

Typologising Cities: Critical Reflections

Veranstalter: Humanities Centre for Advanced Studies/Kollegforschungsgruppe 'Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations' (FOR 2779), Max-Weber-Kolleg, University of Erfurt

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The aim of the *Typologising Cities: Critical Reflections* workshop was to reconstruct where typologisation in urban history came from, what it was intended to achieve, and which relevance it still has for both comparative research on cities and more fine-grained ethnographies and case studies. One starting point is Max Weber's 1921 essay on *The City* and his sociological method of forming ideal types. However, while Weber's methodology has been well influential within the social sciences and history, has the Weberian approach actually been helpful in defining or categorising cities? By tracing the lineage of defining cities, in regions such as medieval India, early modern Germany, and modern Lebanon, the workshop sought to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of assigning a specific category based on certain characteristics. Can city types only be used within a certain geographic region and epoch, and can we use alternatives to accurately compare cities?

EMILIANO RUBENS URCIUOLI (Erfurt) began the workshop by offering a brief introduction, in which he pointed out that, contrary to the usual agenda of the KFG, this workshop would almost exclusively focus on urbanity and rather move religion to the background. While stating that Weber's influence cannot, and should not, be ignored, Urciuoli emphasised that we must test his seminal proposals for appropriately classifying cities on new epistemologies, more differentiated thematic foci, and geographically expanded empirical data.

Starting the conference properly, SUSANNE RAU (Erfurt) proposed a hypothetical question, asking if Weber himself acknowledged the typologising of cities? While the social sciences and the humanities have long assigned different designations

to cities, some of these categories can lose meaning, especially if they turn out to be too historically contingent or region-specific. Rau then gave an overview of the historical origins of the practice of designating cities. She illustrated how cities have often been a space and a means of knowledge production and introduced the main conceptual distinctions of cities. She observed that, while Weber had his theory of the ideal city, whose features combined single phenomena that together created characteristics of a utopia, this type of city simple cannot exist. It can, however, derive from our reality. Moreover, while Weber and other social scientists have often discussed the urban fabric and economic sector of cities, the religious dimension and its relevance to the taxonomic enterprise is generally overlooked in these influential categorisations. What does this lacuna mean for a research group interested in the co-production of religion and urbanity, as well as, in general, for other historians researching cities? And to what extent are these examples from a European perspective applicable to other spatiotemporal contexts?

Taking the workshop into a specific case study from early modern Europe, MARTIN CHRIST (Erfurt) discussed the problems and issues of typologising European cities, specifically Munich and London. While Munich was Catholic, London was Anglican, had a Jewish population, was more heterogeneous and economically complex than Munich. The Wittelsbach dynasty was very influential in Munich in the early modern period. The Wittelsbachs performed rituals in Munich, commissioned a large number of construction projects, and had connections to a large number of churches in the Bavarian capital. This all contributed to Munich being designated as a 'Residenzstadt' since the royal family had an active presence within the city. While the royals were central to the identity of Munich, Christ argued that in London other urban actors and architectural landmarks played a bigger role than the royal family and their buildings. In fact, London and Westminster have long been described as separate cities, with London often being represented as a 'capital and great' city, which further emphasises the difference between cities and royal residences.

While there appears to be a great importance on the term 'Residenzstadt' for Munich, London features a division between royalty and urban life within the city. Therefore, Christ argued for the broadening of the term 'Residenzstadt' to include the court rather than simply the presence of an individual monarch.

In keeping the workshop within the time period 1400-1700, SARA KELLER (Erfurt) presented her research about royal cities in South Asia. Looking specifically at royal cities in Muslim India, she investigated typologisation based on the function and politics of the city. While historians have only considered the different types of Indian cities since the 1990s, Keller argued that the idea of a royal city is more relevant in India because of the historical presence of numerous kingdoms on the Indian subcontinent. Surprisingly, however, for Muslim India, there is a lack of capital cities. This can be related to the nomadic nature of the royal courts at the time and to the fact that attempts to unify India into one kingdom were short-lived. So, how can we define an Indian capital city then? The palace, located in one sector of the city, and the fort, rather standing on the margins thereof, can be a starting point. Another typologising element can be represented by the daily rhythm of the king and the court, while also not forgetting that the city can legitimise the ruler through ceremonies such as coronations, parades, and funeral monuments. This all leads to the embodiment of royal power within an urban space. Perhaps, concluded Keller in agreement with Christ, we should use the term 'court city' instead of 'royal city' to further differentiate that court life could spread to the urban streets of Indian cities.

