

KFG UrbRel (For 2779) | International Workshop | Concept Note

Metamorphoses of Urbanities: Grasping Differences

22-23 June 2022, Venue: Haus Dacheröden, Erfurt

How do we live together in dense urban spaces? This is the big question – in today's urbanised world as well as in historical urban networks. Evidently, people have given very different answers to that question on sunny places and in dark shelters. Ways of living urban lives change quickly across time or groups. This is what our workshop wants to explore.

In the research group's work on the reciprocal formation of religion and urbanity, we have observed how cities change constantly – both on an object level (architecture, institutions, inhabitants, legal framework) and on the level of subjective experience. What also changes within and between cities is how inhabitants and visitors perceive a city's lifestyle and/or socio-religious set-up. For example, attitudes towards urban religious diversity and processes of secularisation are both context specific and open to historical change. So far, we have dealt with urbanity in many guises – reflected in travel reports, monumentalisation, or how specific groups have 'citified' themselves.

Across time, religious and urban agents observe and comment upon different types of urbanity – how life in this city was different to that in another or how a city's urbanity has changed over time. This subjective experience of different urbanities between two cities, within one city over time or between neighbourhoods is our point of departure for the workshop. The subjective recognition of different urbanities – and the comparative impetus inherent in this recognition – also mobilises a diverse set of observations of human appearances, sounds or architecture, to name but a few. This subjectivity also necessitates a reflection on the criteria of comparison, as do the limitations inherent in typologising cities (see our workshop in May 2022).

Subsequent to the May workshop and its concern for how historians typologised cities, in June we want to explore whether urbanities can be typologised – or rather which concepts and approaches are useful for this. We would tentatively argue at this stage that the analysis of transforming urbanities is perhaps less a matter of systematizing synchronic and diachronic comparison. Rather, we are interested in explorations of juxtaposition, resemblance, imitations or contingencies – that is, in case studies combining specific parameters with each other, and engaging with the following research questions:

- Which criteria or markers for differentiating urbanities can be drawn upon?
- Who is observing the differences? How much overlap is there between the perspectives of insiders and outsiders?
- Which terms can be used to qualify these different urbanities? Are these terms reflecting qualitative or quantitative differences? Are perceptions and sensory impressions or rather signs of monumentality or even 'ecological' topics (such as urban climate, air pollution or resilience) referred to in this context?

- How does religion contribute to the metamorphoses of urbanity (inhabitants/emic perspective) and to grasping these metamorphoses (scholarly/etic perspective)?
- How and how much does religious pluralism and/or secularization contribute to the experience of urbanity, to changes in this experience, and to the scholarly perception and misperception thereof? How would one describe the urbanity of a 19th-century Polish *shtetl* or contemporary Peshawar in comparison with that of multireligious metropolises like the imperial Rome or present-day New York?
- How do religious and urban actors (re-) imagine the bygone urbanity of their city?

We welcome papers with comparative ambitions and/or proposing rectifications of received categories more than mere case studies or historiographical overviews. On a micro-level (ego documents), attitudes, atmospheres and aspirations constitute possible avenues of investigation.

The results of this workshop will be published on the open access database Religion and Urbanity online (<https://doi.org/10.1515/urbrel>). For this, we aim to foster projects of co-authorship evolving from the workshop. Participants are expected to pre-circulate their contribution (max. 3 pages, draft versions are accepted) by June 5th.

Recommended literature

Böhme, Gernot. *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*. Berlin: Suhrkamp 2013.

Haug, Anette. "Das Ornamentale und die Produktion von Atmosphäre. Das Beispiel der Domus Aurea". *Antike Bauornamentik. Grenzen und Möglichkeiten ihrer Erforschung*, edited by Johannes Lipps and Dominik Marscek. Wiesbaden: Reichert 2014, 219–239.

Rau, Susanne. "Urbanity (urbanitas, Urbanität, urbanité, urbanità, urbanidad...) — An Essay". *Religion and Urbanity Online*, edited by Jörg Rüpke and Susanne Rau. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1515/urbrel.11276000>. Accessed 2022-03-09.

Van der Veer, Peter. „Introduction: Urban Theory, Asia and Religion". *Handbook of religion and the Asian city. Aspiration and urbanization in the twenty-first century*, edited by Peter van der Veer. Berkely: Univ. of California Press 2015.