

## **Urbanity and Religion in Film**

Iconic urban settings shape cinematic narration in unique ways. Landmarks like the Coliseum, the Forbidden City, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Eiffel Tower, or Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in Mumbai serve not just as background to a film's plot, but play their own part as expressions of cultural values, technical achievements, cultural exchanges and conflicts, or historical constellations. From drama to science fiction, from comedy to animation, from film noir to documentary, and also in productions that challenge any genre categorisation, urban centres are landscapes in which all ki

Cities appear in films and TV series as formations in which multiple places, cultural meanings, and social functions are interlaced, and people and groups interact in manifold ways. They assume symbolic values as a representation of the innermost world of characters, of power relationships, of hopes, desires, or disappointments. They foster cultural and technological progress, destruction and war, fragility of life and the end of the world.

Cinematic cities may refer to existing urban settings, highlighting concrete socio-political formations and dynamics. However, films can also unfold new imaginations of urban formation: utopias as well as dystopias are often developed as cities and explore the question of how urban formation may contribute to the ideal of the good life, or, vice versa, how cities can be transformed into hellish places of destruction and violence. Film depicts cities in dreams and nightmares, in otherworldly travels, as nostalgic reenactments of past communities or projections of futuristic high-tech cityscapes.

These manifold representations of urban phenomena in film are closely entangled with religious communities, institutions, traditions, practices, worldviews, or places. Cities provide the concrete material spaces in which religious institutions may be constructed and practices unfold, which on their part serve to symbolically and affectively enrich the filmic narratives.

In this JRFM issue, we explore the multilayered interactions between urbanity and religion in mainstream films, arthouse productions, TV series, or short films. Contributions may focus (among others) on the following topics:

- the role of religious communities and traditions in shaping filmic cities,
- the interrelation of urban and religious places and their functions in film,
- the cinematic representation of the entanglement of urban formations and ritual practices in diverse genres,
- processes of sacralisation of urban places in films, including natural elements within the city (vegetation, animals, water etc.),
- the representation of the tension between transcendent and immanent dimensions in urban practices,
- utopian and dystopian imaginations of urban formation in film in response to human and environmental existential needs and desires,
- the development of new cities and new religious practices in films.

The issue also includes an open section for articles on other topics related to the profile of the JRFM. The deadline for all submissions is **1 October 2026**. Contributions should be between 5,000–6,000 words (including notes and references) and be submitted for double-blind peer-review through the journal homepage, [www.jrfm.eu](http://www.jrfm.eu). We kindly ask authors to register and follow the instructions for submitting contributions. Manuscripts have to be formatted according to the JRFM's [style guide](#). Publication of this issue is scheduled for 15 November 2027. For any questions about the issue or possible contributions, please contact the issue editors: Prof. Dr. Stefanie Knauss ([stefanie.knauss@gmail.com](mailto:stefanie.knauss@gmail.com)) and Prof. Dr. Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati ([pezzoli@lmu.de](mailto:pezzoli@lmu.de)).