Ambivalences of Religion: The Constitutive Tensions Within Religion in Urban Space

The concept of ambivalence - in difference to diffusion, historical duality, development, or progress - takes a syncronic stance and observes tensions and contradictions. It stresses conflict and constitutive ambiguity, bi-polar orders, bivalence at any given moment. The opposition in a religious or urban ambivalence is neither dissolved in good and bad religion, good and bad urbanity nor are such ambivalences seen as ephemeral and transitory. When using such a concept in a research approach, complexity is predicted as a condition for survival of a city or religion rather than a critical state.

As in the case of the urban, further ambivalences that do not just occasionally occur but are constitutive for what is embraced by religion as an academic classification or people’s practices. Aiming at sharpening and perfecting a heuristic grid for the study of the mutual formation of religion and urbanity, the contributors will develop concepts of religion that are mutually constituting each other. As in the case of the urban, further ambivalences that do not just occasionally occur but are constitutive for what is embraced by religion as an academic classification or people’s practices. Aiming at sharpening and perfecting a heuristic grid for the study of the mutual formation of religion and urbanity, the contributors will develop concepts of religion that are mutually constituting each other.

The complexity of urbanity can be seen as constitutive of the ambivalences of the urban as a field of tensions that can be examined in terms of actors, positions, strategies and phenomena. Religion can likewise be described by ambivalence. Religious ambivalences have been described, for instance, by Jonathan Z. Smith with the conceptual pair of locative and utopian, Thomas Tweed as dwelling and crossing and Jörg Rüpke in the concept of the duplicity of religious (and divine) agency mutually constituting each other.

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Programme

Wednesday, 15 November 2023
14:00-14:15 | Welcome and Introduction to the Conference by Jörg Rüpke and Elisa Iori
14:15–14:30 | Urban Ambivalences by Susanne Rau

Panel 1: Ambivalences in Context of Religious Plurality, Encounters, Selfhood (Chair: Elisa Iori)
14:30-15:15 | Birgit Meyer (Utrecht): Making the Religion-Urbanity Nexus from the Interstice
15:15-16:00 | Anne Murphy (Vancouver): Naming Sameness: The Ambivalence of Religious Difference and Identity in Early Modern South Asia
16:00-16:30 | Coffee Break

Panel 2: Ambivalences Within and Beyond the Urban (Chair: Benedikt Brunner)
16:30-17:15 | Emiliano R. Urciuoli (Bologna): Locative, Utopian... and Urban: Ancient Christian Martyrdom as Urban Religious Insight into Incongruity
17:15-18:00 | Anders Klostergaard Petersen (Aarhus): Urban Religion Moving Beyond Urbanity: From Urban Ethnic to Kosmos Trans-Ethnic Types of Religion
19:30 | Dinner

Thursday, 16 November 2023
Panel 3: Multi-dimensional Ambivalences: Materiality and Beyond (Chair: Martin Christ)
9:30-10:15 | Elisa Iori (Erfurt): Material Ambivalences in Early Buddhism
10:15-11:00 | Jörg Rüpke (Erfurt): Religious Ambivalences in the Dimension of Spatiality, Temporality, Materiality, and Sociality
11:00-11:15 | Coffee Break
11:15-12:00 | Volkhard Krech (Bochum): The Religious Semiotization of Physical Space
12:00-13:30 | Break & Lunch

13:30-14:30 | Award ceremony for pupil's prize with Aileen Becker and Simone Wagner
14:30-15:00 | Coffee Break

Panel 4: Contexts of Ambivalence: Nature, Empire, State (Chair: Sara Keller)
15:00-15:45 | Robert Yelle (Munich): Civil Religion and the Ambivalence of the Church-State Relation: A Constitutive Tension for Secularism
15:45-16:30 | Katharina Waldner (Erfurt): The Ambivalence of Empire and the Trauma of (Religious) Intellectuals
16:45-17:30 | Irene Becci (Lausanne): Urban Nature Between Enchantment and Valuation Under the Current Circumstances of Climate Change
19:00 | Dinner

Friday, 17 November 2023
Panel 5: Marginalised Urban Spaces (Chair: Jörg Rüpke)
9:00-9:45 | Marian Burchardt (Leipzig): Religion, Ambivalence and Urban Insecurity in Cape Town’s Urban Fringes
09:45-10:30 | Martin Fuchs (Erfurt): Ambivalence as Condition and Opportunity: Dharavi and the Relationality of Social Space
10:30-10:45 | Coffee Break
10:45-12:45 | Discussion (Elisa Iori & Jörg Rüpke)
13:00-14:00 | Lunch

Organisers
Elisa Iori & Jörg Rüpke

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