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NIT Urban Heritage Lab

A Multi-Disciplinary Platform for Teaching Transformation and Reuse of Water Heritage

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As Found

International colloquium on adaptive reuse

5-7 September 2023

📍 Hasselt & Antwerp, Belgium

Hasselt University &
Flanders Architecture Institute

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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IMAGE: Castelvecchio Museum Verona by architect Carlo Scarpa (cc) presso Archivio Paolo Monti

AS FOUND INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON ADAPTIVE REUSE
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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Conference Chairs and editors: Bie Plevoets, Hülya Ertas, Sofie De Caigny



Fig. 1, The Valens Aqueduct (Bozdogan Kemer) in Istanbul, Source: Mariëtte Verhoeven, 2022, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

NIT URBAN HERITAGE LAB: A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PLATFORM FOR TEACHING TRANSFORMATION AND REUSE OF WATER HERITAGE

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Throughout history, fresh water supply has been an issue of political, social, economic, and cultural importance to cities. Istanbul and its hinterland have a rich water heritage of more than 1,500 years. This includes dams, tunnels, aqueducts, distribution stations, water towers, reservoirs, fountains, and baths, as well as the social and cultural traditions that go with them. Many of these remains are protected by cultural heritage regulations but also suffer from neglect, uncontrolled urban development, and deliberate destruction. At present, planners, policymakers, and the public are insufficiently aware of the value and potential of this heritage. The Netherlands Institute in Turkey (NIT) Urban Heritage Lab was set up in 2021 to address urban sustainability challenges through heritage-focused education programs. It operates from the basic notion that contemporary urban issues require (conservation) architects, planners and heritage professionals that are trained in multi-disciplinary approaches. To address the challenges and possibilities for the transformation and reuse of water heritage from a multi-disciplinary perspective, the Urban Heritage Lab offered a post-graduate course in the autumn of 2022. The course took place partly online (lectures and discussions), partly on-site in Istanbul (field trips, study groups, and workshops), and was open to early-career professionals and graduate students of any discipline from higher education institutions in the Netherlands and Türkiye. We will show that our course ‘Water Heritage for Sustainable Cities’ explored water heritage by approaching it as a complex network of material and immaterial remains – not as isolated historical relics – in a modern urban setting. With a focus on Istanbul’s water heritage and discussing case studies from elsewhere, the course participants investigated how water heritage can be employed to raise awareness of worldwide historical and contemporary water issues. In this way, the course relied on constructive and inquiry-based pedagogical approaches as the participants developed group projects to enable the community to re-valorise Istanbul’s water heritage through its transformation and reuse. Scholars and experts from the Netherlands and Türkiye (two countries with a rich history in water-related developments) contributed with presentations and discussions of historical and contemporary water-related topics. The course participants investigated the material and immaterial history and aspects of the ancient Valens Aqueduct (Bozdogan Kemeri) in today’s Istanbul, as an example of a water heritage object that underwent many transformations over the centuries and lost its original function. To deal with the challenges of studying water heritage in education, the course introduced “landscape biography” as a methodology for understanding heritage places with multiple narratives and layers. In this presentation, we will discuss the potential, limitations, and outcomes of the course by assessing the proposals for action that the participants developed in a multi-disciplinary design studio which utilized research-by-design as a tool to stimulate social and active learning, thereby focusing on sustainable development and/or increasing public awareness of contemporary and future water issues.

Özgün Özçakır is an architect by training and works as an assistant professor at the METU Graduate Program in Conservation of Cultural Heritage. His research interests include heritage values and sustainability, intervention strategies and approaches in heritage places and heritage impact assessments (HIA).

Aysel Arslan is an archaeologist. Her research interests include ancient fingerprints, labour division in prehistory, the emergence of social inequality, settlement archaeology, and contemporary issues in heritage. She co-organizes and coordinates courses, talks and symposia on a wide variety of topics on cultural heritage at NIT.

Fokke Gerritsen is an archaeologist with a long-standing interest in urban heritage issues. As NIT director he develops heritage programs at the intersection of research, education and public outreach.

Mariëtte Verhoeven is a university lecturer and researcher specializing in the field of late antique and Byzantine cultural and architectural history and heritage. Currently her research focuses on water heritage in Istanbul and the use of digital techniques to increase public awareness of and engagement with cultural heritage.

Gerdy Verschuure-Stuij was trained as an architect and works now as an assistant professor at Delft University of Technology and a cluster leader of the Centre for Global Heritage and Development at the University of Leiden. She is specialized in landscape architecture, heritage, landscape biography and participation.

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This colloquium is organized as an extension of the exhibition *As Found: Experiments in Preservation* by the Flanders Architecture Institute. Curated by Sofie De Caigny, Hülya Ertas and Bie Plevoets, the exhibition is on show at De Singel, Antwerp, from 6 September 2023 to 17 March 2024. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, available in English (ISBN: 9789492567321) and Dutch (ISBN: 9789492567338).

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