

History of Climate

The Little Ice Age in Norway and Europe (1500-1800)

The Little Ice Age (LIA) brought a variety of challenges to the primarily agricultural societies of the early modern world. Colder temperatures and an increased frequency of extreme climate events threatened the socio-ecological systems of its time. The increase in environmental stress threatened already vulnerable societies and coincided with turbulent periods of reform, revolution and crises. This was particularly true for Norwegian society that was dependent on the constant grain-imports.

In recent years the current challenges of anthropogenic global warming have sparked additional interest in the way that historical societies have confronted, coped with and adapted to climatic changes (on a roughly comparable level of magnitude). Looking back in the future has increasingly inspired new integrated 'socionatural' views of the human-environment-interaction (HEI). Students interested in this field might analyze:

- In which ways did people adapt to a changing environment. Which strategies and practices of survival proved particularly successful?
- Did a connection between the witch hunts and climatic downturns exist?
- How did climatic stress impact Norway's relation with Denmark and its trade?
- What did people do to cope with the epidemics connected to the LIA?
- How did clusters of climate anomalies (1570s, 1690s, 1770s) interacted with historical, cultural and social developments?
- Which technological, political, cultural or scientific changes are (rightly or wrongly) attributed to the new ecological environment of the LIA?
- How did our knowledge of the LIA evolve and how does it influence our view of Global Warming.
- How can historians contribute to the debate on changing climates and what sources are particularly relevant?
- Which narratives frame the LIA today and how do they inform/misinforms our understanding of future challenges?

NB: The proposed themes are only meant to illustrate a range of possible topics. Students are also encouraged to bring in their own proposals and interests.

NB: The MA-thesis can be written in both English or Norwegian.