

# From Forests to Heritage

## A conference on historical timbers and wooden cultural heritage

organised by: Marta Domínguez-Delmás (University of Amsterdam), Aoife Daly (University of Copenhagen) & Kristof Haneca (Flanders Heritage Agency)

**19-21 April 2022, Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

Dear colleagues,

These are exciting times for scientists studying wooden cultural heritage. Well-established and novel methods from different disciplines are being combined, tested and implemented on historical wooden objects and timbers to retrieve tree-ring patterns through non-invasive techniques, make accurate inferences about timber provenance with isotopes and DNA, and achieve the most accurate dating of timbers from areas lacking reference chronologies or having insufficient rings. Historical tree-ring records bring fascinating stories to the surface!

To celebrate these advances, we are organising an **on-site international conference** dedicated to the historical use of wood, covering all aspects from the selection of trees in the forests to timber transport and trade, supply to workshops and construction sites, and processing of the wood for production of furniture, works of art, buildings, ships and other timber structures. Although the conference will have a strong focus on tree-ring studies, we aim to bring together a diverse group of dendrochronologists, wood scientists, art- and building-historians, archaeologists and museum collection curators from all around the world to exchange the latest insights, methods, questions and ideas related to the study of wooden cultural heritage. During this conference, research on historical wooden objects and structures that results in a better understanding of past timber exploitation and trade, forestry practices, wood provenance, supply chains, timber assortments, woodworking techniques and craftsmen's skills will be presented. Furthermore, we encourage contributions that explore novel methods for non-invasive research on historical art objects and analytical techniques that allow to pin-point the provenance of the wood.

We are exploring possibilities to publish the **conference proceedings** (peer reviewed, open access and free of charge for contributors) in an edited book or as a special issue in a scientific journal shortly after the conference. More specific information will be announced in a next circular.

### Conference location and venue

The conference will be held in **Amsterdam**, The Netherlands. The city holds a worldwide reputation for its cultural heritage, its canal systems and rich history as a major trade and cultural hub of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Built on a swampy river delta, Amsterdam is said to be built on Norway, in reference to the conifers imported from the Scandinavian country to serve as foundation piles for buildings in the city. Baltic wood and timber from central Europe also arrived in Amsterdam over many centuries, through the Hanseatic network first and the well-established trade connections afterwards. Amsterdam is therefore a perfect setting for stimulating discussion on forest history, timber trade and cultural heritage.

The exact venue is still to be confirmed.

We aim to organize this conference on-site, and while we encourage contributors from anywhere in the world to join us in Amsterdam, we will try to accommodate pre-recorded presentations in the program followed by live interaction with the presenters, to allow researchers who are still experiencing travel restrictions at the time of the conference to present their work.

## Call for abstracts

We will soon welcome abstracts for oral presentations and posters (please use this [abstract template](#)). We would like to receive your tentative title and c. 250 words summary by **3 December 2021** (email and website address will be provided in the next circular). We will design the program around the following main topics:

### 1. Forest history

(growth trend analysis, historical forest management, wood harvesting and processing, ...)

### 2. Shipwrecks and archaeological structures

(excavations with large timber collections, analysis of ship timbers or cargo, ...)

### 3. Furniture and works of art

(tree-ring studies on panel paintings, chests, statues and sculptures, or the complete oeuvres of old masters, ...)

### 4. Built heritage

(tree-ring studies on roof constructions, log cabins, old temple complexes, ...)

### 5. Evidence of timber trade and transport

(tree-ring based provenance analysis, trade marks on ancient timbers, historical evidence of timber trade, overseas transport of wood, ...)

### 6. Novel methods for dating and provenance analysis

(stable isotope analysis, aDNA, techniques for wood species identification, ...)

### 7. Non-invasive techniques for the study of wooden cultural heritage

(imaging techniques for tree-ring studies, wood identification, 3D- $\mu$ CT scanning, AI, ...)

## Two projects

The initiative to organize this conference was born from the convergence of two research projects that interrogate historical timbers: the *Wood for Goods* and *TIMBER* projects are studying the chronology and provenance of wood in Northern Europe, to examine past timber exploitation and trade of this resource.

*Wood for Goods* (016.Veni.195.502), funded by the Dutch Research Council (2019-2022) and led by Dr. Marta Domínguez-Delmás, studies the use of wood for production of panel paintings, sculptures, furniture and half-ship models in the Low Countries from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Combining dendrochronology with (technical) art history and implementing novel techniques of X-ray CT imaging, Dr. Domínguez-Delmás aims to provide scientific support for attributions to artists, schools or workshops.

*TIMBER* (grant agreement no. 677152), funded by the European Research Council (2016-2022), with Dr. Aoife Daly as PI, examines past timber trade (c. 1200-1700) across scientific and humanities disciplines. Combining dendrochronology, isotopes, aDNA, archaeology and history, Dr. Daly's team is interrogating the material evidence for the movement of timber across the continent through time, examining the regionality of supply and demand of this highly sought-after resource.

Tentative dates:	
October 2021	Next circular & website
3 December 2021	Abstract submission deadline
14 January 2022	Announcement acceptance communications
31 January 2022	Registration deadline
19-21 April 2022	Conference
20 May 2022	Manuscript submission deadline



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