

## CALL FOR PAPERS

“Public Theologies in Vibrating Cities: Precious and Precarious”

Curitiba | 03-06 October | 2022 | Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, Brazil

Dear Colleagues,

The Global Network for Public Theology (GNPT) is pleased to announce the call for papers for the sixth triennial consultation on “Public Theologies in Vibrating Cities: Precious and Precarious” which will be held in Curitiba, Brazil from Monday 03 to Thursday 06 October 2022.

Cities vibrate, shine, resonate. They are vibrant, tourist brochures tell us – lively, that is, interesting for those who seek for good food, nightlife, and entertainment. But much more than that, public life is vibrating. What do these vibrations mean? What kind of vibrations are we feeling? Which ones are we systematically closing our senses to? Cities are both precious and precarious. They represent the precious: creativity, mobility, sound, colour, construction, organization, interaction. But they also feature the precarious: poverty, traffic jams, noise, smog, destruction, chaos, exclusion. A diversity of publics, of interests, of beliefs, of needs, of longings and belongings emerge from the cities. Thus, by amplifying our understanding on publics and theologies, by appreciating the preciousness and discovering the precariousness, by realizing that there is preciousness in what is considered precarious, and that there is precarity in what is regarded as precious, we believe that there may be a more complete analysis of cities’ ambiguities and the critical and constructive role public theology can play in this context.

These are some of the issues the upcoming GNPT Consultation intends to address. Alongside panels and lectures, our Working Groups will help us think through current challenges and possibilities for public theologies in vibrating cities.

### **Instructions for submitting a paper**

Paper proposals are to be submitted to one of the fourteen Working Groups listed below. Thus, the paper proposal must contain:

- The indication of the Working Group it is being submitted to;
- A title;
- An abstract in English (Spanish or Portuguese where applicable), of no more than 250 words. It should give a succinct account of context, the objectives, the significance of the matter the article is aiming to address, as well as some results;
- 3-5 keywords;
- A short academic biography of each proponent (not more than three proponents!).
- Any single proponent should be in no more than one paper proposal.

Proposals may be sent to [gnpt2022@pucpr.br](mailto:gnpt2022@pucpr.br) before 1 March, 2022. The proponent(s) should indicate the intended Working Group in the subject of the e-mail. The organizers shall then forward the proposals to the Working Group coordinators for analysis and

deliberation. Proponents shall be informed about the decision taken until 20 March, 2022. The decision taken might be “approved”, “approved with revisions”, or “not approved”.

## **Registration**

Registration will open on 3 April, 2022, using an online event system. At that point, payment of a registration fee of **EUR 150,00** or equivalent will have to be made to confirm the registration. Please note this fee will be due regardless of the form of participation. Those unable to pay this amount may file an application for subsidy which will be appreciated by the GNPT Executive. Those able to pay a little more are welcome to do so in order for others to be able to participate. We are also trying to secure extra funding from donor agencies.

## **Language**

As common in GNPT Consultations, the working language is English. However, to be more inclusive to the context, in which most people do not speak English on a daily basis, we intend to have simultaneous translation for the keynote lectures (English/Portuguese). Most working groups are English speaking, some will work in parallel groups in different languages and one will only use Portuguese and Spanish.

## **Format of participation**

Given the continuous COVID-19 pandemic, we are foreseeing a hybrid event. At this moment, Brazil is open to travellers that are fully vaccinated without quarantine and with quarantine to those not, or not fully, vaccinated. However, such regulations might change at any time. We shall keep you informed and it is our commitment to keep you all as safe as possible. **Please do indicate in your paper proposal submission whether you intend, if possible, to come personally to Curitiba next October** and whether you would prefer, in this case, to make your own hotel arrangements (we can give you some indications if need be) or if you would like us to provide budget accommodation for instance in rooms with religious congregations or even families. This will give us an indication of the demand and enables us to make the necessary arrangements. Brazil is fairly low cost for those coming with hard currencies; however, for colleagues with more volatile currencies, it might be quite costly. Please do not hesitate to contact us on [gnpt2022@pucpr.br](mailto:gnpt2022@pucpr.br) should you have further questions.

## **Working Groups**

The Working Groups that will gather and evaluate the paper proposals are:

### **1. Public Theology and Migration**

Dr Seforosa Carrol (WCC)

Dr Ulrich Schmiedel (University of Edinburgh)

Dr Sturla J. Stålsett (MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society)

This GNPT working group on “Public Theology and Migration” brings together academics and activists to reflect on the controversies, challenges, and commitments that

migration stirs up in the public square from both empirical and theoretical angles. The unprecedented numbers of people forced to flee their homes requires theological analyses and assessments, particularly when migration is experienced as a crisis that provokes polarization and politicization. This working group sees migration as a site for theology, a locus theologicus, where pressing social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental issues intersect with a public-theological concern for justice. Migration can be connected with the themes of GNPT consultations, such as the forthcoming one on “Public Theology in Vibrant Cities”.

