



Seminar

## POUL HOLM

EURIAS Fellow, SCAS.

Trinity Long Room Hub Professor of Humanities, Trinity College Dublin

# *Baltic Fisheries, c. 1000–1600*

Thursday, 6 February, 11:00 a.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

Alongside grain, wine and textiles, fish was one of the most important staple commodities of medieval Europe, and the first and largest commercial fishery developed in the Western Baltic. During my stay at SCAS I have reassessed traded and landed amounts of the main target species, herring and cod. In my presentation I shall present my findings and discuss the implications for our understanding of medieval diets, markets and politics.

The fisheries enabled North European populations a much higher consumption of fatty acids than elsewhere in Europe. Outside of the region, however, consumption will have been much less than is usually assumed by historians. Baltic herring was a well-defined quality product which sold at premium prices relative to competing local products. In that sense it may not have been for mass consumption, but it was certainly highly popular among broadly defined rural and urban elites in Northern and Central Europe, including monasteries and other public institutions which bought Baltic herring as a staple product for a varied diet through the year and particularly for Lent.

The decline of the Scanian fishery by the end of the sixteenth century presents questions of relevance to general historical interpretation of the period. The demise of the largest commercial fishery of medieval Europe must have had political ramifications, and I shall discuss the implications for our understanding of Hanseatic, Dutch and Nordic history.