Social Space and Religious Culture 1300 - 1800

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Under the auspices of the academic network 'Social Sites Öffentliche Räume Lieux d' Échanges', a three-day workshop on 'Social Space and Religious Culture 1300-1800' was hosted by the Technical University of Dresden between 30 November and 2 December 2006. The workshop, the second organised by the network, forms part of its ongoing investigation of the consequences of the 'spatial turn' for early modern studies. Underlying this engagement is a twofold interest: on the one hand, the network seeks to exploit the potential of various spatial approaches to gain and/or re-evaluate historical knowledge; on the other hand, the network aims to recover explicit and implicit uses and understandings of space in past societies. The workshop was co-ordinated by Susanne Rau (History, Dresden), supported by postgraduates Christian Hochmuth and Eric Piltz (History, Dresden) and network facilitator James Brown (History, Warwick), and received generous financial and institutional support from the Leverhulme Trust (UK) and the Sonderforschungsbereich 537 (Dresden) . In the splendid surroundings of the Dresden Blockhaus, an eighteenth-century guardhouse situated on the north bank of the Elbe, a range of established as well as emerging scholars from various European and US universities converged on the multifaceted relationship between space and religion in the late medieval and early modern periods.

After a welcome from the organisers, which included a theoretical introduction by Susanne Rau and a comprehensive thematic overview by Gerd Schwerhoff (History, Dresden) that focused on developments in the historiography of religious space, the first formal session examined 'The Construction and Perception of Religious Space'. In a paper entitled 'The Reformation of Ritual and the Impact on Space', Susan Karant-Nunn (History, Iowa) argued that, rather than undergoing a process of 'desacralisation', Lutheran church interiors in German-speaking lands remained sacred environments that experienced profound and meaningful spatial reconfigurations in line with the transformation of three key rituals (the Eucharist, prea-

ching, and Baptism). Her argument was reinforced by Robert J. Christman (History, Decorah [Iowa]), who in his paper 'Burial, the Bann, and Bodies Exhumed: A Lutheran Concept of Holy Spaces in Early Modern Germany' analysed the figuring of cemeteries as a species of sacred space within reformed dedication sermons. To complement these high church discourses, three case studies demonstrated that this 'aura of sacredness' was also experienced by ordinary worshippers. Vera Isaiasz (History, Berlin) closed the session with a paper entitled 'Umrisse einer lutherischen Architekturtheologie: die Etablierung von Kirchweihen um 1600'. Continuing the critique of the usefulness of 'disenchantment' paradigms for our understanding of Lutheranism, Isaiasz argued on the basis of consecration rites that a distinctive model of sacral architecture developed within Lutheran theology around 1600 that contributed to its 'preserving power' (in terms of adiaphora and the rejection of iconoclasm) and served to distinguish it from other reformed confessions. Explicitly or implicitly in dialogue with current discussions about the nature of confessionalisation, these papers echoed and elaborated Schwerhoff's comments on the problematic quality of many of our transmitted notions of 'desacralisation' and 'secularisation', which are common in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century social theory and the earlier historiography of the Reformation.

The first day's communications were concluded by a well-attended public lecture delivered by Hans-Georg Lippert (Architecture, Dresden) entitled 'Aneignung des Raumes: Der Kölner Dom im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert'. In a lavishly illustrated and entertaining presentation, Lippert outlined the architectural and cultural history of this national 'symbol', especially in terms of its persistent susceptibility to a dazzling variety of 'profane' appropriations even as it was being imaginatively constructed as the lodestone of a new Catholic theocracy; from hospital, stable and warehouse in the revolutionary era, via pedestrianisation in the 1960s to its current status as political rallying point and concert venue. Like the Lutheran spaces discussed earlier in the day, uses of the Cologne cathedral reflect ongoing and historically contingent tensions in notions of sacrality, in this case located in both state and church plans for the cathedral's mise-en-scène and popular spatial perceptions. The first day's papers taken together thus pointed out the complexity of the sacred/profane

divide, which needs to be worked out in each specific setting rather than categorised abstractly.

