



Above and Beyond Legal and Construction History in Dialogue

**Department of Architecture and Urban Planning
Ghent University
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Above and Beyond:

Legal and Construction History in Dialogue

The Belgian EOS-project Construction History: Above and Beyond aims to understand 'what history can do for construction history?' It does so through three parallel yet intertwined interdisciplinary tracks, combining construction history with three other historical disciplines – colonial history, urban planning history, and legal history. As part of this broader research project, this book workshop is situated along this last track, and seeks to explore the interdisciplinary dialogues between legal and construction history.

Marked by an intense 'proliferation of law', the construction sector in Belgium and beyond has undergone intense processes of 'juridification' (Habermas 1987, 357). These developments not only span across varying conventional hard laws, from legislation on labour conditions to the professional protection of architects. The construction sector also seems the prime sphere where multifarious forms of soft law were developed, from changing building permit protocols, to material standards and construction guidelines. Moreover, such juridification went hand in hand with an equal proliferation of paper productions. Next to a wide array of bureaucratic records documenting building protocols, procedures, and regulations, court case proceedings form particularly valuable yet understudied sources. Resulting from moments of construction crises, collapse, accidents and conflicts, these documents not only contain expert reports and photographic evidence, but also direct testimonies of labourers, often the most silenced voices of construction history. Such paper trails offer rich opportunities for innovative archival research on both specific legal issues, and on broader questions regarding e.g. tacit building knowledge, labour conditions, lobby work, ...

With the workshop, we aim to bring together different perspectives on the understudied legal documents, regulations, administrative procedures and legal practices that have shaped construction industries and built environments, and the alternative actors and agencies within the building world that emerge when looking through such legal lenses.

We invite legal and construction historians, but also welcome and applaud researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds such as urban, cultural, material, and art history. Focused on the long nineteenth and twentieth century, contributions may explore various geographical scopes, and diverse topics such as:

- Methodologies of interdisciplinary archival research
- Legal 'borrowing' and knowledge transfer
- Regulations and enforcement in construction (sites)
- Expertise in construction litigation
- Construction histories through alternative legal sources
- Legal authorship
- ...

The workshop will serve as an intermediate stage, where we will bring together a broader number of interested researchers to present on-going research, on which we will base the future proposal of our edited volume.

Submissions

Paper abstracts of 300 words with a biography of 300 words and a list of 5 relevant publications should be **submitted by 15 September 2024**. Notification of acceptance will be communicated a week later.

Scientific Committee

Prof. Dr. Dave De ruysscher (legal historian)

Prof. Dr. Rika Devos (architectural & construction historian)

Dr. Simon De Nys-Ketels (architectural & construction historian)

Future information will be communicated through mail, and through the project website:

<https://abch.be/research/legal-construction-dialogue>.

For further questions, contact simon.de.nysketels@ulb.be.