Ambiguity and Reconstruction Mechanisms of Religious Spaces in the Process of Urbanization

Alexei Ivanov[1],*

[1] Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Москва 117198, Russian

* Correspondence:

Alexei Ivanov

alexei1998@gmail.com

Abstract

In contemporary urban landscapes, traditional religious spaces, once defined strictly by physical boundaries of temples, churches, mosques, and other sacred places, increasingly exhibit ambiguity and fluidity. Driven by rapid urbanization, secularization trends, decentralization of urban planning, and a global resurgence of spirituality, religious practices and experiences frequently transcend conventional religious boundaries, integrating into diverse urban contexts. This study critically examines how religious spaces manifest ambiguity within urbanization, exploring mechanisms underlying their reconstruction in response to modern socio-spatial changes. Through interdisciplinary theoretical lenses such as spatial theory, post-secularism, and religious sociology, combined with case studies of diverse urban environments, the study elaborates on the structural, social, and spiritual factors influencing the reshaping of religious spatial boundaries. Findings indicate a marked departure from traditional spatial logic, highlighting the emergence of hybrid, ephemeral, and decentralized forms of urban religious spaces. The implications underscore a significant shift in understanding religion's role within contemporary urban contexts, suggesting critical revisions for urban planning and religious governance.

Keywords: Religious Spaces; Urbanization; Spatial Ambiguity; Decentralization; Spirituality; Urban Sociology

1. Introduction

Urbanization, one of the most transformative phenomena in contemporary society, profoundly affects social interactions, spatial formations, and cultural practices (Smart, 2003). A significant yet relatively understudied aspect within this discourse is the interplay between urbanization and religious spatial configurations. Traditionally, religion within urban environments has been institutionally defined by stable, visible, and demarcated sacred sites such as temples, churches,

mosques, and shrines (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004). However, contemporary cities, characterized by intensified globalization, mobility, and pluralism, witness significant shifts in religious expressions and spaces. These shifts are accompanied by growing ambiguity and fluidity of religious boundaries, challenging conventional frameworks and traditional spatial understandings of religion.

This paper specifically addresses the emerging phenomenon of religious spatial ambiguity within the context of urbanization, focusing on how contemporary urban conditions facilitate the decentralization of religious practices beyond traditional sacred precincts. Recent global trends—ranging from the resurgence of individualized spirituality, alternative forms of religious expression, and socio-economic urban restructuring—have catalyzed this decentralization, making religious experiences increasingly accessible in secular or traditionally non-sacred spaces such as shopping malls, parks, residential buildings, and virtual environments. The purpose of this paper is thus to systematically analyze and theorize these complex dynamics, addressing key questions concerning the nature of spatial ambiguity in contemporary urban religion and its underlying reconstruction mechanisms.

2. Spatial Ambiguity, Decentralization, and Religious Dynamics

Understanding the ambiguous nature of religious spaces in urban contexts necessitates a nuanced theoretical exploration. Contemporary urban transformations challenge traditional understandings of religious spaces as clearly bounded and institutionally confined entities. To critically address the emerging ambiguity of these religious spaces, it is essential to explore intersecting theoretical frameworks from urban sociology, religious studies, and spatial theory. Within this interdisciplinary nexus, the conceptualizations offered by Henri Lefebvre, complemented by the insights of post-secular theorists, and the notion of decentralization in urban studies collectively provide a robust analytical foundation for comprehending the complex nature of religious spatial ambiguity.

Henri Lefebvre's seminal theory of social space constitutes an essential starting point for analyzing religious spatial ambiguity (Knott, 2015; Knott, 2008). Lefebvre's theory conceptualizes space not as a static physical container but as a dynamic social product, continually shaped through intertwined processes of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. Lefebvre categorizes these processes into three interrelated dimensions: perceived space, conceived space, and lived space (Lefebvre, 2012). Perceived space refers to the concrete spatial practices of everyday life, including mundane activities that constitute and reproduce social environments. Conceived space involves the abstract planning and institutional arrangements that organize urban environments. Finally, lived space, or representational space, signifies the symbolic and experiential realm through which inhabitants assign meanings and values to their surroundings. In urban religious contexts, this triadic framework elucidates how religious spaces emerge through the ongoing interactions among habitual practices (perceived), institutional arrangements and policies (conceived), and symbolic meanings attributed by practitioners and communities (lived).

