

Planning history and urban heritage. Historical towns atlases as a tool for research, heritage management and participation

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Cities are concentrations of heritage. A profound understanding of urban heritage is not possible without understanding the dynamics that guided the creation that heritage, as well as its development over time and the problems of conservation and management that arise today. This was recognized as early as 1955, when the International Commission for the History of Towns began the European Historic Towns Atlas program, aiming at highlighting Europe's shared history through its cities. This has given a major impulse to the production of historical atlases, both within and outside the program, for example the Parigramme series of thematic historical atlases of Paris or the Dutch commercial series. At the same time, GIS and (online) digital cartography have emerged. More and more archives, image repositories and archaeological data are digitally available and can be linked to cartographic backgrounds. Early cadastral maps, which have been crucial from the beginning, are available digitally, for instance in the Dutch HISGIS project.

This calls for rethinking the form of historic atlases. New, multidisciplinary approaches and models of atlases for comparative and synthesizing research are conceivable, both on paper and in digital formats. We cannot escape digitization if we want to compare and synthesize. On the other hand, books are needed to engage the public, as demonstrated by the success of several long-running series. In this session, we want to survey the current state of the art and reinvigorate the conversation about historic atlases, within and outside the EHTA. In this session, we welcome innovative case studies, proposals for new formats and approaches to the city as a historical phenomenon based on historical cartography, as well as contributions on the traditional atlas to appeal to a wider audience, new ideas for making maps and archival sources accessible, and ideas for comparative and synthesizing research.

#urban heritage #mapping #historic atlases