



Invitation

“Nutzen und Nachteil” revisited: what’s the use of Applied History?

Webinar and debate on the opening of the new academic year of the Research School Political History with Ido de Haan, Irène Herrmann, Harm Kaal, Jelle van Lottum and Catrien Santing.

25 September 2020, 3-4.15 PM

We warmly invite you for the digital opening meeting of the national Research School Political History (OPG), organized in cooperation with the Association for Political History. After the introduction of the new PhD’s and the first results of our investigation into the career prospects of PhD’s political history, we discuss the use of applied history.

Why Applied History?

Many of the currently contested political issues like the response to covid-19, but also climate change, the shift in global power, or the crisis of democracy appear to call for a historical perspective. This is not the only reason why a debate on applied history is of pivotal importance to political historians. It also focuses our attention on the inescapably political nature of political history. Furthermore, not only the launch of the newly established *Journal of Applied History* is a reason to address this theme, but also the current public debate on the role of historians in the Low Countries. We are happy that participants in the public debate, Ido de Haan and Catrien Santing, contribute to our panel discussion. Also the founding fathers of the *Journal of Applied History*, Jelle van Lottum and Harm Kaal, have accepted our invitation. Dirk Jan Wolffram will chair the debate.

Debate and publications

Recently, the historical world of the Low Countries was stirred by the publication of [Aan de slag! a manifesto for ‘applied history’](#). In it, four prominent historians, Beatrice de Graaf, Lotte Jensen, Rina Knoeff and Catrien Santing, called for a more active role for historians in public debate and policy decisions, specifically, yet not exclusively, with regard to the current covid-19 crisis. Their appeal was part of a wider plea for applied history, voiced in previous manifestoes, e.g. the [Applied History Manifesto by Graham Allison and Niall Ferguson](#) and [The History Manifesto](#) by David Armitage and Jo Guldi. Their appeal fell on fertile ground in the Netherlands, as testified by the newly established [Journal of Applied History](#). In the meantime, the issues raised in the manifesto *Aan de slag!* have led to further debate, partly on the website [historici.nl](#) and in the general press, e.g. by [Ido de Haan](#).

How to account for the public and political role of political history?

The question how to account for the public and political role of political history entails on the one hand a debate about the historical discipline and on the other hand on the nature of the application. Rephrasing the well-known Nietzschean question, this refers to the question what the use or perhaps disadvantage is of historical knowledge for contemporary debates. To what extent does history

contribute to our understanding of the present and the future? How, by what means, and with what kind of challenges, can we “apply” history? But another issue is the nature of application: what are the issues that historians can best address? Is history useful to propose solutions to policy issues, or is practical value of history to be found elsewhere? And finally: what is the politics involved in applied history, both in the obstacles historians might need to overcome in order to make their insight productive in public, political and policy debates. Also, what is the politics in the call for applied history itself – as part of the wider debate about the value, use and quality of the humanities?

Timetable

- 15.00 Opening and welcome by the chair of the Research School, Marijke van Faassen
- 15.05 Presentation of the new PhD’s political history
- 15.15 Career perspectives PhD’s political history by Managing Director of the Research School Margit van der Steen
- 15.20 Start of the debate by chair and Director of Studies Dirk Jan Wolffram
Five short statements by Irène Herrmann, Harm Kaal, Jelle van Lottum, Ido de Haan and Catrien Santing
- 15.50 Question, comments, responses and rebuttals
- 16.15 End of session.

Information: bureau@onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl

Registration: email before 23 September to bureau@onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl and you will receive the zoom link.

Participation is free of charge

Speakers

- **Prof. dr. Ido de Haan** is professor of Political History at Utrecht University and academic director of the Research School for Political History.
- **Prof. dr. Irène Herrmann** is professor of Transnational History at the University of Geneva.
- **Dr. Harm Kaal** is assistant professor of Political History at Radboud University Nijmegen.
- **Prof. dr. Jelle van Lottum** is head of the History Department at Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands and extraordinary professor at Radboud University Nijmegen.
- **Prof. dr. Catrien Santing** is professor of Medieval History at Groningen University.
- **Prof. dr. Jan Wolffram** is professor of the History of Governance and Politics in Modern Times. at Groningen University and director of studies of the Research School Political History.

<https://onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl>

<https://associationforpoliticalhistory.org>

Amsterdam, 1 September 2020