



## Human Niche Construction

**Time** 16–17 October 2015

**Venue** The Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich, Germany

**Conveners** Maurits Ertse (Delft University of Technology), Edmund Russell (University of Kansas), Christof Mauch (Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society)

**Abstract** It is well known that organisms adapt their environments to increase their chances of survival, a process known in biology as “niche construction”. This workshop tries to understand the causes and consequences of niche construction by human beings. Social forces (such as politics, economics, technology, and culture) have joined natural forces (such as climate and ecology) in shaping niches for people and companion species. This workshop will examine the idea of human niche construction on a theoretical level and apply it to case studies, such as the growth of cities. Our aim is to see how the idea of human niche construction might lead to new insights into the ways in which people and environments have shaped each other over time.

Rachel  
Carson  
Center

TU Delft

## Friday, 16 October 2015

**13:00 – 14:00    Lunch**

**14:00 – 14:45    Opening Remarks / Setting the Scene**

**14:45 - 17:15    [Histories of Human Niche Construction](#)**

**Moderator: Christof Mauch**

David Bello (Washington & Lee University)

Cultivating Space for People and Locusts: A Niche Conflict in Chinese Cereal Fields  
Across the 18th and 19th Centuries

Initial comments by Laura Martin and Sjoerd Kluiving

Ove Eriksson (Stockholm University), Co-Author: Matilda Arnell

Niche Construction and Landscape Domination in Scandinavian Infield Systems

Initial comments by David Bello and Tim LeCain

Laura Martin (Cornell University)

The Evolution of the Indoor Biome

Initial comments by Ove Eriksson and Erle Ellis

**18:15                Dinner**

## Saturday, 17 October 2015

**09:00 – 09:30    Coffee/Tea/ Informal Start**

**09:30 - 12:00    [The Built Environment](#)**

**Moderator: Edmund Russell**

Giorgia Aquilar (University IUAV of Venice; Federico II University of Naples)

Heritage as Bíos: Human Niche Re-Construction for a Co-Evolving City

Initial comments by Michael Just and David Bello

Mariagrazia Portera (Free University of Berlin)

Aesthetic Niche and the Development of Human Aesthetic Preferences and Tastes:  
New Conceptual Tools for a Revised Evolutionary Aesthetics

Initial comments by Giorgia Aquilar and Ove Eriksson

Michael Just (North Carolina State University), Co-Author: Robert Dunn

Human Indoor Climate Preferences Approximate Specific Geographies

Initial comments by Mariagrazia Portera and Laura Martin

**12:00 – 13:00 Lunch**

**13:00 – 15:30 Concepts of Human Niche Construction**

**Moderator: Maurits Ertsen**

Sjoerd Kluiving (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Co-Author: Arthur Hamel

Human Niche Construction as a Perspective on the Anthropocene Onset Definition

Initial comments by Erle Ellis and Giorgia Aquilar

Tim LeCain (Montana State University)

Material Cowboys: Niche Construction of Northern Plains American Ranching in the  
Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Initial comments by Sjoerd Kluiving and Mariagrazia Portera

Erle Ellis (University of Maryland)

Sociocultural Niche Construction, Anthroecosystems and the Anthropogenic  
Biosphere

Initial comments by Tim LeCain and Michael Just

**15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break**

**16:00 – 16:45 General Discussion**

**16:45 - 17:15 Wrap Up Discussion**

**18:15 Dinner**