

Learning from the Past

Facing modern challenges by integrating historical and present-day data on rural and urban infrastructure

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The spatial layout of towns and infrastructure provides information on past human-landscape interaction. And although dynamic in nature, many of these spatial constructs have continued to exist in the present-day landscape.

River-delta areas are generally low-lying; their landscapes shaped by marine and fluvial influences. In Europe they are often divided in two main landscape types: the lower, dynamic Holocene soils and higher, more stable Pleistocene areas. Remarkably, the more densely populated areas were often located in the more dynamic Holocene parts, especially in the proximity of rivers channels. Because of their fertile substrates, easily maintainable natural boundaries and abundant transport options these landscapes have always attracted people throughout history. However, living in these dynamic landscapes required the inhabitants to adapt to ever-changing circumstances. This has resulted in very specific town layouts and the development of elaborate and intertwined rural and urban infrastructural works, in which water management was always a factor to be reckoned with.

At present, issues such as increasing weather extremes and urban, agricultural and economic interests put pressure on these landscapes, directly threatening the preservation of heritage. Besides providing useful knowledge of past solutions for future challenges, these historical spatial constructs also have a social function as was underlined in the recent Davos declaration (2018) on the importance of a European vision on *Baukultur*.

In this session, we invited researchers to come forward with inspiring examples of successful integration of historical and/or present-day data in order to analyse, visualize, reconstruct or preserve past urban or rural landscapes or infrastructural developments. This session focused on heritage projects using historical data to face modern-day challenges. The aim of this session was to identify, analyse and compare different methods and technologies and their effects throughout Europe.