Visualising the past

Defining the standards for digital reconstructions of past landscapes

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***Keywords**: immersive technologies—past landscape—digital reconstruction—data authenticity—uncertain data*

With the rapid advances in immersive technologies, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are currently re-emerging as affordable ways providing new potentials for heritage organisations and agencies to access new and attractive ways of informing and involving the public. A constantly growing number of immersive experiences of past landscapes and cityscapes are now available to the general public. These virtual reconstructions aim to offer insights on the original look of lost and/or altered monuments and portions of the urban fabric of ancient cities and landscapes. Indeed, past cityscapes can be digitally recreated as immersive VR experience, and lost urban features can be 3D modelled and then be superimposed to the reality using AR. But, how do we communicate to the public the breadth of research that lays behind the digital reconstruction? How do we present authentic data in an engaging way? Which is the best way to convey to the public the uncertainty or lacking of research data? These are just few of the 'hard questions' scholars and cultural heritage managers are faced with when analysing and developing visualisations of heritage for public engagement.

The goal for this session was to start a conversation about how digital visualisation tools are used to deliver reconstructions of altered or lost past landscapes. We invited participants to submit papers that present either comparative or case-based examples.

Papers were considered:

- Identifying key challenges and lessons learnt in creating landscape reconstructions using uncertain data
- Examining the main issues faced by, and opportunities offered to, cultural heritage practitioners in creating accurate and transparent digital visualisations for the public
- Demonstrating the harnessing of new and emerging strategies to convey data authenticity in digital visualisations