

**Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea, Jelle Haemers, Nena Vandeweerd (dir.), *El uso social del espacio en las ciudades medievales del suroeste de Europa, Logroño (Instituto de Estudios Riojanos) 2024 (Ciencias Históricas, 56)*, 484 p., il. col., ISBN 978-84-9960-182-3, EUR 15,00.**

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Building on Jelle Haemers' concluding reflections, which revisit Henri Pirenne's classical tripartite model of medieval society – nobility, clergy, and the emergent citizenry – this volume places itself firmly within the ongoing effort to rethink long-standing frameworks. It seeks not to discard but to refine these new models that emphasize that social groups in medieval Europe interacted far more fluidly than rigid categories suggest. The essays assembled here demonstrate the porosity of boundaries between church, monarchy, nobility, and townspeople, and how these relations were continuously negotiated within urban spaces that were at once physical, symbolic, and deeply social.

The focus on the Western Mediterranean, with case studies from the Iberian Peninsula and Italy, offers an alternative to models derived from Northern Europe. The book originated from the eighteenth Encuentros Internacionales del Medievo de Nájera (24–25 November 2021) and brings together contributions in Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, some of which have been translated into Spanish. This multilingual composition reflects the editors' intention to bridge regional historiographies and encourage comparison across linguistic borders. The introduction by Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea and Nena Vandeweerd (11–18) clearly outlines the thematic direction, while Jelle Haemers' concise conclusion (451–455) effectively brings together the main observations.

The book is divided into five thematic sections: the configuration of urban space; the economic use of space; social practices and gendered spaces; religious institutions; and religious diversity and minorities. Within this structure, the variety of sources and methods is striking as some studies focus on material and spatial evidence, others on fiscal records, literary production, or legal documents. Among the contributions are analyses of the fish trade in Seville, the wine sales of the Mallorcan cathedral, and the urban topography of Aranda de Duero. António Gomes' short but precise overview of the *juderías* in Portugal provides a useful statistical framework and could be an introductory article for any seminar on the topic, while Miguel Ángel Motis Dolader's study of the semantics of Jewish quarters in Aragon successfully combines linguistic, archaeological, and religious approaches. Questions of gender and social practice receive significant attention. One

Mittelalter – Moyen Âge (500–1500)

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contribution analyses »gendered spaces« in late medieval Castilian towns through fifteenth- and sixteenth-century judicial sentences; another examines the long dispute between the *concejo* of Potes and the monastery of Santo Toribio de Liébana. The inclusion of a study on the experience of sound in Castile expands the notion of »social practices« beyond the visual and material to the sensory sphere. Finally, the use of Geographic Information Systems to localize the patrimony of a convent in Barcelona demonstrates the potential of digital tools for spatial history.

Chronologically, most essays focus on the late Middle Ages, though some extend further back. Elisabetta Filippini's »Ridisegnare lo spazio di una città: Cremona e l'ascesa signorile di Buoso da Dovara« examines thirteenth-century developments, while others, such as Pereira's, reach into the early modern period. This broad scope reflects the gradual nature of change in Mediterranean urban contexts, where continuities between medieval and early modern structures were often stronger than in Northern Europe.

Editorially, the volume is well organized and clearly presented. Abstracts are placed at the end rather than the beginning, allowing the introduction to serve as a genuine synthesis. The numerous maps, photographs, and diagrams – many in color – are generally informative, though a few are difficult to read. Considering the book's size and the quality of printing, its price is reasonable and makes it accessible to a wider readership, including students. The decision to include an English-language conclusion, while practical, sits somewhat apart from the Romance-language body of the book.

The collection's greatest strength lies in its diversity, though this also limits its internal coherence. The essays vary in method, scope and length, thus direct comparisons between them are not really possible. Yet this heterogeneity reflects the complexity of the subject and the editors' decision to privilege multiplicity over synthesis. In a certain way each contribution therefore stands on its own, but together they underscore how varied the social uses of space could be across the medieval cities of the Southwest of Europe. The result is not a unified model of urban life but a set of case studies that collectively illustrate the limits of generalization.

*El uso social del espacio en las ciudades medievales del suroeste de Europa* offers a solid contribution to the study of Mediterranean urbanism. Its essays combine empirical depth with methodological openness, touching on issues of economic organization, religious coexistence, gender, and governance. The editors have brought together a body of work that, while uneven in focus, provides valuable insight into how urban space functioned as a stage for negotiation, identity, and social practice in the later Middle Ages. Most scholars will probably open the volume for a single contribution but find themselves lingering over others, drawn in by the variety of themes and approaches. The volume's accessible format and interdisciplinary ambition make it a useful resource for both specialists and advanced students of medieval urban history.



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