

Early Modern Privacy – Notions, Spaces, Implications

Veranstalter: Danish National Research Foundation Centre for Privacy Studies (PRIVACY) at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark

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The Centre for Privacy Studies at the University of Copenhagen was established in 2017 by a generous grant from the Danish National Research Foundation and will run for six years. Its goal is to analyse early modern notions of privacy, both as a quality and as a threat, by means of a terminological examination of words containing the root „priv“ and by the use of heuristic zones (soul, body, house/household, community and state) that help assessing manifestations of early modern privacy in the intersections between these zones. The Centre promotes interdisciplinary, collaborative research on privacy through eleven case studies, among them Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Versailles and Westminster.

The purpose of the inaugural conference of the Centre was to examine early modern views on privacy, its definitions and manifestations, through a prism of the history of ideas, social, legal and architectural history and the history of religion. We hosted scholars from Europe, the United States, Canada and China, with the aim of establishing privacy in its historical context as a valid research field.

The four keynote lectures delivered at the conference touched upon key elements of privacy research in the early modern period. Did privacy really matter five centuries ago? With this thought-provoking question, WILLEM FRIJHOFF (Rotterdam/Amsterdam) launched the conference. He shared his contemplations concerning the historical study of privacy, and particular the question of how to conduct research on „agencies for privacy“. Frijhoff showed how privacy issues can be tackled through the assessment of not only the per-

sonal but also the commercial correspondence of a family of merchants located in various geographical points. MIA KORPIOLA (Turku) brought in the legal perspective, based on the example of Swedish society and privacy in medieval and early modern times. Her lecture drew on a mixture of ego-documents and legal records. This constellation of sources was symptomatic of the vast majority of historical source material drawn on in the exciting keynotes given on the first day of the conference. In his keynote on privacy and exemplarity in Roman Baroque art and architecture, MAARTEN DELBEKE (Zurich) focused on the expression of inner emotions in sculpture and painting in a given architectural setting. HÉLÈNE MERLIN-KAJMAN (Paris) raised the terminological question of privacy research, the use of *privé* and *particulier* and the closely-related words of *familiarité* and *intimité* in their contemporary meaning in 17th century France.¹

The conference was divided into five panels of three papers each. Panel 1 was dedicated to the privilege of privacy in French contexts. MATHIEU LAFLAMME (Ottawa/Toulouse) talked about sexual intimacy in French juridical records, illustrating how the intimate lives of defendants were put on public display at court. MARIAN ROTHSTEIN (Kenosha, WI) gave a paper on Marguerite d'Angoulême and Catherine de' Medici. She reflected both on the spatial setting of their quarters and the correspondence of these two Queens of France, in order to reconstruct some ideas about the privacy of the 16th century elite. DITLEV TAMM (Copenhagen) presented the story of the 17th century French crossdresser, Abbé de Choisy, who left written accounts of his life as a man dressed as a woman.

The second panel focused on ethics and law. The topic of witch trials was taken up by NATACHA KLEIN KÄFER (Berlin). She shed light on the intimate relationship between healer and patient as shown in her rich source material from early modern French, German and Italian witch trials. JØRN ØYREHAGEN SUNDE (Bergen) and PERNILLE ULLA KNUDSEN (Copenhagen) showed the

¹ The keynote lectures can be viewed here: <https://teol.ku.dk/privacy/conference-early-modern-privacy-notions-spaces-implications/>

relationship between melancholic murderers and private space by examining the Act on Melancholy Murderers (1767) and its implementation in Danish society. FRANCESCA IURLARO (Florence) introduced aspects of philosophical ethics in her paper on food ethics and animal rights in the works of Thomas Cajetan.

Panel 3 was dedicated to conspicuous privacy. CHRISTINE JEANNERET (Versailles) guided the audience through the soundscapes of early modern Rome. Her focus was on the public and private spaces of various sounds, and she drew in part on Grazioso Uberti's *Contrasto musico* (1630). ANNE RÉGENT-SUSINI (Paris) analysed privacy in 17th century funeral sermons. She particularly reflected on good deeds and inner life. WALTER S. MELION (Atlanta, GE) took a biblical approach to Jesus, Mary and Joseph as artisans of the heart and home in an early 17th century manuscript, compiled by the student Martin van Heule. Particularly interesting was his exploration of van Heule's handwritten notes on the text of the Scriptures.

Panel 4 concentrated on rituals and space. LEE PALMER WANDEL (Madison, WI) explored the idea of privacy at the moment of Communion. Her focus was on the theological side of the ritual. DAG LINDSTRÖM (Uppsala) and GÖRAN TAGESSON (Linköping) presented a case study of several Swedish 18th century towns and the spaces for comfort and seclusion that could be found there. They illustrated the development of housing from a single large household into several separate households under the same roof. VALERIA VIOLA (York) shifted the focus from Sweden to Italy. Her talk was dedicated to Palazzo Papè di Valdina in Palermo with its secret passages and blurred architectural borders between the private and the public.

The final panel of the conference focused on discourse and knowledge-making. HANG LIN (Hangzhou) delved into early modern China and the way that knowledge was negotiated between the private and the public. His particular focus was on the Four Books of the Confucian Canon. IVANA BIČAK (Durham) assessed the moral aspects of scientific experiments in early modern England and the way these experiments were viewed by their con-

temporaries. The last paper was given by THOMAS MAX SAFLEY (Philadelphia, PA), who elaborated on the private and public lives of merchant families and family firms, thus closing the circle.

