

## The APHELEIA Conference Series 2025

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### Speaker: Poul Holm



Poul Holm is the Director of the [Trinity Centre for Environmental Humanities](#), member of the Royal Irish Academy's Standing Committee for Archaeology, and Vice-Chair of the Humanities class of Academia Europea.

Poul's main research interest is North Atlantic fisheries c. 1400-1700, and more generally the interdisciplinary combination of marine science and history. He has published on medieval and early modern marine environment, coastal communities, and maritime culture. A special interest area for him are the Viking settlements in Ireland.

He served for four years as head of the Danish Research Council for the Humanities; in 2008-9 he chaired the METRIS committee (Monitoring European Trends in Research in the Socio-economic sciences and humanities) for the EU Directorate-General for Research. Between 2015 and 2018 Poul served as President of the European Alliance of Social Sciences and Humanities.

He is a member of the editorial boards of several academic journals (Humanities, Mariners' Mirror, Global Environment, Journal of Marine and Island Cultures). He was a co-awardee of the prize for the Best Research of the Year 2009 by [videnskab.dk](#), a Danish science magazine, and was knighted by the Danish Queen for services to research in 2008. Poul has served as President of three international academic organisations: European Society for Environmental History, the Association for the History of the Northern Seas, and the European Consortium of Humanities Institutes and Centres. In 2015 I was elected a Member of Academia Europaea.

## **The global fishing industry and modern food systems – how the ‘blue humanities’ may inform citizens and management**

The problem with the ocean is that we do not see what is below the surface. 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.

What happens below the sea surface was largely hidden to the human eye until the development of scuba diving and submarine photography in the second half of the twentieth century. However, in the last two decades, collaboration between historians and ecologists has revealed the deep and complex impact of humans on oceans and marine life.

This shift in understanding emphasizes that what we consider “normal” or pristine oceanic conditions today may actually reflect a degraded state when compared to earlier periods. The talk will focus on how historical insights may inform coastal communities and be brought to bear on marine management. Obstacles include translating historical data into actionable strategies and convincing stakeholders to consider long-term historical changes when making decisions about marine resource management.

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