Co-spatiality: Changing rules of double use, excluding, inviting, imagining

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For three years, the Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe „Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations" has organized an annual conference focusing on theoretical questions. In general, the research group examines from an interdisciplinary perspective how urbanity and religion influenced each other. During this conference, the participants were invited to use a spatial approach to the research question. By doing so, the conference was part of a current trend in social geography, spatial sociology and (pre)modern history to investigate urban space.

What made the conference unique was to primarily engage with the concept of co-spatiality by French geographer JACQUES LÉVY (Paris). The concept enables researchers to integrate religious elements in a spatial analysis. Lévy defines co-spatiality as „une des interspatialités caractérisée par la mise en relation de deux espaces occupant la même étendue". Thus, the concept allows looking at how spaces and places, sharing the same extension, are used and constructed by different religious or profane urban groups. It zooms in on the instance when those spaces become connected and explores the preconditions and results of those connections. In order to test whether the concept of co-spatiality is applicable to historical case studies and which insights it provides, the conference brought together researchers of different disciplines like archaeology, literary studies, and history. Themes of the conferences spanned from antiquity to modernity in terms of time and from India to Europe in geographical terms.

Several contributions were preoccupied with liminal spaces bridging the profane and sacred, i.e. the earthly, physical reality and the supernatural. SARA KELLER (Erfurt) researched the Munsar Lake in the West Indian town of Viramgam and its stepwells in the pre-Sultanate period. The lake had several meanings and functions ranging from profane (e.g. female sociability) to sacred dimensions (e.g. daily ritual baths). Hindus viewed the lake as a crossing place between earth and heaven. Rituals functioned like a „switch" activating a passage from the physical world to the lake's previously dormant „imaginal" (Henry Corbin).

A related contribution about *ghāts* (steps to rivers or lakes) by SUPRIYA CHAUDHURI (Kolkata) adopted a literary perspective. Similarly to Keller, Chaudhuri interpreted the *ghāt* as „a liminal space between land and water, life and death". It was used for Hindu rituals connected to life and death, bathing as well as other daily necessities related to water, athletic exercises, as a meeting place for lovers, musical performances and commercial activities. Despite its strong connections to Hinduism Muslims also shared the space of the *ghāt* and appropriated it.

A liminal space in Europe was introduced by BEAT KÜMIN (Warwick). He concentrated on deposits in „tower balls" placed on top of prominent buildings in German-speaking areas. Parish or city representatives stored chronicles and other objects in these tower balls since the late middle ages. According to Kümon, the tower ball deposits were „generation sites" aimed at preserving the communicative memory of successive communities. As they constituted a space between heaven and earth they neither clearly belonged to the earthly community nor to the metaphysical realm.

In addition to spaces bridging the profane and the sacred, several contributions explored different religious groups peacefully sharing profane as well as religious spaces. SUSANNE RAU (Erfurt) described premodern bazars at the Malabar Coast, particularly in Calicut, in a spatio-temporal perspective. Bazars were not clearly demarcated areas but rather had porous borders and became entangled with religious institutions. Rau argued that both trade and religion had shaped the city. While Arab Muslims dominated the trade and thus the bazar in Calicut, Jains, Hindu Seths, Gujarati and Marwari moneylenders, Tamils and Andhra Chet-

tis could also be found there. Hence, the bazar connected different (religious) groups socially and spatially.

ABDUL NISAR (Calicut) complemented this picture by focusing on *akams*, medieval residential houses of the Muslims in Calicut. Groups of traders settled together near the bazar where they build their multi-purpose housings. As Muslim merchants often entered into temporary marriages with local women the *akams* and its structure reflected Arab Muslim and local Calicutan influences.

A European example of peaceful religious interaction was given by DIONIGI ALBERA (Aix-en-Provence). He examined mixed religious groups attending holy places in Istanbul, especially Muslims visiting Christian sites. Shared holy spaces could be best understood as „cosmopolitan canopies", little islands of peace in an otherwise bustling urban setting characterized by diversity and openness. Spatial practices expressed nostalgia for the multicultural city in the Ottoman past. Specifically women and long-term citizens engaged in these practices.

