

Religious Guides to Urbanity

Veranstalter: Martin Christ, Emiliano Rubens Uricuoli, Max-Weber-Kolleg für kultur- und sozialwissenschaftliche Studien der Universität Erfurt

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In line with the goals of the research group „Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations,“ (DFG, FOR 2779) the focus of the workshop wrestled with ideas and the logic of how religion regulated and influenced urban life, and vice versa, across different time periods and different geographic locations. The way religious practices influenced urban life, and how urban spaces shaped the practicalities of religion, served as the basis of this conference. Within this framework, certain texts addressing or exposing religion, so-called guides, directed the basis of urban culture across time and space. Analysing these guides, and how they intended to create a „safe urban life,“ formed the basis of this conference.

MARTIN CHRIST (Erfurt) opened the conference by explaining the aim of this workshop, namely to show how cities in different geographic areas, mostly the Mediterranean, central Europe, and South Asia, were influenced by religious attempts to organise urbanity through guides across different time periods. Through the use of guides, how did these mutual formations come to fruition? How were these guides treated? How did they change? Utilising a wide array of sources, such as poetry, letters, and treaties, these presentations challenged the extent to which religiously concerned guides influenced urbanity in different geographic areas and a variety of periods.

JÖRG RÜPKE (Erfurt) presented his research about equestrian urbanity and Augustan elegy in the works of Tibullus. He initially discussed challenges to guides by calling upon poems that deal with urban residents in rural spaces. However, because these urbanites practiced and elaborated poetry, their urbanity was not restricted to strictly urban settings. Instead, Rüpke argued that the term „urbane“ would be the appropriate ter-

minology when discussing the ideas of guides to urban living. Even when used in rural spaces, the same ideas were applied to non-urban settings. Urban peoples can still interact with rural spaces, as urbanity is not about the number of inhabitants. Instead, it is about complexities and discourse.

In continuing the conversation about the urbane, EMILIANO RUBENS URCIUOLI (Erfurt) discussed his research about how Christians dealt with secrecy and discretion in the ancient Mediterranean. Using a sociological approach, he reinterpreted the anonymous early Christian text *To Diognetus* to see how urbanites created specific social relationships, while maintaining a level of secrecy. By investigating the cross-class interactions of Christians, Uricuoli attempted to answer how a Christian urban way of life was affected by an urban management of information between people characterised by different amounts and types of reciprocal knowledge.

The next panel dealt with these ideas but placed within the framework of the southern side of the Mediterranean basin. STÉPHANIE BINDER (Bar-Ilan) presented her research about the integration of Jews and Christians in 2nd and 3rd century Carthage. The city was seen as a cosmopolitan space, with many different peoples and their influences contributing to the identity of the city. But she investigates how the monotheistic minorities of Carthage, the Jews and Christians, interacted with the Greco-Roman „pagan“ majority. She showed that the monotheistic people's ideas were challenged by the urban reality, as both Jews and Christians had to learn to co-exist with the „polytheists“ in the public sphere. Binder then asked if this led to the creation of a neutral space, where all the inhabitants had to learn to live close to one another.

Further along the Mediterranean coast, JESSICA VAN 'T WESTEINDE (Bern) discussed imperial interventions during the 431CE Council of Ephesus. She illustrated how the urban space of the city was controlled whilst there was a major international event occurring. But as communication between the delegates and the Emperor transpired, peaceful debate evolved into violent conflict. The powerful ecclesiastical leaders restricted the

boundaries of urban space, creating a spatial eviction. The key themes that she touched on included the rhetoric of urbanity, the debate between civilised vs. uncivilised, the idea of an urban audience, and what comprises urban infrastructure.

