

Report

Stakeholder synergies surrounding sacred space. Convergence of multi-, and transdisciplinary approaches concerning sacred space sustainability

Bonn, 17.01.2016 – 19.01.2016

- Sunday, 17.01.2016, Collegium Albertinum Bonn

The conference was opened by Prof. Dr. Ulrich Berges, Dean of the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Bonn. Prof. Dr. Albert Gerhards and Dr. Kim de Wildt introduced the conference background, intentions and aims in their opening lectures and depicted the topic of sacred space in its societal and religious context, with specific reference to the challenges this theme poses for a secular and religiously pluralistic society. The main themes and questions were the following:

- Sacred spaces undergo an identity change, cease to exist, or re-emerge:
- Is this fact merely a crisis of tradition or a chance for innovation?
- Muslim, Jewish and other religious traditions are more publicly recognized and their visual presence is enhanced by their religious buildings
- Christian tradition seems to follow a reversed trend: church buildings are increasingly abandoned, reused or demolished and a public discussion with regard to these buildings is often avoided

Against the background of this context the aim of the conference was stipulated as follows: the monopoly of religious traditions concerning sacred space has been broken and the interests of other stakeholders, such as religious communities, heritage conservation, real estate agents, architects, art historians and multi-religious and secular society differ enormously in the debate on the reuse of sacred spaces. The burden of unused sacred spaces, the problematic dealing with transformed objects (reuse, partly demolished, completely demolished), the unclear definition of future buildings, and the search for clear boundaries and further development of sacred spaces have become pressing key issues for science and society and is the main theme this conference addresses. The working hypothesis is that sacred spaces are valued from different positions and to different means. These conflicting positions complicate possible solutions for productive further development. Therefore we want to formulate and validate criteria for the future use of sacred spaces. Differing interests concerning erection, preservation or non-preservation of sacred spaces therefore need to

be coordinated that transcend current bilateral initiatives. Factors such as legal, political, economic, societal, religious and ecological aspects need be taken into consideration. A united vision on a “Theory of Sacred Space” in the 21st century which can be applied to the concrete praxis on the basis of interdisciplinary research and transdisciplinary dialogue should be developed.

The questions posed were the following:

- There are different stakeholders with different aims: what divides and unites us?
- What effects do the transformation and recoding of sacred space have on religion and society?
- Which kind of sacred spaces does a multicultural, pluralistic or religiously indifferent society in the 21st century need and which one should it create?

After this introduction the keynote speaker, Prof. Dr. Thomas Erne (Marburg), addressed the question why we still need church buildings in this complex current societal context. Erne highlighted the fact that church buildings are popular destinations among tourists and related this to other “sacred” spaces of our time: stadiums, movie theatres, museums. Because of their aesthetic value such hybrid spaces will remain of importance to a society in which people still have a longing for transcendence. The first day of the conference was concluded with a theoretical introduction and musical performance of Prof. Dr. Bretschneider (Bonn) and Suzanne Thorp (Cologne) into “Liminal” church music.

- Monday, 18.01.2016, University Club Bonn

The second day started with a lecture by Prof. Dr. Sigurd Bergmann (Trondheim) which broadened the scope to sociological and ecological dimensions of sacred space. The second lecture of the day was by PD Dr. Johannes Stückelberger (Bern) who contextualized the future of sacred space against the background of sacred space topography and the implications sacred space has in the public domain.

After the break two lectures from other religions on sacred space were presented: Dr. Mohammad Gharaibeh (Bonn) presented a lecture on the development of mosques in Germany, addressing the complex situation with regard to debates on integration, immigration, refugees, security issues and terrorism. In a further step Gharaibeh explained the difficulties (architectural and theological) from an Islamic point of view when a church is reused as a mosque. Prof. Dr. Johannes Heil addressed this theme from Judaism: namely, the challenges which are encountered when a church is reused as a synagogue.

After lunch Dr. Ursula Schirmer (Bonn) of the Deutsche Stiftung Denkmalschutz presented how her organization deals with the question of obsolete churches with regard to stakeholders and sustainable solutions. The archdiocese-architect Emanuela Freiin von Branca (Paderborn) reflected on the situation in Paderborn with regard to the liturgical situation and increasing individualization and the diverse consequences this has on sacred space: reuse, demolishing, integrated use.

