

BEYOND THE MONUMENT THE FATE OF CHURCHES: BECOME HERITAGE OR DISAPPEAR

Call for papers

Ninth International Young Scholars Conference on Heritage
University of Leuven (Belgium) | September 26 to 28, 2013

CHAIRE de recherche du Canada
en patrimoine urbain
ESG UQÀM



KU LEUVEN

Within Western civil society, the abandonment of historical religious traditions, so obvious in North America, has become a matter of increasing consensus: there are fewer churchgoers, fewer priests joining the fold, and fewer monks and nuns living in monasteries and convents. For long, churches and chapels were urban and rural landmarks as well as pivotal places of communal life. Scattered across entire areas in the wake of past lifestyles, these buildings are today threatened because of the increasing deficiency of their economic environment.

“The irrepressible desire to want to preserve everything,” (in the well chosen words of Pierre-Yves Balut), the enthusiasm of some for all-encompassing heritage, or an enduring faith in the eternity of historical monuments can give the illusion that churches are not threatened, that looking after them is a duty, or even that the “best” among them will survive on their own. A simple glance at the reality, however, is enough to convince that this desire to conserve needs to be deeply interrogated, including its financial mechanics and social logic. It is indispensable to learn choosing and providing support, in a context where the legitimacy of heritage preservation cannot be taken for granted. In the very short term, the public action upon which heritage-making still relies for support will no longer be able to sustain increasingly privatized immovable property in a systematic manner and without any form of examination, given the exclusive vocation of such property and its withdrawal from the communal socio-cultural framework. Hence the overall civil future of these buildings must be our focus of consideration.

The *Ninth International Young Scholars Conference on Heritage* intends to discuss heritage-making with respect to churches and chapels of the historical religious traditions by examining from a pragmatic perspective the transition of these buildings from the religious space to the public space of contemporary civil society. It becomes evident that the “historical monument” is limited and unable to satisfy our various heritage desires or, more strikingly, generate the funding that this sort of satisfaction requires. Otherwise, converting redundant places of worship by allotting new uses is unavoidable. From these two evidences, the conference intends examining the ongoing evolution of these churches and chapels in the civil realm as well as looking at transition strategies designed to support this process. The following dimensions will be specifically addressed: public action, including its means and partners; funding methods; means of conversion; and selection criteria at various territorial scales. Property plans and the appropriate or inappropriate character of eventual uses obviously remain crucial issues as well.

We invite young researchers from all disciplines and nations to submit proposals for papers based on case studies originating with projected or completed conversions that will facilitate a discussion of practical methods and cultural and social challenges connected with the fate of churches and chapels in the public space of a contemporary town, village, or region. Proposals for papers (title, a maximum 500-word summary, and a maximum 500-word biographical note) must be sent to Dr. Jean-Sébastien Sauv  (crc-patrimoineurbain@gmail.com) by **April 15, 2013**. All proposals will be evaluated by a scientific committee on the basis of their thematic relevance, the originality of their questioning process and the general quality of their arguments.

Travel costs incurred by young researchers may be partially subsidized, subject to budgetary restrictions. The Canada Research Chair on Urban Heritage and KU Leuven’s Department of Architecture will offer a few travel grants for participants.

||

Each year since 2005, alternating between Quebec and Europe, the *International Young Scholars Conference on Heritage* has invited up-and-coming scientists to present their research concerning various aspects of heritage-making, under the scientific supervision of the Canada Research Chair on Urban Heritage (Prof. Dr. Luc Noppen and Prof. Dr. Lucie K. Morisset, School of Management, Universit  du Qu bec   Montr al) and its partners, PARVI (Interuniversity Research Group Concerning Landscape Representation, the City, and Urban Identities) and the Canadian Forum for Public Research on Heritage. The 2013 edition of the International Young Scholars Conference on Heritage-Making will be held in Leuven, in partnership with the *Department of Architecture, Urbanism and Planning* and the *Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation of the University of Leuven*, under the scientific supervision of Prof. Dr. Thomas Coomans.

Reviewed by an editorial board, numerous contributions emerging from the first seven meetings have been published in collective books; the eighth volume is being prepared for publication, and the papers of this ninth conference are slated to be published in a similar format.

