Delta Dialogues (York, 22-24 Jun 26)

University of York, UK, Jun 22–24, 2026
Registration deadline: Mar 15, 2026

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Association for Low Countries Studies (ALCS) 16th Biennial Conference.

The Delta Dialogues conference invites scholars, researchers, artists, and practitioners from diverse disciplines to explore the profound and complex relationship between culture, language, and the living landscape across the Netherlandophone world.

The title "Delta Dialogues" speaks to the constant negotiation, adaptation, and creolization inherent in communities living at the dynamic interfaces of water and land. We aim to foster a critical exchange on how Dutch language and Neerlandophone cultures, in all its varieties and historical contexts, has shaped and has been shaped by environments ranging from the engineered polders of the Low Countries to the resilient mangrove coasts of Suriname and the hydrologically vulnerable coral islands of the Dutch Caribbean.

We are particularly interested in papers that analyse the cultural dimensions of wetlands, coastal zones, and river systems—those fluid spaces of transition that resist simple categorisation and demand innovative forms of cultural and linguistic expression.

We invite individual 20-minute papers or themed 1.5-hour panels.
The theme is broad and the quality of the proposal is more important than strict adherence to the theme.

We welcome in particular contributions from emerging scholars and (creative) practitioners.

Potential topics include:
Linguistic Landscapes: The role of Dutch, Frisian, Sranantongo, and Papiamentu in naming, mapping, and mediating the environment (e.g., terms for tides, swamps, dikes, and coral).
Narrating the Delta: Literary, cinematic, and artistic representations of water, floods, coastal erosion, and island life.
The Shapes of Water: The use of nature and landscape imagery in poetry, literature, proverbs, and oral traditions across the Netherlandophone sphere.
Picture Ecologies: Encounters with nature in wetlands and seascapes.
Draining the Swamp: Water control and political power in the Netherlands and beyond.
Polder Culture and Ideology: The historical and contemporary cultural significance of reclamation and the ethos of "making land" in the European Netherlands.
Resilience and Creolization: Cultural practices and knowledge systems (e.g., Indigenous, Maroon, or Afro-Caribbean) that manage and utilize natural wetlands (mangroves, peat bogs, salt ponds)

as opposed to purely engineered spaces.
Coastal Vulnerability: Cultural responses to sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events in the Antilles and Suriname.
The Language of Crisis: How discourse and terminology shape public understanding and policy debates surrounding climate change adaptation in the different regions.
Memory and Heritage: The cultural heritage embedded in traditional waterworks, agricultural practices, and local dialects that may be threatened by environmental change.

Submission Guidelines
We will have two keynote speakers: Dr Eric Mijts (Aruba) will speak on 'Language, Power and Nature in the Multilingual Postcolony" and a second speaker will be announced soon.

The two-day event includes a festive conference dinner and an opening lecture.

Please submit your proposal in the form of a 250-WORDS abstract or collection of abstracts + a short biography of the speaker(s) by 15 March 2026 via this form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSemJx18K9mq5qL1xvw222GmcI5pTk0EqntmqK_HMskMmkFkCA/viewform

Selected papers will be published in a special edition of the ALCS Journal: Dutch Crossing (https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/ydtc20)

A number of bursaries are available for postgraduate, early career, and independent scholars. Please contact ALCS@sheffield.ac.uk

For questions about the 2026 Conference: ALCSYork2026@gmail.com
Other questions and queries: alcs@sheffield.ac.uk

Reference:
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