In the third panel, REUVEN KIPER-WASSER (Jerusalem) presented his research on the Rabbinic marketplace. Using case studies from multiple narratives, he argued how the marketplace brought different groups together, mainly, the rabbis and the „other.“ While the average marketplace was originally intended for secular reasons, religious actors transformed this space. It changed with the seasons and was used to comply with religious normativity, especially regarding the treatment of the Jews by the Romans. In this way, an ironic self-awareness emerged where the people realised that the „other“ was crucially needed in an urban setting.

In the fourth panel, MICHAEL EHRLICH (Bar-Ilan) asked why Muslims established the city of Ramla in modern-day Israel. It was a common practice for Muslims to transfer capital cities to pre-existing cities, such as the transfer of the Syrian capital of Antioch to Damascus. But why did the Muslim conquerors choose Ramla, when the crossroads city of Lydda was nearby? While reasons may have included strategic or economic considerations, a more religious explanation could be uncovered. The city of Lydda already had Christian and Muslim factions, which was exacerbated by the fact that Lydda was a Christian pilgrimage centre. Instead of having mosques relegated to the periphery of the city, as in Lydda, the mosques were constructed in the city centre of Ramla, putting Islam at its core.

In keeping with the thought of city planning, SARA KELLER (Erfurt) discussed the question of urbanisation in India from the 5th to the 15th centuries. Relying upon the *Vāstu śāstra*, a literary genre that comprises the ideas of Indian architecture, she asked why India was perceived to be resistant to the process of urbanisation. She noted that western-style normative guidelines do not apply to South Asian urban spaces, as corporate groups held most influence in urban life. She also concluded that there is a constant rene-

gotiation of space, since there is no specific *contrat social*, and that the city was the embodiment of religious deities with cosmological thought influencing space.

GIOIA FILOCAMO (Terni/Parma) discussed the role of the Virgin Mary in 15th-century Bologna. Long known as a Marian city, Bologna often used its association with the Virgin Mary to claim municipal autonomy. But Marian devotion can also be found in the corpus of *laude*, or devotional poems. Appearing in more than a quarter of devotional poems, Filocamo investigated the connection between Mary and the commercial sphere, and the field of legal thought. Since Mary appealed to all of the social strata of European cities, these *laudes* aimed to smooth out the differences in the name of civic peace. Moreover, the poems convey Mary's role between heaven and earth.

Moving north, MARTIN CHRIST (Erfurt) explored the *Gute Policey* (good police) in early modern German towns. These policies controlled and regulated almost every aspect of life in urban centres. Focusing on the city of Danzig and the religious elements in the *Policey Ordnungen* (police orders), he revealed information about how the documents spoke to both religious and urban concerns. While focusing on these aspects of the ordinances, Christ argued that the interactions between urban administrators and religious actors ensured that an ideal behaviour of an urban community existed. These same ideas then expressed thoughts on proper governance and the priorities of urban magistrates.

Panel VI turned away from European geographic locations. In her work on *Hisba* handbooks in Ottoman Tunis, NORA LAFI (Berlin) examined how these treatises influenced Tunisian society from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The *Hisba* is a principle concerning all aspects of society: from the functioning of markets, to the regulation of urban space. It served as inspiration, guidance, and framework for a functioning society. Since these handbooks had strong religious preferences, the *Hisba* shows moral principles, the implementation of which can result in the foundation of a civic sphere.

For modern India, QUDSIYA CONTRACTOR (Goa) discussed what it means to be a

Tablighi in the Mumbai slums. The *Tablighi Jama'at* is an 18th century Islamic missionary movement that remains prevalent in India today. Contractor's work focuses on how the modern members negotiate the spiritual world by following the six principles of the *che baaten*. The ideas of being a good and exceptional Muslim have been reinterpreted in the slums of Mumbai. By combining faith with a modern lifestyle, members create a new expression of Islam that emphasises personal virtue, renewed moral order, frugality, and greater social equality. With these ideas, a pragmatic approach to reconcile members to old ideas in a new context emerges.

