



Sub-Urban

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Increasing urbanisation throughout the world challenges the sustainable development and resilience of cities. Despite this, the importance of the ground beneath cities is under-recognised and often overlooked. The main aim of the Sub-Urban Action is to provide a long-needed contribution to greater interaction and networking, and so transform the relationship between experts who develop urban subsurface knowledge and those who can benefit most from it - urban decision makers, practitioners and the wider research community.

By 2050 it is estimated that two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas. Europe's population is already substantially urbanised and as populations grow, sustainable development - a pattern of growth in which resource use aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment for present and future generations - is increasingly threatened.

In contrast to the attention given to the visible (above ground) expressions of cities, there is a marked lack of appreciation of the importance of the subsurface amongst those who plan, develop and manage cities. For underground space to remain a societal asset, we need to plan and manage its use. In cities such as **Helsinki** and **St Petersburg** subsurface urban development has been integrated into the land-use planning system. If this is not done, the greatest benefits of underground space will prove to be short-lived. For example, unanticipated disruption of groundwater flows can cause wells to dry up, cause ingress of pollutants, damage to sites of historical interest or cause flooding of existing subsurface developments.

In 2012, the British Geological Survey together with other geological surveys in northern Europe, put forward a proposal to the Transport and Urban theme of COST for greater interaction and networking between experts who develop urban subsurface knowledge and those who can benefit most from it - urban decision-makers, planners and practitioners (private consultants and contractors). This action is running from June 2013 to June 2017, is today consisting of 29 countries and their city partners.

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