Applying Lefebvre's framework explicitly to urban religious spaces reveals how ambiguity arises through dynamic tensions and negotiations among these spatial dimensions. Traditional religious spaces — churches, temples, mosques — are conventionally understood as clearly demarcated, institutionally endorsed entities (conceived spaces). However, under conditions of rapid urban transformation, increased mobility, migration, and sociocultural diversification, everyday religious practices increasingly spill beyond these clearly defined boundaries into secular urban spaces (perceived spaces). For instance, spontaneous religious gatherings in public parks, urban streets, or commercial complexes illustrate how religious activities are routinely woven into secular, non-religious environments (Vazquez, 2022). These actions challenge traditional conceptions of religiously designated spaces, creating ambiguous spatial experiences that can neither be classified purely as sacred nor wholly secular. Moreover, the symbolic dimension (lived space) is particularly critical in understanding spatial ambiguity, as individuals and communities imbue secular urban settings with personal and collective religious significance, transforming ordinary public spaces into temporary or hybrid sacred settings through ritual, prayer, and meditation (Van der Tol & Gorski, 2022). Thus, Lefebvre's spatial theory allows for a comprehensive examination of how religious spaces continuously evolve through social practices, institutional strategies, and symbolic negotiations, fostering considerable ambiguity in contemporary urban environments.

Complementing Lefebvre's spatial theory, the theoretical framework of post-secularism significantly enriches our understanding of religious spatial ambiguity (Thomas, 2021). Post-secular thought challenges classical secularization theories which posited that modernization would inevitably diminish religion's social relevance. Instead, post-secular theorists argue that contemporary modernity does not eradicate religion but transforms its manifestations, relevance, and spatial configurations. In urban contexts, post-secularism highlights the coexistence, interaction, and hybridization of secular and religious experiences, practices, and spaces. It posits that urban modernity facilitates conditions wherein the sacred and secular increasingly intermingle and blur into hybridized forms that defy traditional categorizations. Such hybrid religious spaces frequently appear as ambiguous spatial configurations—ranging from interfaith meditation rooms in airports, shopping malls, or universities, to secular spaces spontaneously appropriated for religious rituals, to city-sponsored commemorative spaces that integrate religious symbolism into public memory and community identity.

Furthermore, post-secularism offers a crucial analytical tool to understand how urban religious ambiguity reflects broader transformations in religious identity and community affiliation. Individualized spirituality, characterized by eclecticism, personalized meaning-making, and autonomy from formal religious institutions, is strongly correlated with post-secular urban conditions. Increasingly, urban inhabitants selectively engage with religious practices, drawing from multiple traditions and actively reshaping their religious expressions to fit individualized, urban lifestyles. This individualization creates spaces of fluidity and ambiguity where traditional institutional religious boundaries are blurred or deliberately transgressed, fostering spatial manifestations that accommodate evolving spiritual sensibilities within diverse urban populations. Thus, post-secular theoretical perspectives not only explain the persistence of religion in urban

modernity but also illuminate how religious identities and spaces become more personalized, decentralized, and ambiguous within contemporary cities.