In moving towards the North American continent, JUDITH THISSEN (Utrecht) presented her research on Sunday laws in turn-of-the-century New York City. Dating back to the time when the Puritans settled what would eventually evolve into the United States, there have been regulations on what people can and cannot do on Sundays. But at the dawn of the 20th century, a new leisure culture emerged in the United States, with many people enjoying the new motion pictures, nickelodeons, and saloon culture. In New York City, it was mostly the Italians and the Jews who operated these entertainment businesses. It was the regulation of these laws by the Anglo-Saxon Protestant elite that tried to halt the business and influence of the „immoral“ Jews and Italians, as they attempted to challenge the „good order“ of the United States.

Finally, VERONIKA EUFINGER (Bochum) discussed her work on urban Catholicism. Following the Second Vatican Council, efforts were undertaken by the Holy See to adjust to the modern world. Eufinger concentrated on the layout of urban religious spaces and how religious meaning has been added to urban spaces, which has led to a production of new religious space. With this expansion, a form of Christian cosmology emerged. The homily of Pope Francis, given on 31 December 2019 in the Vatican Basilica, created a particularly potent representation of urban space.

In his closing remarks, Urciuoli stressed the pragmatic purpose in relation to territorially demarcated sections of the population in the very different „guides“, especially as guides

pertained to the role of religion in urban spaces. These guides serve to explore the motivations behind regulations and the meaning of urbanity, as a way of life, and peaceful coexistence materialises. These sources can also help scholars explore how these guides relate to their space-times, in terms of empires/statehoods/polities and the rise of secularisation. Finally, guides to urbanity attempted to construct utopias as the foundation of cities began. While there were indeed some failed guides, no guide seems to be a counter space (i.e. a heterotopia). Each guide had a purpose and a vision. While there were many different sources in this conference, most of them have the common theme of the construction of a „neutralised space“. Is this a consequence of a shared preference for urbanity as civility/being urbane? Or are we dealing with an actual cross-cultural and -temporal regularity that cities continually produce in order to work and survive as such? And what about the future of guides? As long as there will be cities, there will be guides too. Where will future guides be written? Or, more specifically, which areas of life will future guides regulate?

Conference overview:

Martin Christ, Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli (both Erfurt): Introduction

Panel I

Jörg Rüpke (Erfurt) : An Urban Guide to the Non-Urban (Tibull, Carmina, Book 2)

Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli: Urbane Distances: Christians' Guidelines to Lie, Secrecy, and Discretion

Panel II

Stephanie Binder (Bar-Ilan): The Integration of Jews and Christians into 3rd Century Carthage's Idolatrous Urbanity

Jessica van t'Westeinde (Bern): Controlling Misbehaviour in an Urban Context: Imperial Interventions during the Council of Ephesus 431 CE

Panel III

Reuven Kiperwasser (Jerusalem): Guides to the Rabbinic Market Place

Panel IV

Michael Ehrlich (Bar-Ilan): Why did the Muslims Establish Ramla?

Sara Keller (Erfurt): *Vāstu śāstra-s* as cosmological Guides to an Indian Urbanity (5th–15th Century and Beyond)

Panel V

Gioia Filocamo (Terni/Parma): „Ecco la città tua come a te viene“: Virgin Mary’s Role in the 15th-Century Bolognese *Laude* for the Gallows

Martin Christ (Erfurt): Between Divine Intervention and Urban Authority: The *Gute Policy* in Early Modern German Towns

Panel VI

Nora Lafi (Berlin): Hisba Handbooks in Ottoman Tunis: Religious Guides to Urbanity?

Qudsiya Contractor (Goa): Being a tablighi in a Contemporary Mumbai Slum – Islamic Reformism in the Context of Urbanity

Panel VII

Judith Thissen (Utrecht): Sunday Laws and Shabbat Observance in Urban America

Veronika Eufinger (Bochum): The Pope’s Homily on the Ethics of Urbanity. Jesuanic Socio-spatial Practices as a Model for Crossing Social Space and Exposing Oneself to the other

Closing Discussion

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