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COLLEGIUM  
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Seminar

POUL HOLM

EURIAS Fellow, SCAS.

Trinity Long Room Hub Professor of Humanities, Trinity College Dublin

*Deep Harvests:  
An Environmental History of the Fisheries*

Thursday, 10 October, 4:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall  
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala  
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## ABOUT POUL HOLM

Poul Holm studied history at Aalborg University and earned a Dr.Phil. at Aarhus University with a study of Scandinavian early modern maritime history. He is currently President of the European Consortium for Humanities Institutes and Centres, and Director of the Irish Digital Arts and Humanities PhD Programme. Holm has served as chairman of the Danish Research Council for the Humanities. He has been a professor at Aarhus University and University of Southern Denmark, and Rector of Roskilde University. He was President of the European Society for Environmental History in 2005-2007, and he serves as global chair of the research project “History of Marine Animal Populations”. Holm was made a Knight of Dannebrog in 2008 for services to research.

Holm’s main research interest is the interaction of humans with marine life. He is the author of ten books and over one hundred research papers. Recent publications include “Collaboration between the Natural, Social and Human Sciences in Global Change Studies” in *Environmental Science and Policy* (Holm et al, 2012) and “Marine Animal Populations: A New Look Back in Time” in *Life in the World’s Oceans: Diversity, Distribution and Abundance* (Holm et al., Blackwell, 2010).

During his time as a EURIAS Fellow at SCAS, he will be writing a book on the environmental history of fisheries of the world.

## ABSTRACT

The problem of the ocean is that we do not see what is beneath the surface. On land we can see change with our own eyes. When we clear land for urban development, when we change agricultural practices, when we cut the trees or kill off the wolves, we see the changes. The environmental history of the land is well documented, and archaeologists and historians have long been able to document and visualise past landscapes. What happens below the sea surface was largely hidden to the human eye until the invention of scuba diving and submarine photography. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that historians have largely neglected ocean life and how human history depends on it. It is only in the last 10-15 years that we have realised the potential of the records that are in fact preserved of how, when and to what effect humans have impacted marine animals – and how in that process we were impacted as well. The talk will present how we are gaining new knowledge and how this may change historical interpretations of human encounters with oceans past.

Perceptions and fashions are fundamental to understand fishing matters. Humans are driven not by what we eat but by what we want to eat, and fisheries have driven us far and wide. Fishing played a central role in the voyages of discovery and in the spreading of humans throughout the globe. Those sentiments are what drove the Los Roques Indians to pluck the Queen Conchs off the bottom of the Caribbean Sea, past fascination of life in the sea is vivid in the imagery of the Mycenaean palace of Knossos, and it is evident today from our focus on healthy seafood, sea air, diving and cruising. Fishing is by no means a unilinear, unstoppable sail towards emptying the oceans. But it is an environmental history full of conflict and choice.