

## **GCHD Program Heritage and Environment**

Humans have long shaped buildings, cities, and landscapes in complex interrelations with the natural environment. Historic buildings, such as churches or castles, warehouses and ports, windmills and refineries, but also polders and canals, are the embodiment of changing collective political, social, cultural as well as economic values. The narratives, networks and functions of these cultural environments have changed over time, others have been adapted or destroyed.

Heritage structures embody the grand narratives of the past. Contemporary landscapes are a palimpsest of past networks and narratives. These are not just a “passive heritage” but they serve as mnemonic devices and actor networks of social, economic and environmental change. Their spatial appearances and the actor networks that have been established over centuries create path dependencies that influence future decision-making. In the face of diverse environmental changes such as global warming, migration or sea level rise, we will have to find new approaches towards the definition, conservation, transformation and adaptive reuse of heritage structures.

The Research Group Heritage and Environment investigates these complex narratives of landscape change in the past, present and future. As a group of anthropologists, archaeologists, architects, engineers, heritage researchers and historians we seek to address these narratives in an interdisciplinary way, combining concepts and methodologies from these various fields of expertise.

### **Approaches, Methodologies, and Tools**

By studying the interrelations between human intervention and diverse environmental factors have shaped historic landscapes, we aim to create awareness of the interconnection between heritage structures and environmental factors past, present and future. Diverse methodologies - such as landscape biographies - emphasize the need of historic exploration as a foundation for future design. Instead of preserving individual iconic buildings from the past as emblems of our shared culture and history and finding ad-hoc solutions for each case, we argue that a comprehensive approach to heritage landscapes is needed to permit a scaling up of approaches towards heritage. Exploring heritage in the context of the environment requires novel theoretical, methodological and conceptual approaches as well as instruments that acknowledge the inseparability of natural and cultural heritage, the interconnection of spatial and conceptual aspects of heritage, and the importance of water related heritage for the future. We are particularly interested in methods of landscape change models, using Geographical Information Systems (GIS). This could lead to new policy, design, education, and outreach tools. Open access platforms and augmented reality tools (i.e. Black Gold) are among the Digital Humanities initiatives that we pursue.

Networks of water and energy and their evolving complex relationships with man-made structures stands as example. Starting with the Netherlands, where eight out of ten world heritage sites are related to water, we argue that a comprehensive and interconnected approach to historical research, heritage decisions, policy-making, education and outreach is necessary to develop sustainable adaptation strategies. Changing systems of transportation via water, rail or road, or air have shaped heritage landscapes over time, and stand as reminders of historic colonial and other networks. One of our foci is water, that plays a central role in narratives in cities and landscapes from coastal water defenses and ports to cities and waterfronts, from drainage and irrigation systems to utilities and drinking water. Shifting energy sources from water mills to oil have shaped urban development and heritage structures extensively. The concept of landscape thus includes rural and farming landscapes, urban and industrial landscapes, harbor landscapes, maritime landscapes, and “petroleumsapes,” natural and human-made water systems, memorial landscapes and “heritagescapes,” leisure landscapes and tourist-recreational cities, as well as particular places,

monuments, regions and “territories” that operate as key elements in their functioning and radiation.

The CGHD Program “Heritage and Environment” aims at shedding new light on these issues by combining insights, concepts and research methods from history, heritage studies and archaeology, from geography, architecture, urban planning and landscape. We study the long-term histories and changing heritage of human environment from prehistory up to the present, exploring new ideas about the relationships between nature and culture, human agency and materiality, global interactions and local engagement, and engages questions of cultural transmission and future design.

“Heritage and Environment” generate new interdisciplinary research in this fascinating field and establishes collaboration in academic education and publication. Besides, the group intend to create an inspirational environment for PhDs and RMA’s by organizing meetings about ongoing PhD research.

Research Projects and initiatives:

- Water and Heritage for the Future (with ICOMOS NL)
- Energy landscapes and Heritage of Globalization (Collaboration with Museum Rotterdam)
- Peer-reviewed “Journal of European Landscapes”, hosted by Amsterdam University Press
- Interdisciplinary collaboration on heritage and environment issues with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/CLUE+, through Re-scape Colloquium (a series of seminars that take place every six weeks)
- LDE RMA/Minor “Comparative Perspectives on Urban Cultures”
- LDE Minor: “Heritage and Design”
- Digital Humanities projects including open-access augmented reality tool
- Heritage and Tourism in Coastal landscapes - joint session in the Heritage Tourism and Hospitality International Conference 2017 in Turku, Finland.