

***Territories of Faith: Religion, Urban Planning and Demographic Change in Post-War Europe.*** Edited by **Sven Sterken** and **Eva Weyns**. KADOC Studies in Religion, Culture & Society 30. Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2022. 362 pp. 99 b/w images. \$65.00 paper.

*Territories of Faith*, a well-edited and coherent collection of ten case studies, grew out of a 2017 international seminar on the built environment of religion in postwar Europe, convened by the Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society at KU Leuven, Belgium (KADOC). In war-ravaged, rapidly urbanizing Europe, planning for the revitalization of the churches was often a collaborative project undertaken on a large scale by church leaders and secular professionals who believed spiritual well-being was essential to the overall health of individuals and communities. Western European church leaders, state and local officials, and urban planners worked together to find material solutions that would effectively enhance community values and spirit, literally *placing* organized religion in order to “maintain its presence in an increasingly urbanized, individualistic, and mobile society” (12). The ten case studies mostly concern Catholic churches in Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, and Germany, although there are also studies of a Lutheran church in Finland, a garden suburb of Manchester, England, and a mass housing complex in Dublin. The editors have organized the essays into three clusters: “Negotiation,” “Expertise,” and “Authority,” according to the character of the planning and building process. A valuable editors’ introduction contextualizes these studies and argues for the importance of this area of scholarship.

The four chapters in “Negotiation” illustrate the pragmatism and compromise evident in communities in Finland, Manchester, Lyons, and Berlin. Sofia Singler’s chapter on Alvar Aalto’s iconic Ledeuden Risti (1951–1966) in working-class Seinäjoki, Finland, is an especially rich case study of a single church. Singler takes a well-known modernist building and provides a planning context involving multiple entwined forces. The state and the national church were intent on promoting a shared modern, progressive identity—a social democratic welfare state rooted in the church. But the economic and social interests of the local municipality and the ambitions of the church body (hoping to be the center of a new diocese) created a sometimes competing local context. Singler deftly uses both archival sources and the building itself—which was unusually grand and traditionally processional at a time the trend was toward “meekness” in massing and form—in her interpretation of the church. In short, this essay argues convincingly for “how complex the milieu that shaped post-war religious architecture was” (119).

The next section, “Expertise,” draws out the importance of research programs developed by and for the Catholic church in Brussels, Lisbon, and Madrid. Church leaders based their ideas for parish structure and growth on insights from experts in a variety of research fields. Chapter 5, by editors Eva Weyns and Sven Sterken, describes the influence of the Centre de Recherches Socio-Religieuses de Bruxelles, established in 1956, and its 1958 Pastoral Plan for Brussels. Led by Canon Francois Houtart, a priest as well as Marxist sociologist (who studied urban sociology on a Fulbright at the University of Chicago in 1952), the emphasis was on a new type of pastoral unit, based in “rigorous planning” (157). Linking religious apathy to the decline of group affiliation and identity, here and elsewhere Catholics decided that the reigning

sixteenth-century idea of parish as territory was unsuitable for the fragmented, scattered, individualistic, and mobile modern citizen and city. The solution appeared to be a more efficient, effective, and rational distribution of churches and clergy based on an increased number of smaller and simpler parishes designed to meet modern needs.

The final section, "Authority," highlights the role of powerful individuals who promoted a new model of parish life in Milan, Barcelona, and a mass housing development, Ballymun Estate, in Dublin. The Milan case study by Umberto Bordoni, Maria Antonietta Crippa, Davide Fusari, and Ferdinando Zanzottera, is particularly compelling because the chief authority was Cardinal Montini, who became Pope Paul VI in 1963 and closed the Second Vatican Council. Between 1955–1963, the diocese built 123 churches, facilitated by a highly effective partnership Montini formed with prominent businessman Enrico Mattei, whom he appointed head of the *Comitato pro Templi Nuovi* (Committee for New Temples). Even though this process was highly centralized, Montini encouraged wide lay and clergy participation. In contrast to Northern Europe, the Italian church thrived in the postwar decades. Overall, the authors claim, Montini's "modernity emerges in the rationality and efficiency of his aims and in his use of language to motivate others to achieve them; in his awareness of the limited range of action of the Church; in his recognition of contemporary debates about social cultural and economic problems; and in his realistic approach to urban, architectural and artistic themes" (278). This is an apt description of many of the characters and projects described in this book.

Tempered by local conditions, however, the material results of carefully conceived planning initiatives were mixed. In Seinäjoki, Brussels, and Milan, the meeting of planning ideals with practical realities yielded uneven results. Some churches were impressive modern buildings; others were cheap, industrial, serviceable structures. By the mid-1960s, the limited spiritual, social, and material results of these building programs were discouraging to many, and the questions veered sharply from the 1950s question "how can we build churches to structure and support community?" to "do we even need churches at all?" In that latter spirit, the collection's epilogue is a thoughtful theological meditation on "the spatiality of God in modern times" by Kees Doevendans.

The scholarship in this book is energetic and fresh. Chapters include many stories featuring compelling personalities, important organizations, and intriguing buildings, all grounded in excellent archival work. Although the authors focus on institutional thinking and formal planning, each chapter also includes a discussion of specific architecture, and many authors raise preservation and heritage questions about those buildings today. This collection is not only packed with new information, but it is also coherent and conceptually sophisticated. It should spur further, international scholarship on an understudied topic raised by Doevendans in the epilogue: "the way religious principles [have] influenced architecture and urbanism in the twentieth century" (341).

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