

## **Workshop 68**

### **Sacralising Urban Space**

Convenors:

**Nicholas Harney, University of Western Australia**

[nharney@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:nharney@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)

**Karsten Pærregaard, University of Copenhagen**

[karsten.paerregaard@anthro.ku.dk](mailto:karsten.paerregaard@anthro.ku.dk)

**Pnina Werbner, University of Keele**

[p.werbner@keele.ac.uk](mailto:p.werbner@keele.ac.uk)

This session examines the processes, politics and practices associated with sacralising urban space in plural cities. The term plural city conjures up an urban imaginary of immigrant quarters and ethnic enclaves. The visibility of ethnic restaurants, commercial strips and vernacular architecture provides material grist for exoticising processes in contemporary cities and evidence for multicultural advocates of the benefits of diversity for the consumer desires of an urban bourgeoisie and the enhanced economic strength of the city. These structures also calibrate degrees of exclusion and inclusion by their spatial arrangements within the urban terrain. Another form of visibility either in its periodic form exhibited by processions linked to religious calendars or its monumentalising form in the foundation of sacred places of worship intensifies these reactions to and processes associated with difference in the urban landscape. How do we consider the sacred city ^ Catholic and Pentecostal religious processions, Sufi cult practices, and sacred rites of passage? The liberal modernist desire for orderly, secular and homogenized urban landscapes is disrupted by the dramatic presence and lived practices of migrants enmeshed in transnational practices and the sacred arena of the diasporic public sphere. By performing in and acting on urban space migrant sacralising practices subvert the singular modernist narrative and force researchers to consider the translocal and diasporic imaginary that animate these sacred activities. What effect do the specific features of urban space have on collective practices of religiosity? What are the processes involved in making urban space sacred? How does the sacralising of urban space intersect with other processes such as racialisation, commodification and aestheticisation? How might we consider the influence of diasporic connections, debates and imaginaries on the sacralising of urban space?

### **Church, Mosque and Nation in Scout Participation in Urban Religious Processions in the Israeli-Occupied Territories**

Glenn Bowman, University of Kent

[glb@kent.ac.uk](mailto:glb@kent.ac.uk)

From the period of the British Mandate to the time of the First Palestinian Intifada there was a close relationship between

Scout troops and urban religious processions. While initially this manifested a public will to be involved in ceremonial sacralisations of city spaces, after 1967 Israeli laws forbidding collective activities by Palestinians unless under the supervision of religious institutions meant that Scout activities, while nominally religious, were simultaneously covert expressions of Palestinian nationalist sentiments. This paper, based on the author's interviews with scouts and with religious authorities, will examine respective interpretations of the significance of urban processions and of the scout's roles in them. It will particularly attend to a process of disembedding which took place in the mid-eighties in the lead up to the first Intifada which led to increased collaboration between the scout movements patronised by various churches and by the mosques and eventually to the generation of (illegal) urban processions, based on religious forms but organised as political demonstrations. During the first Intifada the scout movement disappeared, with many of its members going underground to take part in activities against the occupation. The paper will close with attention to the re-emergence of the scouts in the period after Oslo, and will look at their role in articulating distinct communal identities in a period of apparent peace.

### **Matonge Fresco or the Ethics of the Public Display in an African Neighbourhood of Brussels**

Adina Ionescu-Muscel, Free University of Brussels  
[adina.ionescu@freshfields.com](mailto:adina.ionescu@freshfields.com)

The "Matonge fresco" was inaugurated during the 2001 annual "kermeze de quartier" in the African neighbourhood of Brussels, Matonge. The popular painter of Kinshasa, Chéri Samba, was invited a half a year prior to the public event to conceive a painting inspired by the hectic life of the neighbourhood. The painting was enlarged, printed on a tarpaulin, hanged on a shop's facade at the presumed entry into the African neighbourhood and became the "Matonge fresco".

Though the Matonge neighbourhood is not mentioned into the official administrative records, the City Hall argued that the location chosen to display the fresco doesn't belong to Matonge, thus it wouldn't be an appropriated public space to receive an African painting.

The primary question of our paper is how an artistic creation is converted both by the African community and the Belgian authorities into an "ethnic label". Elements as the analysis of the painting and the semiotic inquiry of the discourses that constructed its public and political meanings will provide the necessary components for an answer. Furthermore, we analyse the more complex problem of the ethics of public display and the "visibly correct" undertone of the aesthetics criteria that assess the artistic event of Matonge fresco.

### **Sacralising Hotels: Religious Encounters in Tenerife, Spain**

Eva Evers Rosander, University of Uppsala

[Eva.Evers-Rosander@teol.uu.se](mailto:Eva.Evers-Rosander@teol.uu.se)

My case is about Mourid (a Senegalese Sufi order) migrants in Madrid and Tenerife, Spain and the travelling shaykhs or marabouts who visit the Senegalese Mourids in the diaspora to collect money in exchange for maraboutic prayers and their prestigious presence.

In this paper I will focus on the transient sacredness of the hotels chosen as places for the maraboutic meetings with their disciples. These Western-dominated international and national tourism sites are temporarily transformed into holy centres for transnational religious (Sufi) practices. Thereby spaces are opened up which otherwise, for racial reasons, are closed for Senegalese men and women in Spain.

The hotels are – except when the Mourid marabouts visit them – regarded by the Senegalese Mourids as places to be avoided because of their Western and secular character. In this translocal setting, it is the bodily presence of the marabout which sacralises the hotel, not the space per se. The maraboutic charisma and blessing (wolof: barke) is present in his physical appearance; it comes and it goes with the shaykh. Parallels between the use of hotels and multipurpose locations such as stadiums can be drawn, in contrast to holy and unipurpose places like churches, where the architecture and the religious paraphernalia have a religious value of its own.

### **Good Friday, Good Espresso and the Inscription of Urban Space by Italians in Toronto**

Nicholas Harney, University of Western Australia  
[nharney@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:nharney@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)

This paper considers the interplay of discourses about religiosity, ethnicity, community and objectification that animate the central religious procession among Italians in Toronto. The Good Friday procession in the heart of the older post-World War II Italian settlement in the urban core has become a public media event that transcends the sacred to engage the discourse about multiculturalism and difference in urban space. As the single most important procession in the Catholic religious cycle it receives considerable attention. Italian immigrants from the United States and across Canada make the pilgrimage to Toronto for the procession. The visibility of Italians in Toronto's cityspace through restaurants, commercial strips and vernacular architecture are the most obvious material manifestations of Italian presence in the city and cater to the consumer desires of an urban bourgeoisie and to processes of reification that occur in cross-ethnic encounters. However, the Good Friday event reveals a more complex process of ethnicisation. I argue it can be interpreted as a site through which the ethnic group is doubly sacralised in space through its formal religiosity and the claims made by the various discourses internal to the community to a foundational place for Italians in the city's multicultural landscape.

