

# Walking With Saints: Protection, Devotion and Civic Identity. The role of the landscape.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
May 24–26 2018 • Ronse (Belgium)

For centuries people in Europa and elsewhere have walked the landscape carrying the relics of martyrs and saints. By doing so they altered the significance of the land, be it urban or natural. One of these aspects is the way in which the landscape is transformed by walking it, thus setting paths, reinforcing boundaries, strengthening a community's identity in relation to a certain landscape or setting the pace of life according to the repetition of the traditional acts in time.

## CONFERENCE FOCUS

The conference "Walking with saints: protection, devotion and civic identity" focusses on the origin and evolution of procession rites with a strong link with the landscape. It aims at studying the religious landscape, be it a specific spot or a larger territory, not as the mere spatial background for spiritual activities, but as an active agent in the shaping, transmission and transformation of the spiritual activity of human beings throughout time.

## BROADENING THE PERSPECTIVE

Though the starting point is an activity that is typical for Europe, we are interested in broadening the perspective to non-Christian and non-Western traditions that have an important connection with the landscape in which they are performed.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers are invited that deal with the following themes of the conference:

- Sacralisation of the landscape: alteration, destruction and resistance
- Immaterial heritage: religion and landscape
- Perennial aspect of immaterial heritage
- Immaterial heritage and community building
- Healing saints in their territorial context
- The influence of relics on the landscape and on city boundaries
- Processions, pilgrimages and the senses
- Healing saints, magic and assimilation

The starting point for the Conference, and the reason why it is held in Ronse, is the *Fiertel Ommegang*. This procession (around 1090 A.D.) is yearly held on Trinity Sunday. During a long walk the inhabitants circumscribe the boundaries of the city carrying Saint Hermes's relics for protection and cure.



This 3 day conference will be hosted by the city of Ronse and is part of an assessment of the local *Fiertel* procession as a possible candidate for recognition as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

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