Despite the many misgivings and well-reasoned reservations on the presence of privacy throughout history, the papers present a powerful display of scholarship on exactly that: early modern privacy, historically investigated. Indeed, over the broad range of notions, spaces and implications of privacy probed during the three days of the conference, what we found prevalent was the immense richness of legal records, almost serving as spectacles with which to look into the circumstances of private lives that, as was emphasised by the speakers, we would not otherwise have written records of. The papers covered different geographical areas, reaching as far as China. They discussed privacy among merchants and artisans, simple people and the elite, criminals and witches, not forgetting scientific, artistic and religious motives. One cannot say privacy is not colourful. Furthermore, as much as we here see a divergence on cultural, social, religious, legal and architectural thematic focuses for inquiry, there is interestingly also a convergence on the use of diverse genres of source material for research into privacy.

Each day of the conference concluded with a summary session during which the ideas that were brought up during the papers on that day were further discussed. This was facilitated by fellows of the Centre for Privacy Studies. During the concluding session, it emerged that this „private“ dimension of research into the early modern world works as a catalyst for delving into a deeper level of assessing the relationship between individuals and society, and for challenging historical paradigms.

Alongside the conference, an exhibition curated by FABIO GIGONE, FREDRIK TORISSON and RIKKE LYNDSØ CHRISTENSEN displayed the work of the Masters' students of the Danish Royal Academy of Fine Arts, conducted in autumn and spring 2018/19.

The first part of the exhibition consisted of three models that explored aspects of privacy in temporary accommodation such as hotels,

student housings and asylums, inspired by building culture specific to Amsterdam. The students worked with a set frame in a scale of 1:10; they were free to choose the material inside the frame, and they were asked to focus specifically on architectural thresholds and connections in order to investigate how privacy can be conceived and negotiated.

The other part of the exhibition was called „Form-of-life – Privacy in the Layman’s Studiolo“ and presented seven installations produced in relation to a workshop focused on the design and production of ceramic, plaster, concrete, textile, and glass elements. The students were asked to transfer the iconographic formula of St. Jerome sitting in his studiolo, as represented in various Renaissance paintings, into a new setting, thereby reflecting the implications of privacy in today’s context.

During the conference, the exhibition provided a point of focus and the objects catalysed discussion between conference participants. These are all students’ works. It is not a historical exhibition, rather history employed as a vehicle for rethinking present relations to privacy.²

Conference Overview:

Introduction

Natália da Silva Perez

Welcome address

Prof. Mette Birkedal Bruun

Keynote 1

Willem Frijhoff (Rotterdam/Amsterdam): A Privacy Case-Study of a Franco-Dutch Family Network around 1600

Chair: Michaël Green

Panel 1: The Privilege of Privacy in French Contexts

Chair: Michèle Seehafer

Mathieu Laflamme (Ottawa/Toulouse): Surveiller et Écrire: Understanding The History of Sexual Intimacy from 18th Century French Judicial Sources

Marian Rothstein (Kenosha, WI): On Marguerite d’Angoulême and Catherine de’ Medici

Ditlev Tamm (Copenhagen): L’Abbé de Choisy – Crossdressing and Privacy in 17th

Century France

Keynote 2

Mia Korpiola (Turku): A Legal Historical Perspective on Possibilities for Privacy in Medieval Swedish Society

Chair: Natália da Silva Perez

Panel 2: Privacy, Ethics, and the Law

Chair: Anni Haahr Henriksen

Natacha Klein Käfer (Berlin): Dynamics of Healer-Patient Confidentiality in Early Modern Witch Trials

Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde (Bergen) and Pernille Ulla Knudsen (Copenhagen): The Discourse of the Melancholy Murder and Public Space

Francesca Iurlaro (Florence): On the Empathy of Reason: Thomas Cajetan on Food Ethics and Animal Rights

Keynote 3

Maarten Delbeke (Zurich): Privacy and Exemplarity in Roman Baroque Art and Architecture

Chair: Fabio Gigone

Panel 3: Conspicuous Privacy

Chair: Lars Cyril Nørgaard

Christine Jeanneret (Versailles): Soundscapes of Early Modern Rome, Private and Public Spaces: Noises and Music as Performance of Identity

Anne Régent-Susini (Paris): Is there a Place for Privacy in an Early Modern Funeral Sermon? Good Deeds and Inner Life in French 17th Century Oraisons Funèbres

Walter S. Melion (Atlanta, GE): Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as Artisans of the Heart and Home in Manuscript MPM R 35 Vita S. Ioseph beatissimae Virginis sponsi of ca. 1600

Panel 4: Privacy, Rituals, Space

Chair: Fredrik Torisson

Lee Palmer Wandel (Madison, WI): The Moment of Communion

Dag Lindström (Uppsala) and Göran Tageson (Linköping): Spaces for Comfort, Seclu-

²More on the exhibition: <https://teol.ku.dk/privacy/events/2019-events/form-of-life-privacy-in-the-laymans-studiolo/>

sion and Privacy in Swedish 18th Century Towns

Valeria Viola (York): Secret Routes, Overlapping Views, and Blurring Borders: The Case of Palazzo Papè di Valdina in Palermo (1715–1742)

Keynote 4

Hélène Merlin-Kajman (Paris): *Privé* and *Particulier* in France in the 17th Century

Chair: Bastian Joseph Nolsøe Vaucanson

Panel 5: *Privacy, Discourse, and Knowledge-Making*

Chair: Anna Becker

Hang Lin (Hangzhou): Paratext, Printing and Examination: Negotiating Knowledge Authority between the State and the Private in Early Modern China

Ivana Bičák (Durham): Virtue or Vice: Privacy in the Early Modern Scientific Experiment

Thomas Max Safley (Philadelphia, PA): The Irony of Secrecy: Merchant Families, Family Firms and the Porous Boundaries between Private and Public Life in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe

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