

Conference topic

The history of cities and rivers is inextricably linked. As suppliers of water and energy, transport and traffic routes or waste disposal method, waterways were often the starting point and an indispensable prerequisite for the development of urban communities. In recent years, historians have therefore been focusing more intensively on the relevance of rivers for pre-modern cities. This research has shown that the relationship between cities and rivers cannot be understood as a dichotomous opposition of nature and culture. Instead, both are symbiotically intertwined as socio-natural sites.

The conference draws on these considerations by addressing the opportunities and challenges arising from the symbiosis of river and pre-modern city. To provide new research impulses, floodplains will also be taken into consideration. Despite their frequently emphasized importance, they remain an important desideratum, especially from the perspective of urban history. In the context of this conference, floodplains can be understood as a fluvial anthroposphere, i.e. as spaces in which, due to their intensive fluvial dynamics, a special concentration of socio-natural processes takes place. This causes far-reaching changes in the environment as well as the emergence of special patterns of human behavior and subsequently fluvial cultures.

The conference approaches the relationship between cities and rivers as well as floodplains from a transregional, comparative and cross-epochal perspective. Case studies from Western and Eastern-Central Europe will be discussed, covering the time period from the Middle Ages to the epochal threshold around 1800. Where possible, cities situated upon smaller waterways will also be included to broaden the focus of research, which is usually centered on large river metropolises.

Organisation & Contact

Venue

Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO)
Specks Hof (Entrance A)
Reichsstraße 4-6
04109 Leipzig

Online participation possible: Please follow the QR code for more information.

Contact

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SPP 2361
On the Way to the
Fluvial Anthroposphere



UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG



March 12 – 14, 2025

Premodern Cities in a State of Flux

A comparative approach
to urban-fluvial symbioses

Wednesday, March 12

- 13.00 – 13.15 Welcome
- 13.15 – 14.00 **Erik Liebscher, Niels Lohse & Julia Schmidt-Funke**
Introduction
- Section I: Weather & Extreme Events**
- 14.00 – 14.45 **Michael Ruprecht (Leipzig)**
Von Fluten, Kälte und Hitze: Wetterereignisse in alten Chroniken Mitteldeutschlands
- 14.45 – 15.15 *Coffee break*
- 15.15 – 16.00 **Briony McDonagh (Hull)**
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- Section II: Urban-Fluvial Symbioses**
- 16.00 – 16.45 **Andrea Kiss (Wien)**
Large River, Small River – and the Medieval-Early Modern Hungarian Town
- 16.45 – 17.30 **Sylwia Lech (Wrocław)**
The Urbanistic Evolution of the Riverside Areas of Wrocław and Prague in the Medieval and Modern Periods (13th-18th Centuries)
- 17.30 – 18.00 *Coffee break*
- Keynote speech**
- 18.00 – 19.00 **Petra van Dam (Amsterdam)**
Blue Diversity. Drinking Water in the Netherlands, 1500-1850

Thursday, March 13

- 09.00 – 09.45 **Section III: Watermills**
Alexander Sembdner (Leipzig)
Vertrauen ist gut, Kontrolle ist besser – Mühleninspektion im Raum Leipzig am Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts
- 09.45 – 10.30 **Matthias Hardt (Leipzig)**
Hochmittelalterlicher Mühlenbau an Elbe, Havel und Spree
- 10.30 – 11.00 *Coffee break*
- Section IV: Floodplains**
- 11.00 – 11.45 **Severin Hohensinner (Wien)**
Genug Holz für Stadt und Fluss? Wiens Holzressourcen in dynamischen Donau-Auen
- 11.45 – 12.30 **Sophie Lindemann (Leipzig)**
Die Bedeutung der Flurnamen für die mittelalterliche Auengeschichte
- 12.30 – 13.30 *Lunch*
- 13.45 – 16.45 **Excursion**
- 16.45 – 17.15 *Coffee break*
- Section V: Interdisciplinary Perspectives**
- 17.15 – 18.00 **Johannes Schmidt (Leipzig)**
Leipzig's Urban Fluvial Dynamics – Multi Methodological Geoscientific Approaches and Interdisciplinary Perspectives

- 18.00 – 19.00 **Keynote speech**
Theo Spek (Groningen)
Moving Mosaics: Landscape Biographies of River and Brook Systems in The Netherlands

Friday, March 14

- Section VI: Water Knowledge & Experts**
- 09.00 – 09.45 **Niels Lohse (Leipzig)**
Aquarum explorandum utilitas et necessitas – On the Informative Value of Early Modern Chemical Analysis of Water
- 09.45 – 10.30 **Davide Martino (Bern)**
The Emergence of Hydraulic Experts and Bureaucracies in Early Modern European Cities
- 10.30 – 11.00 *Coffee break*
- Section VII: Water & Military**
- 11.00 – 11.45 **Erik Liebscher (Leipzig)**
Urban Water Management in Times of War
- 11.45 – 12.30 **Marius Mutz (Dresden)**
A Hydraulic Technocracy? Dealing with Water in Early Modern Dresden
- 12.30 – 13.15 **Martin Bauch (Leipzig)**
Conclusion & Discussion