

Call for papers

International Conference, European Association for Urban History
Rome, August 29 - September 1, 2018.

Premodern Public Health: Comparing Cities 1250-1750

Deadline for paper proposals (abstract, 300 words): 5 October 2017

Submission form and instructions via <https://eauh2018.ccmgs.it/>

Abstract

This session aims to bring together scholars engaged in research into public health strategies and interventions, and resilience thereto, in late medieval and early modern urban communities. This is a dynamic area of research, which is revealing the myriad of ways in which urban public health policies and practices aimed at creating healthier environments. In particular, a consideration of preventive rather than simply curative measures has revealed new spaces of medical practice, including streets, homes and workplaces alongside large civic healthcare institutions, as well as broader communities of practitioners. Until recently, medical and environmental history's main focus steered towards post-plague epidemiology, the development of humoral theory, or hospital institutions offering physical and spiritual care. Social and medical historians, together with archaeologists, are, however, increasingly engaging in interdisciplinary research into preventative health measures directed at and/or implemented by an urban public.

Crossing geographical, disciplinary, and linguistic boundaries, this session aims to further increase understanding of how late medieval and early modern urban governments attempted to regulate urban public health through statutes and bye-laws, policed by officials and prosecuted by the judiciary, as well as responses thereto from industries, guilds, brotherhoods, communities and individuals. These dynamics of communication and contestation will be carefully situated within the built environments they helped to shape.

We would like to invite papers addressing attitudes towards, resistance against and negotiations over health, sanitation, and socio-religious conceptions of purity and cleanliness within various urban environments. This session encourages the submission of papers that adopt a comparative perspective by incorporating multiple urban contexts, agents or case studies, and are expanding a traditional focus on prescriptive and theoretical texts in order to include documents and instruments of practice, to offer an emic perspective of health as a culturally contingent experience.

Key themes and questions

- How did urban authorities and organizations attempt to regulate sanitation and prosecute offenders?
- What were the implications for preventing disease and limiting its spread at a population level?
- What kinds of bodies, organizations, and individuals played a part in addressing such challenges and how, if at all, did they interact?
- What were the ramifications of these efforts in terms of the built environment, from private dwellings to civic architecture?