After a short break the group reconvened for two international perspectives. Prof. Dr. Paul Post (Tilburg) made on the basis of Dutch examples a plea for “open” sacred spaces which can be made up of a combination of “fields of the sacred”, involving religion, commemoration, art & culture and leisure in favour of “closed” sacred spaces which exclusively serve liturgical purposes. Prof. Arch. Andrea Longhi (Turin) and Prof. Dr. Luigi Bartolomei (Bologna) presented profane and sacred use and reuse of church buildings in Italy in past, present and future. Longhi explained the complex judicial aspects that have to be taken into consideration. Bartolomei stressed the need for other

stakeholders besides the church that should be involved in order to preserve church buildings for the future, especially in rural areas.

The forelast contribution was made by the project leader of the church real estate agent of the diocese of Aachen, Bernhard Stenmans. He elaborated the financial dire situation and the challenges this poses for church buildings. The last lecture was held by Dr. Martin Bredenbeck who gave insight in reuse projects in the Rhine area.

After dinner the poster presentations took place. The following participants presented their posters to the following themes:

- Dr. Annette Homann
Qualitäten des Sakralen in der Baukunst. Bedingungen leiblicher teilhabe
- Dr. Birgit Kastner
Designerstück, Sammlerobjekt, graue Maus. Gibt es Überlebenschancen und Überlebensstrategien für überzählige Sakralbauten? Drei Beispiele aus dem Werk des Architekten Karl Band (1900-1995)
- PhD Dr. Ulrich Knufinke
 1. Berlin- a Jewish Topography, Projektbericht
 2. Bet Tfila – Forschungsstelle
- Dr. Sonja Keller
Kirchengebäude in urbanen Gebieten. Wahrnehmung – Deutung – Umnutzung in praktisch-theologischer Perspektive
- Martin Kröger
Dreifaltigkeit sturmfest machen. Entwicklung eines zukunftsfähigen Nutzungskonzeptes für die Dreifaltigkeitskirche Altenoythe
- Drs. Elza Kuyk
The breath of the church building. Different experiences with the sacredness of the place in cases of hybrid use of protestant churches
- Dr. Gisela Pauli-Caldas
Kirchenfenster: Künstlerische Ausstattung im Wandel sakraler Räume – Herausforderungen für Forschung und Praxis am Beispiel von Franz Pauli
- Barbara Schmid
Standort Sakralbau - Der interdisziplinäre Blick auf das Ganze
- Michael Strecker
Sacred Spaces Heritage in the countryside / rural regions of tomorrow: Actors for sustainable paths into education – integration – inspiration!?
- Prof. Dr. Stephan Winter
Kirchen im Umbau. Wie im Bistum Osnabrück kirchliche Räume neu genutzt werden

Tuesday, 19.01.2016, University Club Bonn

The final day started off with a visit to the Schlosskirche of Bonn University under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Reinhard Schmidt-Rost.

The meeting at the university club was opened with a lecture of the archdiocese-architect of Cologne Martin Struck who focused on the complexities of modern church architecture.

Prof. Dr. Albert Gerhards and Dr. Tino Grisi introduced five exemplary cases of reuse as case studies for the project part of the conference. Grisi introduced St. Laurentius, Cologne (reuse as a university lecture room) and St. Helena, Bonn (reuse as a cultural venue), Gerhards introduced the Namen-Jesu-Kirche, Bonn (multiple forms of use: for instance columbarium), Kapernaumkirche, Hamburg (reuse as a mosque) and St. Peter, Mönchengladbach (reuse as a climbing hall). After these introductions the participants worked in five groups, each group concerning itself with one reused church, on answering the questions: 1. How do you evaluate this reuse? and 2. Have all relevant perspectives been included?

The multi-, and transdisciplinary dialogue resulted in a lively discussion were these cases were evaluated in their architectural, art historical, theological, etc. dimension.

After the last break the closing lecture was presented by Dr. Rob Plum (Bonn) who demonstrated that even profanized churches remain a theological issue and summarized the current state as following: Church buildings transcend the meanings which are attributed to them by their makers, owners and other stakeholders. They are materialized forms of presence that cannot be reduced to ritual waste, even if they are profanized. Church buildings transcend meaning; they are present, because they are not just landscape markers, but also identity markers. Church buildings transcend boundaries between people who value them for diverse reasons, religious and non-religious alike. And last but not least, Church buildings transcend the space – time dichotomy: past – present – future on the one hand, near – here – far on the other hand are brought together in one holistic experience.

After the closing lecture we went to the university itself for the Finissage of two exhibitions (PD Dr. Ulrich Knufinke / Dr. Paul Petzel). Knufinke reflected on the theme of the synagogue in his art as well as in his academic work.

The last part of the conference was a visit to the Namen-Jesu-Kirche were the artist Klaus Simon explained the meaning and the work process of making the “Prinzipalien” for this church, which is also an important example of a successful reuse.

Kim de Wildt