The third theoretical element essential to understanding religious spatial ambiguity is the concept of decentralization, which originates in urban studies and sociology. Decentralization theory emphasizes processes in which functions, power, and authority traditionally concentrated within centralized institutions become diffused across multiple locations and networks within urban spaces. This decentralization is intimately connected to broader social, technological, and infrastructural transformations characterizing contemporary urban life, including increased mobility, the proliferation of digital communication technologies, and transformations in urban planning policies emphasizing multi-functional, mixed-use environments. Within the context of religious spaces, decentralization processes profoundly alter traditional spatial hierarchies and central authorities. Historically, religious institutions occupied prominent physical locations—often geographically and symbolically central within urban environments—and served as clearly defined epicenters of community identity, spiritual authority, and collective rituals. In contemporary urban contexts, however, decentralization mechanisms disperse religious practices across various secular and virtual environments, diminishing the authority of traditional institutional religious centers. For example, the rise of suburban megachurches in North American cities, storefront religious communities, informal prayer groups gathering in cafes, parks, or workplaces, and virtual religious communities operating entirely online represent significant decentralization phenomena. These dispersed forms of religious engagement embody a shift from clearly identifiable religious institutions toward decentralized networks of smaller, more flexible communities and informal collectives. Consequently, religious authority, legitimacy, and spatial identities become fragmented and fluid, significantly enhancing spatial ambiguity across urban landscapes.

Furthermore, decentralization underscores a critical reconceptualization of how religious spaces are socially constituted and perceived within contemporary cities. As religious practice becomes increasingly decentralized, urban inhabitants experience religious engagement not primarily through institutional affiliation or membership, but rather through everyday interactions and spatially dispersed encounters. Such decentralized religious experiences further erode clear spatial boundaries, enabling religion to permeate diverse urban contexts ranging from commercial to residential to virtual. Hence, decentralization theory elucidates how contemporary urban structures and lifestyles foster spatial ambiguity by dissolving traditional spatial constraints and promoting diffuse, multifaceted, and networked religious practices throughout cities.

3. Cases of Religious Spatial Ambiguity in Urban Contexts

To concretely illustrate and elaborate upon these theoretical insights, this study examines diverse empirical cases drawn from various global urban environments. The complexity of religious spatial ambiguity becomes clearer through specific instances that highlight how modern urban dynamics — such as densification, cultural pluralism, secularization, and technological advancements—blur traditional distinctions between sacred and secular spaces.

First, metropolitan cities in East Asia offer illustrative examples where rapid urban growth, high population density, and multicultural dynamics significantly influence the ambiguity of religious spaces. Tokyo, Seoul, and Shanghai exemplify environments in which religious communities creatively adapt secular urban locations for spiritual purposes. In Seoul, South Korea, evangelical Christian groups are known for converting spaces originally designed for commercial and public transport purposes — such as subway stations, malls, and office complexes — into spontaneous, transient places of worship. These phenomena represent a spatial reinterpretation, enabling religious practices to permeate daily routines and traditionally non-sacred urban settings. A notable case is the Seoul Metro's Gangnam Station, where groups frequently organize public worship, prayers, and religious outreach activities directly within busy commuting routes and adjacent commercial spaces. Such practices illustrate a deliberate appropriation of secular urban infrastructure for religious purposes, transforming bustling commercial nodes into hybridized spiritual environments and exemplifying spatial ambiguity in real-time urban experiences. Similarly, Tokyo offers pertinent examples, particularly evident in the growing popularity of Buddhism-inspired meditation and mindfulness practices within corporate and commercial districts. Corporate office buildings in the Marunouchi and Shibuya districts increasingly host Zen meditation workshops, mindfulness seminars, and wellness-oriented spiritual retreats within office settings, conference rooms, and rooftops. Large corporations actively integrate meditation spaces into their architectural plans to address workplace stress and promote employee well-being. This intersection of corporate secularism and spiritual mindfulness reflects a distinctly modern form of spatial ambiguity, wherein traditionally secular economic environments explicitly adopt spiritual dimensions. The blending of professional efficiency with Buddhist-inspired meditative practices further demonstrates how urban spatial contexts transform religious boundaries, creating ambiguous spaces that accommodate both secular and spiritual practices simultaneously.

