

## Session at EAHN (Aarhus, 17–21 Jun 26)

Aarhus Universitat, EAHN 2026, Jun 17–21, 2026

Deadline: Sep 19, 2025

Martina Frank and Myriam Pilutti Namer

Water as an Ecological Mediator in Architecture: Tracing Connections from Antiquity to the Modern Age.

The call for papers detailed below pertains to the session organised by Martina Frank and Myriam Pilutti Namer (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) as part of the European Architectural History Network (EAHN) Biennial Conference, to be held at Aarhus University, Denmark, from 17 to 21 June 2026. Scholars, including senior and early-career researchers as well as PhD candidates, working in any area related to architectural history or in interdisciplinary fields connected to it, are warmly invited to submit proposals.

Abstracts are invited for the paper sessions and roundtables listed below. Submissions must be received by 19 September 2025, 23:59 CET. Abstracts should not exceed 300 words and must be submitted directly to both Martina Frank ([martina31@unive.it](mailto:martina31@unive.it)) and Myriam Pilutti Namer ([myriam.piluttinamer@unive.it](mailto:myriam.piluttinamer@unive.it)). Please include the following information: name, email address, institutional affiliation, postal address, telephone number, and a brief curriculum vitae (maximum one page).

This session investigates the multifaceted role of water – whether seas, rivers, lakes, lagoons, or artificial basins – as a crucial element in shaping architecture and urbanism. Spanning the period from Antiquity to the Modern Age, prior to the Industrial Revolution, it focuses on the Mediterranean region and its sub-basins, such as the Adriatic Sea, while also welcoming broader geographical perspectives and comparative analyses. Water is examined not merely as a practical resource or scenographic medium but as a dynamic ecological force and a cornerstone of material culture that has shaped human interaction with the built environment across time and space.

The session foregrounds the relevance of ecological theory as a lens to understand historical engagements with water. Ecological theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of natural and human systems, inviting a reassessment of how architecture and urbanism have adapted to and co-evolved with aquatic environments. Recognizing water as an active agent within ecological systems – rather than merely a backdrop – allows for a deeper comprehension of historical architectural practices as complex environmental adaptations.

Through a variety of sources – including historical drawings, cartography, treatises, architectural plans, digital media, and photography – the session explores the cultural, technical, and environmental dimensions of water's integration into architecture. Key questions include: How has water served as an ecological mediator, influencing architectural design and urban planning across dif-

ferent historical and cultural contexts? How have communities leveraged water's physical and symbolic properties to negotiate the interplay between natural and built environments? How can ecological theory reshape our interpretation of the historical built environment in light of contemporary environmental challenges?

The session highlights Venice as a paradigmatic case where the inseparable relationship between water and architecture is most visible. The city's Grand Canal palaces and mainland villas illustrate how waterways shaped economic, cultural, and urban frameworks, demonstrating water's centrality to the material and symbolic organization of space. Venice itself can be understood as a complex ecological system, where natural and human-made environments are interwoven. Its continuous negotiation with water across centuries connects practices rooted in Antiquity with innovations that shaped the Medieval and Modern Age, offering a unique model of adaptive resilience and environmental integration. In addition, comparative perspectives, such as Lisbon's engagement with the Tagus River, Edo's (Tokyo's) canal networks, and New Amsterdam's (New York's) waterfront spaces, underscore water's role as both a vital resource and a driver of urban form across different cultures and periods. By interpreting the relationship with water through the prism of ecological theory, the session highlights how understanding past interactions between natural forces and built environments can enhance strategies to preserve heritage today while promoting sustainable practices attuned to ecological realities.

#### Selected Literature

Ammerman, A. J., 2003. Venice before the Grand Canal. *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 2003, 48, 141–158.

Ciriacono, S., 2006. *Building on Water: Venice, Holland, and the Construction of the European Landscape in Early Modern Times*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Kassler-Taub, E., 2019. Building with Water: The Rise of the Island-City in the Early Modern Mediterranean. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 1 June 2019; 78 (2): 145–166. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2019.78.2.145>

Merrill, E.M. and Gianaris's, S., 2019. From the Pantheon to the Anthropocene: Introducing Resilience in Architectural History. *Architectural Histories*, 7(1), 7. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/ah.406>

Morton, T., 2009. *Ecology without Nature. Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press.

Morshed, A.Z 2024. Water as a Disciplinary Challenge in Architectural History. *Water Hist* 16, 1–20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12685-024-00342-9>

For further details, please consult the official conference website: <https://konferencer.au.dk/eahn26/call-for-papers-1>, or contact Martina Frank and Myriam Pilutti Namer via email at: [martina31@unive.it](mailto:martina31@unive.it), [myriam.piluttinamer@unive.it](mailto:myriam.piluttinamer@unive.it).

#### Reference:

CFP: Session at EAHN (Aarhus, 17-21 Jun 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 12, 2025 (accessed Jul 13, 2025),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/50347>>.