



Thematic Session

TS5. Historical timber constructions between regional tradition ad supra-regional influences

Chaired by: *Clemens Knobling* (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Switzerland)

The "7ICCH" has set itself the goal "to celebrate and expand our understanding of the ways that everyday building activities have been perceived and experienced in different cultures, times and places". Culturally and regionally specific construction methods are rarely as pronounced as in historical timber construction. But even in the Middle Ages, essential construction elements were already similar in different regions that were at least separated by political borders. At that time, the wanderings of builders led to the spread of various construction methods and building traditions. In addition, they often developed region-specific skills that responded to local characteristics. Bridge construction or hydraulic engineering, for example, has reached great maturity where it was particularly in demand. Climatic conditions also caused the same construction tasks to be carried out very differently from region to region. With the beginning of the early modern era, the first efforts to communicate the construction that had proven themselves in many places via a new medium, the treatise, became visible. Particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries, examples of constructions typical for the region were - in addition to constructions that followed scientific findings or theories - also drawn and published in numerous specialist books. Representative examples are the treatises on timber construction by Jean Charles Krafft, whose own biography reflects the internationalisation of architecture and whose publications were partly produced in several languages for a pan-European market. Suddenly an opulence of international experience became available, from which a supposedly suitable construction could be selected in an exemplary manner for a local building task. Nevertheless, strong regional differences would still characterize timber construction until the 20th century.

The thematic session on timber construction could focus on lectures with the following contents:

- Constructions that were influenced by supra-regional models;
- Constructions which themselves exerted a comprehensible, supra-regional influence;





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Seventh International Congress on Construction History

12 - 16 JULY, 2021

LISBON, PORTUGAL

- Constructions that comprehensibly deal with the technical discussion in contemporary timber construction literature;
- Constructions that have a specific and unmistakable regional character, for example because special geographical or climatic features have been taken into account, etc.

All fields of activity in historical timber construction represent potential contents. There is no limit concerning the period considered.

The aim of the session is to show that - regarding the conference topic - timber construction has matured in different regions to specific masteries, which, with increasing demands on the construction tasks, is permeated by knowledge gained from supra-regional or international examples. I would like to briefly explain the relevance of the topic by means of the 7ICCH's topic setting:

The call for the 7ICCH begins with the sentence "We are what we build and how we build". This is particularly true for timber constructions - this building material has for a long time been an essential part in buildings of all classes. While most of the common buildings were mainly made of wood for a long time, this building material was also in demand for highly specialised requirements in ambitious projects, for example to overcome larger spans and to build large roofs, which made representative architecture possible in the first place. In this sense, timber construction is an important element of the overarching theme "History of Construction Cultures", as it has been able to permeate historical building like no other building material. It enables ambitious structures as well as comfortable designs.

Wooden constructions have long been influenced by local traditions. Even as building became more and more scientific, local traditions and the implementation of new influences from the increasingly academic architecture with traditional techniques continued to play a role in timber construction.

The regional, handicraft character on the one hand and the handling of ideas that originate from "foreign" models or publications on the other hand, make timber construction an illustrative example of the struggle for building culture. In addition, many examples, especially in timber construction, show clearly the influence that the climate and the natural environment have had on the development of regional building cultures. It offers the opportunity to examine everyday building culture as well as the connection between the everyday and the extraordinary.