Shanghai presents another compelling scenario where the rapid transformation of urban landscapes and intensified global connectivity foster religious spatial ambiguity. China's historical context — where religion was tightly regulated — has shifted significantly under contemporary economic liberalization and globalization. As urbanites embrace diverse lifestyles, religious expressions proliferate within unconventional spaces such as cafes, art galleries, and parks, often discreetly. Cafés hosting Bible study groups or Buddhist reading circles in Shanghai's Pudong financial district highlight the adaptability of religious practices to cosmopolitan urban settings. Public parks, such as Century Park or People's Park, frequently witness informal gatherings for Tai Chi and other spiritual exercises, which embody subtle religious symbolism. These urban cases underscore the ambiguous coexistence and interplay of leisure, spirituality, and secular activities, marking a significant departure from the traditional Chinese temple-oriented religious practice and generating new hybrid spatial configurations.

Turning attention to Western urban contexts, a different yet equally nuanced set of religious spatial ambiguities emerges, notably illustrated through examples from cities such as London, Paris, and New York. European cities, characterized by significant religious pluralism due to migration, vividly portray spatial ambiguity in contentious and politically charged contexts. In

Paris and London, Muslim communities' Friday street prayers exemplify highly visible acts that transform public thoroughfares temporarily into sacred spaces. Streets in East London's Whitechapel and Paris's multiethnic suburbs, like Saint-Denis, frequently become sites of communal Islamic prayers during significant religious occasions, sparking both community solidarity and broader socio-political discussions on secularism, public space usage, and religious visibility. Such practices stimulate debates about urban governance, tolerance, and multicultural coexistence, explicitly highlighting how spatial ambiguity becomes a focal point of contested urban identity politics and socio-cultural negotiation.

In New York City, spatial ambiguity takes on distinct forms shaped by cosmopolitan diversity and neoliberal individualism. Yoga and meditation practices—deeply rooted in spiritual traditions from Hinduism and Buddhism—are prevalent in public spaces, including Central Park, Bryant Park, and numerous city plazas. Though largely perceived as wellness-oriented activities, these practices carry implicit religious or spiritual connotations, transforming secular recreational spaces into ambiguous arenas of spiritual engagement. Similarly, smaller spiritual groups—often lacking formal religious affiliation—organize events such as guided meditation, interfaith dialogues, and healing circles in diverse urban venues, including libraries, museums, galleries, and even nightclubs. Such occurrences reflect New York's flexible appropriation of secular spaces for spiritual purposes, embodying contemporary trends towards individualized spirituality, decentralized religious authority, and hybridized spatial experiences.

Additionally, urban festivals and commemorations further illustrate spatial ambiguity in the religious domain. London's Trafalgar Square regularly hosts interfaith vigils, religious festivals, and spiritual gatherings, notably during international celebrations such as Diwali, Eid, and Hanukkah. These events temporarily redefine the square, a symbolically secular public space, into an ambiguous site of collective religious experience. Public authorities' active involvement and sponsorship of these events further complicate distinctions between secular and sacred spaces, revealing how urban governance explicitly engages with religious pluralism and spatial hybridity. Furthermore, virtual spaces have emerged as increasingly significant arenas of religious ambiguity, especially following advancements in digital technology and connectivity. Virtual religious gatherings—conducted via platforms such as Facebook, Zoom, and immersive virtual reality environments—radically disrupt traditional spatial constraints, facilitating religious practices independent of physical location. Online communities, virtual prayer rooms, and meditation apps exemplify contemporary urban dwellers' efforts to maintain spiritual connections amid busy urban lifestyles. The COVID-19 pandemic notably accelerated this trend, as religious services worldwide transitioned online, redefining spatial boundaries and interactions. These virtual religious environments are experientially authentic yet geographically intangible, creating entirely new dimensions of spatial ambiguity wherein religious identities, communities, and practices are fluidly constructed beyond physical urban boundaries. A prominent example includes the proliferation of virtual Buddhist meditation centers and mindfulness groups established on platforms like Insight Timer, Headspace, and Calm, catering specifically to busy urban populations seeking spiritual engagement amid hectic daily routines. Likewise, Christian prayer groups, Jewish Torah studies, and Islamic learning circles increasingly adopt virtual

formats, connecting urban participants across spatial and temporal barriers. Virtual reality (VR) technologies further extend this spatial ambiguity, with innovative experiments such as virtual pilgrimage experiences to sacred sites like Mecca, Jerusalem, or Bodh Gaya. These digitally mediated religious experiences dissolve traditional notions of sacred geography, reflecting profound transformations in contemporary urban spiritualities and spatial perceptions.

