



CALL FOR PAPERS · APPEL À COMMUNICATION

Bells and Carillons of the Belfries

Heritage Laboratories

Dates	15–16 October 2027
Venue	Maison de la Culture de Tournai
Organisation	Société royale d'histoire et d'archéologie de Tournai Association des Cercles francophones d'histoire et d'archéologie de Belgique
Partnership	Ville de Tournai et Maison de la Culture de Tournai
Languages	French · Dutch · English
Duration	20 minutes per paper
Submission	1 March 2027 — beffrois@srhat.be

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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RATIONALE

In the Western world, the bell has long been associated with the religious imagination of church towers, whose peals mark time and the liturgy of the faithful. With the urban renaissance of the late Middle Ages, the emerging communes claimed the **right of the bell** and hung them from a new architectural form: the **belfries**. From the 12th century, belfries and bells became symbols of communal autonomy, used by cities as **mass communication tools** for military, security, administrative and judicial purposes. From the end of the Middle Ages, the installation of multi-bell devices — the **carillons** — further embedded belfries in the urban soundscape and the daily life of their inhabitants.

Despite the political, social, economic and cultural changes since the revolutionary period, urban culture remains intrinsically linked to these two founding elements of the identity of many towns in northern France and Belgium. This is attested by the recognition of 56 belfries on the **UNESCO World Heritage List** (1999 and 2005), and the selection in 2014 of carillon culture on the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

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By situating the subject within a **cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary perspective** — history, archaeology, art history, musicology, folklore — and addressing it over the very long term (12th–21th centuries), this study day aims to take stock of the latest research in **campanology** and belfry studies.

It places particular emphasis on the role of belfries and civic bells as **privileged heritage laboratories**. As crucibles of experimentation in **urban making**, at the crossroads of multifaceted heritage — tangible and intangible, movable and immovable — continuously reappropriated and reinvented, they bring into dialogue the notions of **conservation/transmission** and **renewal** of heritage embedded in urban society.

PROPOSED THEMES (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

The Making of Bells

Founders and foundries · Typologies and manufacturing techniques · Christening, blessing and inauguration · Patrons and commissioners · Bell epigraphy and decoration · Maintenance

A Monument for the Bells

History, archaeology and architecture of belfries · Typologies and techniques of timber frames · Coexistence of bell-ringing with other functions · Master masons, roofers and carpenters · Belfries in the urban landscape · Towns and localities without a belfry

Uses and Functions

Multifaceted uses of civic bells from the Middle Ages to the present · Coexistence or conflict with religious bells · Bell rights · Capture, loss and theft of bells · Regulation and codification of bell-ringing · The silence of the bells

Reception, Heritagisation and Valorisation

Inventories, classifications and protection measures · Campanological studies and historiography · Visual culture: iconography, popular and scholarly imagery, toponymy · Symbolism and appropriation · Folklore · Tourism valorisation · Conservation and restoration

Urban Sound Culture

From bell-ringing to musical instrument · Techniques, variations and innovations · Place in the urban soundscape · Bell-ringers and carillonneurs: profession, training, status · Carillon practice: teaching, competitions, automation · Musical creation: repertoires, hybridisation, dissemination

Submission Guidelines

Deadline: 1^{er} March 2027 | **Response:** by 30 April 2027 at the latest

Contact: beffrois@srhat.be

Elements to submit (in French)

- Title of the paper
- Abstract (maximum 1,000 characters including spaces)
- Connection to proposed themes (optional)
- Author biography and main publications (maximum 1,000 characters)
- Language of presentation (French, Dutch or English)