The second formal session, which opened day two of the workshop, explored lived space at a range of substantive 'Religious Sites'. In a broadening of geographical scope, Doris Behrens-Abouseif (Art & Archaeology, London) provided an elegant analysis of 'The Evolution of the Multifunctional Role of the Mosque in Medieval Egypt'. Echoing the theme of Lippert's paper, Abouseif emphasised their utilisation for a variety of 'non-sacral' purposes (especially as educational institutions). Josef Kaplan (Jewish Studies, Jerusalem) offered a detailed case study of 'The 'New Jerusalem' of the Dutch Sephardim: The Portuguese Synagogue of Amsterdam in the Early Modern Period', established at the heart of the city's Jewish quarter in 1629. He argued that a proliferation of regulations governing conduct within the synagogue and an emphasis on its sanctity reflected this converso group's unique exposure to both Jewish and Christian tradition (because of their separation from communities oriented toward Talmud, their understanding of Jewish practice was focused more on ritual than halakha, and their perception of Christianity was one that emphasized order in ritual). Both architecture and behaviour in the setting were thus designed to earn the respect of the wider Christian community and reify the boundary between sacred and secular realms in ways uncharacteristic of mainstream Judaism. Moving from architecturally-bounded sites to wider urban topographies, Jacques Rossiaud (History, Lyon) offered a paper entitled 'Procession de l'Ascension et paysage religieux à Lyon à l'aube des Temps Modernes'. With special emphasis on its dense processional culture, Rossiaud presented medieval and early modern Lyon as a 'sacred landscape' that, like the church interiors depicted by Karant-Nunn, was constantly remodelled in line with changes in ritual practice. Concluding the session, Wolfgang Kaiser (History, Paris) delivered a paper entitled 'La grotte de Lampedouse: pratiques de neutralisation entre Chrétienté latine et Islam et l'imaginaire d'un troisième lieu en Méditerranée à l'époque moderne', in which he explored the harmonising role of this 'neutral' Mediterranean island in the mediation of Islamo-Christian relations.

After a brief fieldtrip to a present-day religious site, Dresden's remarkable 'New Synagogue' (completed in 2001 on the site occupied by the original Semper synagogue, destroyed in 1938), in which participants discussed the conscious construction and usage of a sacred space as a matter of negotiation not only between members of the Jewish community but also between the community and the city, a third formal session approached 'Religious Space as Conflict Space'. These papers turned more actively to considering specific behaviours in sacrally-designated spaces. In her investigation of 'Konfessionalisierung in simultan genutzten Kirchenräumen der Frühen Neuzeit', Daniela Hacke (History, Zurich) explored the fascinating case of Würenlos, a village in the Swiss confederation whose church was literally 'divided' along confessional lines in 1660 (Catholics were allocated the choir, Protestants the nave). Utilising Martina Löw's concept of 'reciprocity' and emphasizing the role of confessional modes of political argumentation within decision-making, Hacke outlined the conflict potential inherent in simultaneously used church rooms, especially as federal intervention rendered them highly charged arenas of political action. Karsten Igel (History, Osnabrück), in a paper entitled 'Von Belagerung bis Mord: Kirchenräume als Konfliktorte', explored the persistent association between cathedrals, churches and closes and acts of violence. Via two medieval case studies, Igel argued that, rather than representing accidental or spontaneous venues, these environments possessed practical and symbolic associations as locations of Christian unity that rendered them particularly suitable for the staging of conflicts. The session's final two papers shifted frame of the conference to the New World, and its thematic focus onto visual discourses. In his paper „Franciscans for All Purposes' in Colonial Brazilian Visual Culture: Superimpositions and Parallel Systems', Jens Baumgarten (History of Art, Sao Paolo) related colonial church interiors in the Brazilian northeast to prevailing trends in its early modern visual culture. Emphasising the constitutive role played of ecclesiastical iconography and decor (reminding us that an 'iconic turn' preceded the 'spatial turn'), Baumgarten interpreted the rival figurative schemes deployed by Franciscans and Carmelites in the context of superimposition and synasthaesia. His work highlighted the ways in which the design and perception of an iconic program both enhanced and complicated the potential viewers' usage of sacral spaces. In a paper entitled 'From the House of Gods to the House of God: The Reorganisation and Reinterpretation of Religious Space in Colo-

nial Peru', Iris Gareis (Anthropology, Frankfurt), who implicitly and originally engaged the ongoing discussions about syncretism in the conquest of Latin and South America with a case that demonstrated a rhetorical feedback to the colonisers, demonstrated how despite frequent iconoclasm Spanish colonisers assimilated many symbols and rituals of the Inca state into their own representational praxis even as their interference with traditional ritual weakened the indigenous group's social cohesion.

