

Thematic sessions

Little planet. New approaches to a big picture in construction histories, East Asia and Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries

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In recent years, much has been said about World History and the globalising age of the 19th and 20th centuries. The development of histories of science and technology is particularly boosted by the themes about the global circulation of objects, instruments, technologies and knowledge. Studies are disclosing details of the panorama and claim for the re-contextualisation from a global perspective. The links between East Asia and Europe constitute a significant part of it. However, the consequences in construction methods and the built forms are far understudied. How did the global contacts interact with construction stories?

By bridging (sub)divided fields, we observe a huge potential for exploring the paths construction histories were shaped through global connections. For instance, trade networks engaging Europe, China and Japan, intensive agriculture, mining, shipyards, railways, factories, as well as military infrastructures, aviation projects, immigration, and missionaries all played particular roles in the historical process of circulating construction technology. These topics have not been ignored in literature, but their interactions with construction stories have not been properly studied yet. There are certainly historical patterns.

This session seeks to enrich the aims and methods of construction histories by broadening the scopes in traditional monographies and bringing together scholars from diverse fields. We encourage studies reconstructing the viewpoints or re-contextualizing the facts in the construction histories. We welcome works addressing the technologies beyond construction sites (e.g., building materials, sanitation, building physics, and mobility) and the agencies in the circulation of technology. We welcome comparative studies involving global-local relations with technological details. Interdisciplinary approaches, including collaborations with practitioners, are strongly encouraged. They could include archaeology, sociology, analytical methods, literature studies, and big data analyses resulting from computational capacities.

We concern an essential question: how have construction activities contributed to human wisdom over time? The knowledge of human beings is actually a little planet.