



Roosevelt
Institute for
American
Studies

RIAS 2024 Policy Workshop

Immersive Learning and Participatory Governance: The Role of Virtual Exchanges in Sustainable Development

3 June 2024

Auditorium (Filmzaal)
Abdij 8, 4331 BK Middelburg
The Netherlands

Program

Sea-level rise, toxic contamination, and soil erosion are only a few examples of the many multipronged challenges that delta environments like Zeeland face due to climate change. These phenomena confront local communities with difficult choices and the necessity to find innovative and adaptive solutions. For these reasons, sharing best practices, knowledge systems, and cutting-edge technologies is crucial for the sustainable development of coastal areas around the world.

This workshop offers a platform to delve into these shared challenges and explore collective responses, drawing comparisons between the Zeeuwse Delta and the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia (USA). More specifically, this workshop aims to reflect on the risks, vulnerabilities, and needs of delta communities by emphasizing the role that better awareness and understanding of socio-ecological dynamics play in formulating effective environmental policies.

The workshop draws on the outcomes of a month-long virtual exchange between university students from the Netherlands and the United States. The working sessions delve into their works and main findings. The first session tackles the relevance of GIS technologies, mapmaking, and immersive learning through virtual reality in helping students identify places of environmental distress, analyze the historical development of socio-ecological concerns, and compare different systems of environmental governance. The second session is meant to address how students learn about the functioning of democratic environmental decision-making processes and participatory approaches in environmental policy based on their engagement in online simulations and role plays.

During the workshop, the students will share their views with educators, program managers, policymakers, and other stakeholders from both sides of the Atlantic.

Attendance is free, but registration is mandatory. Please complete [this form by Friday, 24 May 2024 to register.](#)

PROGRAM

Monday, 3 June 2024

15:00-15:15 Welcoming Address and Introduction

Presentations of the Virtual Exchange “Environmental Democracy in Delta Regions: A Transatlantic Approach” offered by Leiden University and William & Mary College, Williamsburg, Virginia (USA)

15:15-16:15 Session 1: GIS and Online Map-Making

Students present the findings of their work on mapping socio-ecological challenges in Zeeland and the Chesapeake Bay.

Discussant: Lilian Hoogwerf-van der Linde (HZ and Delta Climate Center, Vlissingen)

Discussion points:

What is the role of GIS tools and map-making in fostering environmental awareness? What are the main advantages of using this technology? What are possible future developments? How can we better integrate this technology into existing programs? What other technologies may help us to achieve better ecological awareness?

16:15-16:45 Coffee/Tea Break

16:45-17:45 Session 2: Environmental Role Plays and Participatory Governance

Students present their views on their participation in the role-playing game “Long River.” They share their insights into the challenges and complexities of finding environmental compromises among diverse interests and across different cultures.

Discussant: Laura op de Beke (Utrecht University)

Discussion points:

What is the role of environmental games in environmental education? What are the difficulties of ecological compromises? What are the main barriers against environmental agreements? What does it take to negotiate among different cultures and backgrounds? What can serious games teach us about both national and international environmental governance?

17:45-18:00 Wrap-up

Immersive Learning and Environmental Democracy: Lessons and Challenges

18:00-18:30 Drinks