

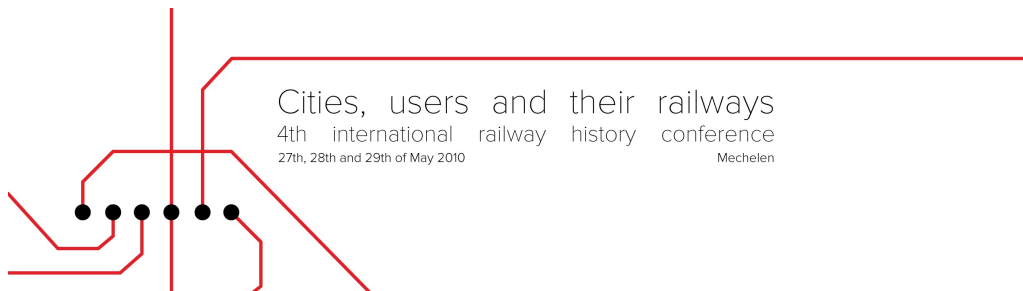
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## Cities, users and their railways. 4th international railway history conference

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On May 5th 1835 commercial railway operations were initiated on the European continent by the opening of the railway section between Brussels and Mechelen. The subsequent expansion of the network during the 19th century introduced a new public space, a new territorial marker: the railway station. In Mechelen the railway station was not only a new building, it also created a new location, a new destination and a new territory with an innovative architecture.

The 19th century stations of major cities were constructed as temples of modernism opening the gate to a new world. Stations strongly affected different aspect of city development: mobility, city planning (including the establishment of unique neighborhoods and social environments), architecture and urban development, etc.

As such stations acquired an identity in a sometimes tense relationship with the city. Moreover, station design was reflected by the establishment of a railroad network. The necessity of rail companies posed new challenges for the cities, not only in terms of urbanization, but also in terms of network construction, network design and architecture.

Railway stations evolved after the Second World War in many countries to non-places or even negative environments. They degraded to necessary, functional, multimodal transit centers. Today, however, this evolution stopped and a new generation of railway stations and railway neighborhoods is born. Stations are rediscovered, and even reinvented. A renewed sensation of station areas is experienced, improving the integration into the urban fabric. This new trend raises several questions: questions about urban planning and mobility, livability, but also about sustainability, heritage and social embedding of urban regeneration in historic sites and neighborhoods.

The Lamot Heritage Center and the International Railway History Association invite about 25 international experts in Mechelen, Belgium from May 27th to May 29th 2010. From a historical perspective and based on concrete case studies, we hope to open the debate and stimulate reflections on the innovation of historical railway environments, railway stations and neighborhoods in relation to actual and future city planning and development.

Download the conference programme

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LAMOT

Van Beethovenstraat 8-10

2800 Mechelen

T +32 (0)15 29 49 10

E [trein@mechelen.be](mailto:trein@mechelen.be)

W conference website soon online

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- Stadsbestuur Mechelen: Grote Markt 21, 2800 Mechelen |
- T: [015 28 00 00](tel:015280000) |
- F: 015 29 75 10 |
- E: [stadsbestuur@mechelen.be](mailto:stadsbestuur@mechelen.be) |
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