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The Birth of the Metropolis

Urban Spaces and Social Life in Medieval Paris

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Between 1150 and 1350, Paris grew from a mid-sized episcopal see in Europe to the largest metropolis on the continent. The population rose during these two centuries from approximately 30,000 to over 250,000 inhabitants. The causes and consequences of this demographic explosion are thoroughly examined for the first time in this book by Jörg Oberste.

As it turns out, the management of urban space is key to understanding one of the most dynamic processes of urbanisation in pre-modern Europe: Who decides on the new construction of streets, squares, and houses? From whence does the multitude of new inhabitants come? What are the consequences of this massive wave of immigration on urban society, the economy, and the keeping of the peace? What kind of self-understanding evolves from the heterogeneous construct of the rapidly growing city, and what kind of external perceptions is late medieval Paris able to create? When does the myth of the “magical city on the Seine” (Heinrich Heine), perpetuated to the present day, come to be born? Oberste’s extensive investigation of the pertinent and wide-ranging medieval sources sheds new light on these and other questions related to the...

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Scholars and students interested in the History of the Middle Ages, Urban History, History of Early Modern Europe, Metropolitan Studies, French History; also interested Intellectuals in Europe, UK and US (it’s Paris).

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Umfang: xii, 288 pp.

Sprache: Englisch

Fachgebiete: [Architektur](#),
[Kunstgeschichte](#), [Geschichte des Mittelalters](#), [Geschichte](#),
[Sozialgeschichte](#), [Geschichte](#),
[Migrationsgeschichte](#),
[Geschichte](#)

Verlag: Brill

Reihe:

[Brill Studies in Architectural and Urban History](#), Band: 1

E-Book (PDF)

Erscheinungstermin: 11 Oct 2021

ISBN: 978-90-04-46841-2

Verkaufspreis

net 118,00 € / USD 142,00 \$

Festeinband

Erscheinungstermin: 01 Oct 2021

ISBN: 978-90-04-46528-2

Verkaufspreis

net 118,00 € / USD 142,00 \$

Order information: Order online at brill.com

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Submission information: brill.com/authors

Titles published by Ferdinand Schöningh, Wilhelm Fink and mentis:
+49 (0)7154 1327 10 | brill@brocom.de

