

Call for papers: Session M24

Cities, Space and the Sacred: Exploring Urban (Religious) Landscapes in the Modern Era (c.1800 – present)

14 th International Conference on Urban History, organized by the European Association of Urban History (EAUH) – Rome, August 29th to September 1st, 2018

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In 1929, the Lateran Treaties between the Holy See and the Italian Fascist regime recognized “the sacred character of the Eternal City.” Rome’s designation as a “sacred city,” however, was highly exceptional, especially within the context of the modern Western world. Indeed, scholars have habitually regarded cities, particularly big cities and metropolises, as hubs and models of political, social and cultural modernization, places where religion and a sense of the sacred were increasingly privatized and marginalized.

Largely absent from this discussion, however, is a consideration of place and space. In what ways were big cities like Rome also sacred places? How do Western and non-Western notions of sacred urban space compare? Prioritizing the issues of space and place, this session aims to reconsider the complex relationship between the city and religion in modern times. By inviting papers from specialists working from a range of different disciplinary and geographic perspectives (including non-European), and inspired by approaches that see space as a social or cultural construction, the session aims to launch an extended discussion of sacred space and the city. The session will focus on three main, closely interconnected themes:

- 1) Urban manifestations of the sacred. Here we invite discussions of the changing role of religious sites and buildings in the city, their visibility, the aesthetic and symbolic codes and languages they use, differences and commonalities between religious communities. How far can we consider sacred space as constituent for modern cityscapes? Is sacred space the expression of a specific “urban religion,” of religion practices and attitudes characteristic of modern city dwellers?
- 2) The demarcation and perception of urban space as sacred. How have faith communities claimed and competed for urban space? How did "secular" forces react to such claims? Where were lines drawn between profane and sacred space? Have different religious traditions adopted discrete approaches to the notion of “sacred space”? Also welcome here are investigations of the durability of these space claims and topographies and what they might reflect about the shifting senses of "sacred" and "worldly" in the urban environment.
- 3) The sacred as a contested category in urban settings. With the rise of the modern nation-state and political mass mobilization, the sacred was often appropriated by new political and social forces, for instance as “civil” or “political religion.” To what degree were these appropriations (e.g. religious architecture, rites, symbols) and encounters specifically urban phenomena? How did they affect, reorganize, and/or transform notions of religion and the sacred in the city? How did they alter traditional ideas about urban sacred space? What might these developments reveal about the relation between traditional and “political religion” and their place in the modern city?

Session webpage:

<https://eauh2018.ccmgs.it/users/index.php?pagename=cms&name=sessiontracks&trackname=cities--space-and-the-sacred--exploring-urban--religious--landscapes-in-the-modern-era>

Please submit your paper proposals of up to 450 words online to the EAUH2018 website <https://eauh2018.ccmgs.it/users/> (prior registration is required)

Deadline for paper proposals submission: October 5, 2017

Notification of paper acceptance: December 1, 2017

Further information about the conference: <https://eauh2018.ccmgs.it/>