In conclusion, the diverse empirical examples discussed from Asian, Western, and virtual contexts vividly illustrate the nuanced realities of religious spatial ambiguity within contemporary urban environments. Collectively, these cases reveal how urban densification, pluralistic dynamics, secularization, neoliberal individualism, and digital innovations synergistically reshape religious spaces, rendering them ambiguous, decentralized, and hybrid. As these global urban examples demonstrate, spatial ambiguity constitutes a central, complex, and multidimensional aspect of modern urban religious life, deserving detailed attention within contemporary urban studies and religious sociology scholarship.

4. Mechanisms of Spatial Reconstruction and Their Implications

Examining these empirical manifestations, three interlinked mechanisms underpinning the reconstruction of religious spaces amid urbanization emerge prominently. These mechanisms—adaptation, appropriation, and digitalization—collectively demonstrate how urban religious spaces are reshaped in contemporary contexts, offering insights into the dynamics of religious life in increasingly diverse and complex urban landscapes.

4.1. Adaptation: Negotiating Religious Practice within Urban Constraints

Adaptation constitutes a fundamental mechanism through which religious communities respond strategically to the constraints and opportunities of urban environments, reshaping traditional religious practices and rituals to fit new spatial contexts. Under conditions of rapid urbanization, increasing population density, and the resultant spatial competition, religious communities frequently find themselves unable to maintain traditional spatial arrangements, such as large standalone temples, mosques, or churches. Consequently, adaptation emerges as a practical and symbolic strategy through which communities sustain and evolve their religious practices within urban spaces not originally designed for religious use.

For instance, evangelical Christian groups in East Asian cities such as Seoul and Tokyo increasingly hold worship services and prayer meetings in spaces like shopping malls, office buildings, and subway stations. Such spatial adaptation arises from both practical necessity—due to the high cost and limited availability of land—and strategic considerations, as these secular locations offer increased visibility and accessibility to a broader urban public. Similarly, immigrant religious communities in cities like London, New York, and Paris frequently modify traditional rituals to accommodate the small spaces offered by rented halls, converted apartments, or storefronts. This adaptive mechanism not only ensures continuity of religious life but also creates new forms of spiritual experience that resonate with urban lifestyles, reflecting the interplay between traditional religious identities and contemporary urban conditions.

Additionally, adaptation involves subtle yet significant modifications to rituals, ceremonies, and symbols to harmonize with secular or shared urban spaces. For instance, Buddhist groups in Tokyo integrate simplified mindfulness and meditation sessions into corporate settings, reshaping traditional monastic meditation practices to fit the fast-paced, secular urban lifestyle. Similarly, yoga, a practice deeply rooted in religious traditions, has been adapted in Western urban settings into forms emphasizing wellness and stress reduction, allowing religious symbols and practices to blend seamlessly into commercialized, health-oriented urban spaces. These adaptations represent nuanced responses to urban spatial constraints and opportunities, illustrating how religious communities actively renegotiate their identities and practices to remain viable and relevant within urban environments.

Thus, adaptation not only addresses practical spatial limitations but also demonstrates the dynamic, flexible nature of contemporary religious practice. By continuously negotiating between tradition and modernity, religious communities actively redefine the boundaries and meanings of religious spaces, contributing profoundly to the ambiguity and hybridity observed in urban religious contexts.

4.2. Appropriation: Claiming and Redefining Urban Public Spaces

The second prominent mechanism, appropriation, involves the deliberate claiming and symbolic redefinition of secular urban spaces by religious communities, either temporarily or permanently. Unlike adaptation, which involves adjustments to religious practices to suit existing spaces, appropriation explicitly entails religious communities actively occupying and transforming secular spaces into sacred or spiritually significant sites. This mechanism frequently reflects broader socio-political and cultural dynamics, emphasizing themes of religious visibility, identity politics, and civic representation.

