Resacralisation and desacralisation of urban spaces: Negotiating sacred places in Poland and Germany

The term "city without God" was associated with socialist cities and the project of secularization of the state in Eastern Europe countries, but after 1989 it is connected with secular cities (McLeod 1992) or postsecular cities (Beaumont, Baker 2011), which are under the influence of capital in the era of late modernity. As Lily Kong (1993) states, sacred “are places where one's god(s) may be found and where one may undergo a sacred experience, including a gamut of emotions from serenity and protection to fear and the sense of being overwhelmed”. In this respect, the concept of space sanctity might not fit into today's way of our thinking about the city. However, other researchers argue that sacrum is "still" present in the secular city, when sacrum means basically art (Landres 2002) or it is socially reconstructed as part of global processes.

The aim of the session is to discuss the resacralisation and desacralisation of space, including changes of "old" religious sites and newly emerging spaces of religious minorities. As some of these cases are contested by local communities they become parts of the discussion about the place of religion in public sphere within European countries. The idea of the session is then to present how in different social and political contexts “new” sacred places function in an already “mapped” religious and spatial context.

We would like is to bring urban sociology and sociology of religion closer together to answer the questions: do we perceive the process of urban space resacralisation? What is the role of religious minorities in Poland and Germany (with special focus on Islam in this process)? What is the nature of the new sacred spaces in contemporary cities - are they only connected to minority religions? Our research group would revise the concepts and methods used so far in the context of European Christianity and its secularization referring to the emerging new sacred spaces and redefining the old ones.

Bibliography:

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1. The theatrical sacralisation of Polish urban spaces. Overview of case studies
Grzegorz Brzozowski, University of Warsaw

2. Sacred spaces in times of secularisation and religious pluralisation: Crisis or opportunity for church buildings?
Dr. Anna Körs, Universität Hamburg, Akademie der Weltreligionen

3. Site-specific art as non-religion sacral space in contemporary cities
Dr habil. Paweł Moźdżyński, University of Warsaw/ Institute of Applied Social Science

4. Sacred political places. Commemoration, politics and religion in urban public spaces in Poland
Dr Maciej Kowalewski, Dr Anna Królikowska, University of Szczecin

5. Religious practices in the urban public space (the case of Poland)
Dr Krzysztof Bierwiacone University of Silesia in Katowice