The third day of the conference opened with the fourth and final session, 'Sacred Topographies and Spatial Networks', which addressed the dynamic relations between religious spaces across wider topographical, national and international contexts. This round of papers stressed more explicitly than the previous sessions the role of spaces in social hierarchies of power. In a paper entitled 'Wo die Schwestern, die Witwen und die Waisen wohnen: Zur Konstruktion einer sakralen Topographie Lübecks im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert', Stefanie Rüther (History, Münster) reconstructed the pattern of charitable donations in an early modern city. Regarding bequests, after de Certeau, as 'spatial stories', she argued that acts of giving conferred religious significance onto a wide range of sites above and beyond church buildings (hospitals, almshouses, dwellings) that inform us about the gendered and hierarchical aspects of the city's social topography. Returning to the iconographic themes discussed by Baumgarten and Gareis, in a paper entitled 'Espace, identité religieuse, identité provinciale dans la Franche-Comté à l'âge baroque (17e-18e siècles)' Patricia Subirade (History, Paris) demonstrated how altarpieces, cartographic discourses and images, especially depicting local miracles, were used to foster senses of Catholic identity in counter-reformation Burgundy. Yves Krumenacker (History, Lyon), in a paper on 'La formation des provinces synodales protestantes dans la France moderne', delineated the organisational strategies of the first French Protestant churches. Perceiving a shift from 'gouvernements' to 'provinciale synodes' during the sixteenth century, he argued that, unlike Catholic dioceses, the latter were not 'sacred territories' but pragmatic and adaptable units constituted by practical relations between regional churches. Returning to connections between the miraculous and the local, in his fascinating analysis of 'The Miracle of Asti and the Construction of a Religious Centre in the Early Modern Period' Angelo Torre (History, Alessandria/Turin) used microhistorical techniques to interpret eighteenth-century accounts of a bleeding host in a north Italian city, generated by a tangle of local jurisdictions, as a multi-layered exercise in the 'production of locality'. His contribution suggested the role of space as a dimension functioning between religion and law. Alexander Pyrges (History, Trier) concluded the session with his paper 'Handlungsorte, Erfahrungsräume und imaginierte Geographien: zur topographischen Dimension eines protestantischen Kommunikationsnetzwerkes im 18. Jahrhundert'. Focusing on Ebenezer, a pietist settlement established in the British colony of Georgia in the early eighteenth century, Pyrges demonstrated how space participated extensively in the communication practices that (re)connected migrants with their European co-religionists. In particular, he argued that concepts of North America beyond the Atlantic seaboard as an 'uncultivated wilderness' were crucial within network signification and formed a symbolic reference point for internal transformations (such as the relocation of the community in 1734).

José Casanova (Sociology, New York) closed the conference with a concluding summary. From the contrasting perspective of a sociologist of global secularisation and transnational migration, Casanova welcomed the spatial orientation of the workshop but offered some constructive caveats. He urged participants not to (mis)use Weber's concept of 'disenchantment', often employed in spatial contexts, as synonym or shorthand for 'desacralisation'; in Weberian understandings, the former only aimed to demystify magic rather than religious and spiritual life more generally. He also urged a broadening of temporal as well as geographical parameters, arguing that a longue durée approach would have enabled the workshop to engage with the major spatial transformations in religious life that characterised the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the decline of Rome, Jerusalem and Compostela; the fragmentation of Christian Europe; and especially the emergence of territorial nation states that were able to claim a monopoly over varieties and means of grace. However, it might be argued that part of the appeal of spatial approaches for the elucidation of religious life is their ability to problematise and avoid the narrowly 'statist' perspectives of much confessionalisation literature.

Overall, however, the workshop was a great success; a publisher for the proceedings is currently being sought. More so than the political themes addressed by the inaugural network workshop[1], pre-industrial religion proved receptive to the spatial preoccupations advocated by the network and their application aroused little controversy among workshop participants already used to (albeit often implicitly and unreflexively) spatial approaches. Several conclusions emerged powerfully from papers and discussion. The notion that reformation processes destroyed the sacredness of space was overturned; while Protestantism certainly adjusted understandings and configurations of space, ecclesiastical buildings and their enclosures as well as wider urban and rural landscapes retained powerful intimations of sanctity under reformed dispensations. We cannot map these enduring sacral topographies onto stable categories of 'sacred' and 'profane'; syncretism, simultaneity, multifunctionality and even conflict were persistent characteristics of even the most 'holy' environments, while gradations and intensities of sanctity were highly responsive to the 'fourth dimension' of liturgical time. Nor can holy sites and environments be regarded in isolation; meanings of religious space were always modified and extended by modes of representation, and through the global networks of communication in which holy sites were increasingly caught up.

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[1] 'Political Space in Preindustrial Europe' [University of Warwick UK, 2005]; see conference report at <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=981>