



Hilma af Klint "Svanen, nr 17, grupp K/SUW, serie SUW/UW", 1915. Stiftelsen
Hilma af Klints Verk. Photo: Moderna Museet/Albin Dahlström (public domain)

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**UNIVERSITÄT
ERFURT**
Max-Weber-Kolleg

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Ambivalences of Religion
15-17 November 2023 | University of Erfurt

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

The concept of ambivalence - in difference to diffusion, historical dialectics, development, or progress - takes a synchronic stance and observes tensions and contradictions. It stresses conflict and constitutive ambiguity, bi-polar orders, bi-valence 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.

Even a quick glance at research literature demonstrates that cities and religion are characterised by contradictions or tensions. Even synchronously, and even in individual actors' conceptions of urbanity or religion, both are internally complex and charged with tensions, and do not interact as two monoliths.

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.

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 addressing material, socio-spatial, temporal, and power-related issues with a view on religious complexity in general and religious ambivalences in particular. The ultimate aim is to better grasp the entanglement between religion and urbanity and the ways urban and religious practices and ideas can change through the interferences of these internal tensions.

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): Mad ina: Thinking 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 Semeiotization 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

The conference is part of the DFG-funded Centre for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences **Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations** (FOR 2779), based at the Max Weber Centre at the University of Erfurt, Germany.