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Special section

Introduction to Pages Symposium, Amsterdam, 3 November 2000

H. Hooghiemstra

Universiteit van Amsterdam, Kruislaan 318, 1098 SM Amsterdam, The Netherlands,
e-mail: hooghiemstra@bio.uva.nl

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It is often said that The Netherlands are a present of the three big rivers Rhine, Meuse and IJssel. The Pleistocene ice ages, in particular the last two, have profoundly shaped the present-day geomorphology of The Netherlands. This setting makes it easy to understand why research on the ice-ages plays an important role in academic research as well as in commercial oriented investigations. Dutch research on Past Global Change (PAGES), a significant stream of the International Geasphere Biosphere Project (IGBP), was presented and discussed in a special symposium, organised by the Dutch IGBP-WCRP Commission. The scientifIc part was organised by Henry Hooghiemstra, Kees Kasse and Henk Berendsen and the meeting was held at the Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts in Amsterdam, 3 November 2000.

The present special volume includes a selected number of contributions with research areas located in the area on which the Netherlands Journal of Geosciences likes to focus: the North Sea basin. These contributions show some important approaches in multi-proxy terrestrial palaeoclimate research.

Van der Plicht contributes with a paper on calibration of the radiocarbon time scale covering the last 40 kyr. Berendsen and Stouthamer contribute with a paper on the Holocene palaeogeographic evolution and avulsion history of the Rhine Meuse delta in which extensive radiocarbon dating plays an important role; they synthesise some decades of research. Renssen, Isarin and Vandenberghe contribute with a paper on the thermal gradients in Europe during the last glacial-interglacial transition; they demonstrate that a comparison of reconstructed and modelled gradients strongly enhance understanding of both climatic and environmental systems. Hoek and Bohncke focus on the same time slice as in the previous paper; they developed a regional vegetation database and reconstructed the regional vegetation development in relation to climate change. They were able to explain vegetation patterns in relation to subsoil and other environmental conditions; the multi-proxy approach was very helpful to precise reconstructions of palaeotemperature and palaeoprecipitation.

We like to thank all who contributed to this successful day. The staff of the Academy is acknowledged for hosting the meeting. Finally we like to mention here that a significant part of the Dutch PAGES-related research was, and is, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).