

Project title: **'Weather Perceptions in the Medieval North'**

Principal Investigator: Dr. des. Carina Damm. The project is financed by the National Science Centre funds (POLONEZ BIS 3). Allocated time: 24 months. Allocated budget: 813 257,- PLN.

Modern-day challenges linked to human-induced climate change causing floods, droughts, avalanches, and other disasters continue to spark an increasing and necessary scientific interest in how human societies coped with analogous shocks in premodern centuries. The chronological point of departure for this project is the turn to the second millennium AD in the harsh margins of the North Atlantic. There, in the recently Christianised North, a Latin literary culture developed on basis of a well-established insular writing tradition, quickly prospering in its vernacular form. This emerging Old Norse text corpus provides until the present day excellent documentary sources which offer insights into climate-society interactions in the medieval North, holding a twofold significance: First, it can contribute to a reconstruction of weather events of the past, and second, return a nuanced mirror image of the medieval minds of its authors. Eventually, apart from ideological and literary functions, the analysed textual evidence allows to draw conclusions regarding the societal consequences of extreme weather events resulting in famines, epidemics as well as epizootic diseases.

From this innovative concept results the aim of the project to contribute to a reconstruction of the environmental history of Northern Europe in the context of high medieval climate changes (c. 1000–1300) which hitherto remain understudied within the field of historical climatology. The project questions how medieval women and men adapted to, instrumentalised, and visualised the witnessed weather phenomena and explores the dynamic interplay between climatic changes, famines, and mobility movements. Moreover, it attempts to show how medieval Scandinavians remembered past environmental changes within their literary and material culture.

Contrary to the steadily increasing popularity and necessity of climate-related studies, the Scandinavian perspective played only a subordinate role in the last comprehensive overviews of historical disasters or remained entirely neglected. However, the significance of medieval Scandinavia as research area for environmental and ecocritical studies is clearly recognisable in an ever-growing number of works investigating the nexus between past climate challenges and societal impacts in the region.

Primarily drawing upon the rich annalistic Icelandic text corpus, the material of investigation is complemented by the earliest chronical works of the North (Theodoricus Monachus' *Historia*, *Ágrip*, and *Historia Norvegiae*), offering valuable insights into processes of knowledge and literature transfer to the historically closely linked Rus' and to Iceland. Legal texts, such as the Icelandic *Grágás*, offer further fresh insights into collective management and

adaptation to extreme weather events. A final methodological approach considers natural proxies for historical climate reconstruction by drawing upon pre-existing geographical, meteorological, and dendroclimatological research. This interdisciplinary perspective hence enriches the literary-based project by data obtained from the 'archive of nature', e.g., from tree rings, sediments, and ice cores.