



CONCEPTUALISING
ENVIRONMENT(S):
CONTINUITY
AND CHANGE

Book of Abstracts



The
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UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL



Conceptualising Environment(s):
continuity and change

University of Liverpool
22-24 November 2025

Welcome Note

Welcome to the Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA) Annual Conference 2025: *Conceptualising Environment (s): Continuity and Change*. We are grateful for the generous support from the British Academy Conference Grant and team, whose contribution is particularly crucial at a challenging time for humanities research.

Thank you for joining the three-day conference. We look forward to dialogue and exchanges. We hope you will enjoy your time at the University of Liverpool and in the city of Liverpool.

Christina Malathouni
Ranald Lawrence
Juliana Yat Shun Kei

A landscape photograph with a green tint. In the foreground, there are several trees. In the background, a factory with smokestacks is visible against a hazy sky.

Strand 1

'Natural

Environment(s)'

A photograph with a reddish-brown tint. Two people are sitting on a bench in an urban setting. The background shows a brick wall and some foliage.

Strand 2

'Human-centred

Environment(s)'

A photograph with a yellowish tint. A large industrial building with four large fans or air conditioning units on its facade. The building is surrounded by trees.

Strand 3

'Controlled

Environment(s)'

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Session & Paper Abstracts

[in alphabetical order of Last Name]

‘CREATIVE COMPENSATION’: LANDSCAPE DESIGN, URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND THE TERRITORIALISATION OF FINANCIALISED ECOLOGICAL NETWORKS IN BERLIN.

Koenraad Danneels (KU Leuven)

C O N T R O L D The city of Berlin is one of the forerunners in developing policy frameworks aimed at mitigating the environmental impact of urban development. Through ‘encroachment regulations’, ‘land pooling’, and so-called ‘eco-accounts’, the state has safeguarded significant portions of Berlin’s ecologically valuable wastelands as ‘compensation landscapes’ for urban development elsewhere. Landscape designers have often skilfully integrated such nature conservation legislation with aesthetic and social programmes, a practice dubbed ‘creative compensation’. However, there is a darker side to this story. Through policies of environmental control, the fields of architecture and landscape design are increasingly embroiled in the financialisation and ‘neo-liberalisation’ of post-industrial landscapes. They participate in the justification of environmental destruction through the renaturalisation of lost environments, while in fact reinforcing urban development projects and real estate. This double trick—pretending to reconstruct an imaginary landscape while destroying vibrant biodiversity hotspots—has not yet been studied in the (history of) urbanism and landscape design. How does landscape design conceal

destruction and redistribute green spaces across urban territories? Who benefits, and who loses, when urban development is mitigated through landscape? In this contribution, I will map the geography of compensation in Berlin and analyse the social and aesthetic programmes of several key compensation parks. By connecting interviews with a wide range of actors—including the state, infrastructure developers, civil society, and landscape designers—with site visits and archival material, I discuss compensation landscapes both as placemakers for conservation and recreation, and as urbanisation devices that mobilise nonhuman labour to support speculative development. My analysis presents the creation of Berlin’s green network as a contested and continuously negotiated arena—caught between the claims of real estate, infrastructure, and spontaneous urban nature—in which design plays an increasingly central role.

in **The Planet, its Political Borders and its Architectures**

DOCUMENTING THE TENSIONS BETWEEN A NEW METRO INFRASTRUCTURE IN HISTORIC URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Sofia Darbesio (Politecnico di Torino)

C O N T R O L D Underground railway systems are an integral part of infrastructural development, as well as urban governance, at both the regional (-national) and local levels. The process of planning and constructing metro systems involves complex decision-making relationships that connect regional planning to local contexts and interests, and that involve technological, societal and political factors. Adding to this, dealing with underground infrastructures in historic cities often means discovering historical stratifications, revealing relevant information for urban and regional history. The contribution presents an ongoing doctoral research documenting the integration of a metro infrastructure in the historic city centre of Naples (Italy) and in two small towns in the suburbs of Paris (France). While the insertion of modern infrastructures into a historical environment creates intersections among different expertise and stakeholders; documenting, understanding and communicating the dynamics is not easy due to the complexity of the process.

Applying Digital Humanities methodologies, the research addresses the challenge of documenting and facilitating interdisciplinary exchanges within the workflow, thereby making the process more accessible. The research approach is based on the understanding that data, tools and information relating to construction sites embody innovative capabilities, processes, and solutions that are relevant to the city and its sustainable development. This contribution will also discuss the research challenges in studying contemporary processes. These include lengthy authorisation procedures and restricted access to documentation by the authorities involved in construction due to security and institutional copyright issues. Concluding, the contribution provides visual insights into how architecture can manage and combine the different dimensions involved – engineering, archaeological, etc. – and can catalyse the regeneration of the surrounding area by interpreting the local cultural and societal context.

in **PhD WIP: Infrastructural Environment(s)**