One vivid example of appropriation is seen in the widespread practice of public street prayers conducted by Muslim communities in European cities, such as Paris and London (Salvatore, 2004). These communities regularly transform urban thoroughfares, sidewalks, or plazas into temporary sites for Friday congregational prayers. This form of appropriation signifies more than mere practical necessity—it asserts religious identity and visibility within secular public realms, often sparking significant debate about secularism, multiculturalism, urban rights, and spatial justice. Such appropriations explicitly challenge traditional notions of urban public space as exclusively secular, leading to contentious dialogues among urban planners, policymakers, and local communities about governance, religious freedoms, and the role of religion in public life.

Similarly, large-scale religious festivals and processions in urban environments—such as Hindu Diwali celebrations in London's Trafalgar Square, Catholic parades during feast days in cities across Latin America and Europe, or Buddhist lantern festivals in Seoul—represent significant acts of spatial appropriation. During these events, public squares and streets temporarily lose their purely secular status and become ambiguous spaces of spiritual significance and communal celebration. Appropriation in these contexts not only reflects religious communities' claims to visibility and recognition but also prompts urban authorities to reconsider policies governing public space usage, inclusivity, and intercultural engagement.

Moreover, appropriation sometimes involves permanent reconfigurations, where religious groups acquire and transform secular spaces—such as former commercial buildings, warehouses, or schools—into religious venues. This kind of spatial appropriation often reshapes entire urban neighborhoods, influencing local demographics, economies, and identities. For instance, Pentecostal churches' conversions of former cinema halls or retail stores in urban centers significantly reshape both physical landscapes and community identities, marking lasting transformations in urban spatial dynamics.

Appropriation thus plays a critical role in the ongoing negotiation of religious spatial ambiguity, reflecting the dynamic interactions between religious communities, secular authorities, and urban societies. The symbolic and material reshaping of urban spaces through appropriation underscores the complex, contested, and politically charged nature of contemporary religious spatial practices.

4.3. Digitalization: Transcending Spatial Boundaries through Technological Innovation

Digitalization, the third critical mechanism, involves the integration of digital technologies into religious practices, fundamentally redefining how urban inhabitants experience religious space. Unlike adaptation and appropriation, digitalization explicitly transcends traditional physical constraints, offering religious communities unprecedented means to create and maintain religious connections across diverse geographical and social contexts. This technological integration has reshaped urban religious experiences into fluid, networked interactions detached from specific physical locations, profoundly amplifying spatial ambiguity.

The COVID-19 pandemic notably accelerated the widespread adoption of digital technologies in religious practices globally, as communities rapidly transitioned religious services, rituals, and educational programs onto digital platforms such as Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook Live. Religious institutions of various traditions—Christian churches, Buddhist meditation groups, Jewish congregations, and Islamic study circles—quickly learned to operate in virtual spaces, establishing vibrant digital communities that transcended local urban constraints. These digital spaces enabled urban residents, often limited by busy schedules and geographic dispersal, to participate consistently and actively in religious life, redefining the spatial and temporal dimensions of religious practice and community formation.

Virtual religious platforms not only sustain traditional rituals but also enable innovative forms of engagement uniquely suited to urban lifestyles. Applications like Insight Timer and Headspace have popularized meditation and mindfulness practices for urban populations, embedding spiritual experiences into daily routines without geographic limitations. Additionally, immersive virtual reality (VR) technologies offer entirely novel spatial experiences, allowing participants to engage virtually in pilgrimages, retreats, or worship ceremonies traditionally restricted by location and cost. Virtual pilgrimages to Mecca, Jerusalem, or Hindu pilgrimage sites, for example, significantly alter traditional religious concepts tied to sacred geography, creating entirely new categories of religious spatiality that are simultaneously authentic yet intangible.