In other cases, competition with different religious groups about certain spaces was greater and conflicting narratives about them emerged. Namely, MAUREEN ATTALI (Fribourg) demonstrated how Jewish and Christian groups constructed two different spaces on the same location, the site of the former Jewish temple in Jerusalem. The rabbinic movement viewed the former temple site as a holy mountain were the divine was still present. Thus, they wanted to maintain its centrality and ritually commemorate its destruction in situ. In contrast, Christian theologians saw the destroyed temple as proof of supersessionism. Therefore, they negated its divine presence, wanted to keep it in ruins and did not approve of rituals there.

RICHARD GORDON (Munich) employed Lévy's notion of „co-opétition" (a mixture of cooperation and conflict) to analyze the spectacles especially in the Roman amphitheater of Carthage. Spectacles were part of polytheistic religions focused on blood sacrifices. However, Gordon carved out two instances, where they were manipulated and subverted. First, practitioners put curses against each other in a storeroom to influence the spec-

tacle's outcome. Second, Christian martyrs were said to have changed rituals of the spectacle to criticize them.

Besides open conflicts, some contributions dealt with the process of un-seeing and seeing spaces sharing the same extension or certain groups using a space differently. For instance, EMILIANO URCIUOLI (Erfurt) looked at the voluntary poor among the early „Christbelievers", the priests, and the real involuntary poor sharing streets in ancient Mediterranean cities. While early Christian texts dealing with the poor often place them in a spatial vacuum this changed in the late 4th and early 5th century. Those later texts, especially sermons, make a spectacle of the urban real poor and depict them as occupying the street.

Similarly, MONICA SMITH (Los Angeles) asked what made passersby see or unsee the presence of different religious groups, their practices and spaces in ancient cities. She views unseeing as the default practice due to overstimulation in cities. However, spaces became seen when they serve different functions than originally intended, when people need a service there, during conflicts and through additional sensory perceptions like scents.

Another strand of contributions dealt with multifunctional spaces that could be used and imagined either by the same group or by various actors in different ways. MARTIN CHRIST (Erfurt) sketched the different functions of the early-modern bedchamber, which served profane purposes but could also become religiously charged – especially in times of death. The bedchamber was similarly open to the public and closed making it an object of the urban magistrates' and priests' strife for regulation. While the actors and objects in a bedchamber could be more diverse in the city, a dichotomy of an urban and rural bedchamber did not seem to have existed.

Relatedly, AMIRA BENNISON (Cambridge) focused on the multifunctional *baḥāʾir*, large suburban estates founded by the Almohad dynasty in the medieval Islamic west. They served as agricultural estates to feed the royal household and as spaces for leisure time and religiopolitical activities of the Almohads and their elites. Namely, the Almohads used the *baḥāʾir* to depict themselves as the true caliphs of the Islam world

transforming the desert into paradisiacal gardens of belief.

Last, some contributions looked at cities as a whole, i.e. as an extension where co-spatialization might have happened. ELISA IORI (Erfurt) presented different levels of co-spatialities at the Gandhāran city of Barikot (Swat valley, Pakistan) in the 3rd century. Related to individual households, courtyards created co-spatiality by bringing together internal and external members of a family as well as monks ritually. Similarly, collective rituals performed at Buddhist temples simultaneously integrated and differentiated a diverse urban society. However, foundations of *stūpas* (buddhistic religious buildings) in the city fixed the discourse on power and vertical social relations. Building a temple on top of the local hill also meant a political appropriation as it spatialized the citizens' relationship with non-urban Buddhist actors.

Relatedly, DIETMAR MIETH (Erfurt) carved out different instances of co-spatiality in Paris around 1300. His examples include the King's chapel (La Chapelle), the bookseller street rue St. Jacques, the central hospital Hôtel-Dieu, the marketplace Place de Grève and the city *extra muros* where the templars lived. Many of these spaces were associated with spiritual conflicts. At these places, a technical Latin and vernacular spirituality respectively ecclesiastical or royal authorities and semi-monastic religious movements like the beguines clashed.

