the environment.

The workshop will be centered around the discussion of pre-circulated papers (no more than 5000 words). Deadline for the submission of the paper is May 2, 2023.

The Duitsland Instituut will cover the costs of travel and accommodation if needed.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the workshop please contact Mario Daniels, [mdaniels@uva.nl](mailto:mdaniels@uva.nl)

Organized by Peter van Dam (Universiteit van Amsterdam) and Mario Daniels (Duitsland Instituut), in cooperation with the DAAD