JUDIT MAJROSSY (Vienna) presented the topic of typologising cities from a medieval East-Central European perspective. After discussing preliminary issues and problems with defining a city in this time period, she noted that 'proto-towns' had been documented due to certain economic, trade, and geographic features. Traditional methods of determining cities' status included their being a centre of rulership, judicial seat, financial or church administration, the number of monasteries and hospitals, the presence of university students, etc. However, Majorossy proposed a

new set of criteria, which included density of the city, the nodal position within larger networks of communication, high accumulation of specialised intellectual and craft skills, urban space as a realm of condensed interaction, social and economic complexity that shows internal cohesion, and the presence of actors and institutions. Given these criteria, the definition of a medieval city in East-Central Europe can still be difficult given the complexity and multifunctionality of these cities. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms and functionality within a regional context can be a valuable investigation in order to assess whether 'practising community' can be a focus for future studies.

JÖRG OBERSTE (Regensburg) then presented his research on the topic of metropolises. While defining a metropolis in pre-industrial Europe has been a thorny issue and still is a matter of debate, a certain consensus has been reached around a few key distinctions such as the significant central function of the city, a high degree of social mobility and diversity, and a potential for innovation. Most recently, new research on metropolises has allowed new potential criteria for the definition of a metropolis. These include the sociological dynamics of cities, which researchers can trace back to the cities of antiquity. When moving forward towards modernity, the metropolis can be connected to the seat of royal and imperial power. By having a city as a seat of immense power, a certain self-awareness can be realised to where 'metropolicity' can be formed: metropolises have consciously created their own self-referential narrative. In this sense, metropolises often make and narrate themselves.

In the last presentation, MARA ALBRECHT (Erfurt) discussed her research on typologies of cities in the Middle East, with a specific focus on Beirut. Albrecht presented her argument for why she disagrees with Weber's view on oriental cities, mostly due to the contemporary lack of sources as well as early Eurocentric, prejudicial theories about non-western cities. Albrecht also discussed the categories 'contested' and 'divided', which are often ascribed to oriental cities. These qualifications can apply to cities

such as Beirut as well as Nicosia, Mostar, Brussels and Belfast. Overall, Albrecht argued, typologising can lead to stereotypes that inherently harm the status of the city. Consequently, Albrecht suggested leveraging religion and urbanity in their mutual determination as a new framework to typologise cities. By focusing on the space-time aspects of urban and religious actors, perhaps a new understanding and better criteria for typologising cities can be achieved.

While the *Typologising Cities: Critical Reflections* workshop generated diverse discussions, much more research needs to be conducted. This workshop provided a platform for the 'Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations' research group to further delve into these important issues. One can easily overlook the different typologies when discussing cities, and this workshop refocused attention to this topic. While typologies have been heavily discussed here, these issues arose again during a second workshop on *Metamorphoses of Urbanities: Grasping Difference* that took place in Erfurt in June 2022.

Conference Overview:

Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli (Erfurt): Introduction

Susanne Rau (Erfurt): Typologising Cities—A Weberian Start

Martin Christ (Erfurt): Kings and Cities: Typologies of Royal Cities in Europe, c. 1400-1700

Sara Keller (Erfurt): Kings and Cities: Typologies of Royal Cities in South Asia, c. 1400-1700

Judit Majorossy (Vienna): Medieval Urbanity and Urban Typology from an East-Central European Perspective

Jörg Oberste (Regensburg): Metropolises. A Special Type in the History of Cities

Mara Albrecht (Erfurt): Typologies of Cities in the Middle East and Beyond. Religion and Urbanity as Criteria for Categorising Cities?

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