

2 Sessions at XII. AISU Congress: The Crossroad City (Palermo, 10-13 Sep 25)

The XII AISU Congress (Palermo, September 10-13, 2025) is organized by the AISU with the Department of Architecture of the University of Palermo.

CfPs for:

[1] Session " Female Artisans in the construction industry" (7.1)

[2] Session "The European City's Open Spaces in the Cold War Era (1950-1970)" (2.17)

[3] Further CfPs

The crossroad city.

Relations and exchanges, intersections and crossing points in urban realities

Cities have exerted an irresistible force of attraction since antiquity and over the centuries, and still do today, representing themselves as places of aggregation, of exchange, sometimes of permanent settlement but frequently also of passage. In many respects and from different points of view, the city appears on many occasions to be a real crossroad, a place where cultures, religions, power groups and institutions meet but also clash, a theatre of markets and trade, a temporary landing place in the context of broader and more dynamic migratory processes, a place where urban design ideas and realisations are debated and technical confrontations are held; sometimes it is the urban form itself that materialises the concept of crossroads, in foundation or refoundation projects, material or symbolic, of the built environment. The 12th AISU Congress intends to produce investigations and promote debates on the city as a crossroad, in the material but also metaphorical meaning of the term, with a multi-scalar and multi-disciplinary approach and from the multiple points of view that contribute to define urban history studies.

In this sense, the city in the broad sense of a crossroad will be explored in the following wide-ranging macro-sessions conceived as spaces of confrontation and integration between dialoguing disciplines:

1. Cities and migrations; 2. Cities and powers; 3. Cities and city networks, trade, fairs and markets; 4. Multicultural and multireligious cities; 5. Cities and spaces of versatility; 6. Cities at the crossroads of urban design ideas and realisations/ crossroads and predetermined schemes in city design; 7. Cities at the crossroads of experiences, materials and technologies and as places of interchange of technical culture.

[1] Cities as a Crossroads of Crafts: the Role of Women in Artisan Guilds and in European and non-European Construction Sites in the Early Modern Age (7.1)

Coordinators: Nicoletta Marconi (Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata); Cristina Cuneo (Politecnico di Torino); María Elena Díez Jorge (Universidad de Granada)

E-mail: marconi@ing.uniroma.it

In the early modern period, the presence of women in construction sites was anything but occasional. Linked to a deep-rooted custom rooted in the operational needs of early medieval construction sites, female labour represented an indispensable resource for lowering production costs and guaranteeing the necessary labour contingent on public and private construction sites, especially in periods of economic crisis or war. Construction work did not prove to be so heavy that it was impracticable for women, nor did they shy away from the most exhausting tasks, above all because they did not require long apprenticeships or specific specialisations and were therefore perfectly suited to the economic needs of many mothers and daughters. If the history of the city, of architecture and of construction were not – and are not – exclusively male domains, the consistency and type of the contribution of women to the craft and to the building profession – often obliterated from historical, documental and iconographic memory – depended on the interaction with men and on the specific social conveniences of the different eras, as was their progressive removal from construction sites starting from the end of the 18th century. This exclusion was substantially due to ideological and economic objections, and not physiological or genetic reasons. Having recognized the pervasiveness of the female presence in construction sites and in the related artisan industries, this session aims to open a broad and updated transversal comparison - international and interdisciplinary - on work experiences, possible training courses, economic conditions, welfare and remuneration, the role of corporations and social reasons for the contribution made by women to the construction of European cities in the modern age. The aim is therefore to take a new look at women's work, not in the most investigated fields of patronage, architecture and the major arts, but rather in the more humble and multiple branches of craft activities connected to construction sites and their related industries, in various Italian and European contexts - first and foremost Spain and France - but also in other international contexts. Particular attention is paid to the interactions between women's work and the social, political, cultural and religious realities of different urban realities.

Propose a paper:

- name /affiliation / other proponents
- short bio note (max. 500 characters incl. spaces)
- paper title (eng/ital, max. 150 characters)
- abstract (eng/ital, max. 5000 characters incl. spaces)
- short abstract (max. 500 characters incl. spaces)
- 5 Keywords (eng/ital)

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[2] The European City's Open Spaces in the Cold War Era (1950-1970)

Coordinators: Federico Deambrosis (Politecnico di Milano); Laura Montedoro (Politecnico di Milano)

E-mail: federico.deambrosis@polimi.it

After World War II, the design, redefinition and resemantisation of open urban spaces occupied a central

position in architectural and urban planning culture, as well as on the agenda of many politicians and administrators. The monumental dimension of public space, explored by new theorisations during the war years, was charged with new values in the framework of the confrontation between the two superpowers. Thus, The Cold War is understood here in the dual sense of a chronological reference and a condition that pervades design and political discourse, influencing their trajectories. The squares, avenues, streets, and parks designed, built or redefined and configured in these years could, in some cases, be organic to the ideological clash, reflecting at the same time the different modes of interaction, aggregation and consumption of the two opposed systems. In the consolidated cities and their reconstruction and expansion areas, as in the new settlements, discourses and practices around open urban spaces concentrated and superimposed authorities, competencies and models. A system of intersections was articulated between the local, national and international dimensions. It was made of penetrations and (cultural, but also physical and morphological) resistances, which determined continuities and discontinuities with the pre-war period. The session aims to explore the issue of the open urban space as an engine of intersections and exchanges in the circulation and hybridisation of models, in the dialectic between local and external actors, in the overlapping of different levels and scales of authority, in a confrontation between disciplines that also involved history and restoration. The session's subject will be projects, visions and building sites in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. A season in which the dichotomy between the forms of Western reconstruction, marked by a more or less evident Americanism, and the urban spaces of socialist realism became progressively less clear and legible, opening up to new forms of intersection and exchange; nevertheless, the atmosphere of the Western European and Eastern European city remained immediately perceptible and profoundly distinct.

Reflections centred on places and projects, as well as opportunities for debate and confrontation such as competitions, conferences, exhibitions, and writings, will nourish an exploration that will hopefully be broadened and varied in its approaches.

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- 5 Keywords (eng/ital)

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[3] Further CfPs

Further calls for other sessions, along with their respective links, can be accessed through the website of the upcoming conference via the link provided below:

<https://aisuinternational.org/en/palermo-2025-sessioni/>

The official languages of the Congress are Italian, English, Spanish and French.

For information relating to the Congress write to the email address: palermo2025@aisuinternational.net

Reference:

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