By contrast, CRISTIANA FACCHINI (Bologna) demonstrated interactions based on tolerance as well as religious-ethnic conflicts. She investigated how and to what extent Jews and other minorities were visible in the port cities Trieste, Odessa and Salonica during the long 19th century. Mixing different religious-ethnic groups spatially and socially as well as giving them spatial visibility was framed as being done at the cities' benefit. Yet, port cities could also be hotbeds of nationalism where minorities' access to citizenship was relatively complicated.

To conclude, the contributions have shown how imaginations and practices of different actors constituted interacting spaces. These shared co-spatialities either referred to the city as a whole or spaces inside or related to a city. Thus, many papers hint at the urban context facilitating co-spatiality or at least people's ability in handling it. Yet, it seems necessary to further analyze relations to rural instances of co-spatiality in order to substantiate this hypothesis. Co-spatiality was created by peaceful double uses as well as during conflicts. It was therefore able to integrate or further differentiate different (religious) groups. Religious aspects were not only addressed regarding the actors. Rather, co-spatiality connected religious and profane imaginations as well as practices. However, as Lévy stressed in his introduction, co-spatiality cannot be taken for granted as generally many superimposed spaces are not connected and do not interact with each other. Therefore, Jörg Rüpke (Erfurt) proposed to further explore the relationship of co-spatiality to other types of superimposed spaces.

Conference overview:

Susanne Rau, Jörg Rüpke and Elisa Iori (Erfurt): Welcome and Introduction

Jacques Lévy (Paris): Introduction to the Concept of Co-spatiality

Panel 1: Threshold Spaces. The Ambivalence of Access

Sara Keller (Erfurt): Hydro-Spaces and Place Sharing in the South Asian Context

Supriya Chaudhuri (Kolkata): Between River and Street. The Ghāt or Landing-Stage as Overlapping Space

Panel 2: Staging Power, Religion and Imaginaries in Performing and Utilitarian Spaces

Amira Bennison (Cambridge): The Multiple Functions of the Baḥāʾir Estates of the Almohads in 12th-century Iberia and the Maghrib

Richard Gordon (Munich): The Imaginaire of the Roman Amphitheatre at Carthage. Narratives in Competition

Panel 3: Inside the Nodes. Revisiting Ritual Practices, Rhythms, Boundaries and Ties of Urban Lives in Indian Cities

Elisa Iori (Erfurt): Spatializing Buddhist practices in Urban Spaces

Abdul Nisar M. (Calicut): Cosmopolitanism

in Microspaces. The Structure and Function of Akams of Kuttichira in Calicut

Susanne Rau (Erfurt): The Market and the City: Mercantile and Religious Entanglements in Cities along the Malabar Coast (Medieval, Early Modern)

Panel 4: Reframing Social Realities. Shifting Narratives and Shifting Spaces

Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli (Erfurt): The Poverty Plateau. The Space of the Urban Street Poor in Early Christian Literature

Dietmar Mieth (Erfurt): The Same Spaces tell Different Religious Stories: Five Examples of Co-spatialities in Paris around 1300

Panel 5: Technologies of the Un-Seeing. The F(r)ictional Production of Space

Maureen Attali (Fribourg): Temple Ruins versus Temple Mount. Constructing two Distinct Theological Spaces in Late Ancient Jerusalem

Monica Smith (Los Angeles): Seeing and Un-Seeing Others' Religions. The Dilemma of Urban Spaces

Panel 6: Unfolding Interspatialities in Micro-Spaces

Beat Kümin (Warwick): Tower Ball Deposits and Urban Spaces in the German Lands

Martin Christ (Erfurt): The Bedchamber as a Shared Space in Early Modern Europe

Panel 7: Urban Inter-Religious Spatializations. Interaction and Marginalization

Cristiana Facchini (Bologna): Port Cities and Religious Diversity. Exploring the Long 19th Century

Dionigi Albera (Aix-en-Provence): Mixed Sanctuaries and Urban Interspatiality. Some Mediterranean Examples

Final Discussion

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