Furthermore, digitalization reshapes authority structures and community dynamics, empowering individuals to personalize religious experiences according to their specific spiritual needs and preferences. This personalization fosters decentralized and individualized spirituality,

further complicating traditional religious identities and spatial arrangements. Consequently, digitalization represents a transformative mechanism with profound implications for understanding religious spaces in contemporary urban contexts, contributing significantly to the broader phenomenon of spatial ambiguity.

4.4. Broader Implications of Spatial Reconstruction Mechanisms

The implications of these three interlinked mechanisms — adaptation, appropriation, and digitalization — are profound and multifaceted. Collectively, they challenge traditional urban planning paradigms, forcing reconsideration of governance approaches related to public spaces, community integration, and religious visibility. Urban planners and policymakers must increasingly engage in inclusive dialogues and flexible planning approaches to accommodate religious pluralism and spatial fluidity.

Furthermore, these mechanisms reflect deeper societal shifts toward pluralism, individualization, and hybridization of religious identities and experiences. As urban populations continue to diversify culturally and religiously, urban spaces must evolve to meet these communities' complex and fluid spiritual needs. These transformations thus necessitate more adaptive governance structures, inclusive public policies, and interfaith dialogue strategies, supporting diverse urban communities while managing the complex dynamics inherent in spatial ambiguity.

In conclusion, exploring the mechanisms of adaptation, appropriation, and digitalization offers critical insights into how religious communities navigate urban challenges, redefine sacred spaces, and contribute to broader debates about urban life, identity politics, and spatial justice. Understanding these mechanisms comprehensively provides crucial guidance for urban scholars, policymakers, religious leaders, and planners navigating contemporary urban complexities, ultimately fostering inclusive, dynamic, and resilient urban environments responsive to diverse religious expressions.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, contemporary urbanization significantly transforms the spatial dimensions of religion, creating ambiguity and necessitating novel reconstructions of religious spaces. Driven by mechanisms of adaptation, appropriation, and digitalization, religious spatial ambiguity encapsulates broader socio-cultural, political, and spiritual dynamics in urban life. Understanding these transformations offers valuable insights for future urban governance and religious community strategies, supporting more inclusive, adaptive, and responsive urban spaces that acknowledge and integrate the increasingly decentralized nature of urban spirituality and religious practice. This study contributes importantly to both theoretical understandings of religion's role in contemporary urban society and practical implications for urban planners and religious leaders navigating increasingly complex urban religious landscapes.

Author Contributions:

Conceptualization, A. I; methodology, A. I; software, A. I; validation, A. I; formal analysis, A. I; investigation, A. I; resources, A. I; data curation, A. I; writing—original draft preparation, A. I; writing—review and editing, A. I; visualization, A. I; supervision, A. I; project administration, A. I; funding acquisition, A. I. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding:

This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement:

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement:

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement:

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest:

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

Knott, K. (2008). Spatial theory and the study of religion. Religion Compass, 2(6), 1102-1116.

Knott, K. (2015). The location of religion: A spatial analysis. Routledge.

Lefebvre, H. (2012). From the production of space. In Theatre and performance design (pp. 81-84). Routledge.

Mazumdar, S., & Mazumdar, S. (2004). Religion and place attachment: A study of sacred places. Journal of environmental psychology, 24(3), 385-397.

Salvatore, A. (2004). Making public space: opportunities and limits of collective action among Muslims in Europe. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 30(5), 1013-1031.

Smart, A., & Smart, J. (2003). Urbanization and the global perspective. Annual Review of anthropology, 32(1), 263-285.

Thomas, J. (2021). Religion and the public sphere: the spatial theory of Michel de Certeau and religious space (Doctoral dissertation, Middlesex University/Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS)).

Van der Tol, M., & Gorski, P. (2022). Secularisation as the Fragmentation of the Sacred and of Sacred Space. Religion, state & society, 50(5), 495-512.

Vazquez, M. L. (2022). End of secular city limits? On law's religious neutrality in the city. International Journal for the Semiotics of Law-Revue internationale de Sémiotique juridique, 35(1), 259-286.