## **2. Asian Cities and Christian Hope**

Dr Gnana Patrick (University of Madras)

Dr Paul Rohan (University of Jaffna)

Dr Yip Mei Loh (Chung Yuan Christian University)

“What hope Christianity can mediate to Asian cities?” and “What can Christianity learn from the Asianess of its urbanity?” – are questions very timely for Christian public theology. Under the impact of globalisation, Asian cities are growing fast not merely in economic activities, but also in cultural, educational, social and political opportunities, attracting the people, especially the rural people into their folds. People find relatively better avenues to solve their problems of poverty, social discrimination, patriarchy, and so on. The younger generation, especially the womenfolk, seem to experience a better level of freedom to grow. However, cities come also with their woes: marketisation of life, cut-throat competitions, trafficking especially on women and children, child-labour, ethnic-discrimination, unethical tourism, etc; Instead of providing equal opportunities to everyone, Asian cities seem to exclude people in several ways; and, the spiritual traditions of Asia seem to take in the commercial impulse and emit poisonous “spirits” of fundamentalism and sectarian communalism. How can Christianity, in terms of its faith, beliefs and practices mediate hope and freedom to this context of urbanity is a pertinent question facing Christian public theologians today. Can the Christian values of equality, non-exclusion, non-discrimination, individual dignity and rights, and the faith in a transcendental creator God be of value to Asia? Can Christianity promote integral life situations in the urban contexts where man and nature could mutually contribute for an eco friendly life? Can Christian theologians create awareness for the preservation of indigenous culture and spiritual traditions in the urban contexts to preserve them from destruction under the influx of globalization? These are some of the lead questions this group will address.

## **3. Just housing – affordable, sustainable, aesthetically appealing?**

Dr Stephan de Beer (University of Pretoria)

Dr Thomas Wabel (Universität Bamberg)

In cities worldwide, housing is precarious. The environments in which people from different social and economic backgrounds live often exacerbate existing social differences, but can also contribute to alleviate these differences. How should we contribute theologically to address the challenges of housing and human settlements? This working group invites contributions that reflect on the following aspects of the problem: 1) urban planning: How can planning interventions to create living space

enhance affordable, sustainable and aesthetically appealing housing for all? How do they tie in with the development of the urban environment, e.g. neighbourhood, traffic connection, green spaces? 2) political, economic and legal aspects: What are the conditions under which changes of the present situation can be brought about? How can theologians contribute, and who are the players (government, civil society, faith communities, social movements, private sector, the academy)? 3) architecture: How can the challenges presented by the concrete conditions be addressed architecturally in such a way, that ecological sustainability, aesthetics, and affordability present a stable balance? 4) social imaginaries: In what way does the built environment give voice to the way a society sees itself? What role do religions and worldviews play? How can public theologians help foster inclusive and just social imaginaries? Is there room for utopic potential to be played out? In our work together, we hope to assess (best practice) examples from different countries against their respective societal and cultural backgrounds. Thus, the group aims at formulating conditions under which affordable, sustainable, and aesthetically attractive housing in an urban environment is feasible.

#### **4. Shaping urban futures: Theological education as engaged scholarship**

Dr Sarojini Nadar (University of the Western Cape)

Emmanuel Akatukunda (Kampala Evangelical School of Theology – Kampala, Uganda)  
(PhD Candidate – University of Pretoria)

Selena Headley (Institute of Urban Ministry – Pretoria/Cape Town, South Africa) (PhD Candidate - University of Pretoria)

Michael Ribbens (Resonate Global Mission; Street Psalms Senior Fellow – Johannesburg, South Africa) (PhD Candidate – University of Pretoria)

As the African continent urbanises at unprecedented rates, the church must be actively engaged in shaping just urban futures. For this to happen, theological institutions in collaboration with other players need to rethink the way theological/ministry formation is being implemented. The Urban 2050 project was convened by the Centre for Faith and Community at the University of Pretoria involving 15 theological institutions across the continent. The focus of the research was how theological education/formation can be reimagined for flourishing African cities in light of current and envisaged urban realities. The project resulted in the publication of several articles with more to follow, quarterly conversations among research participants and plans to reignite the Society of Urban Theology. Building on the Urban Africa 2050 project participation, the GNPT would bring the conversation into a broader global dialogue, inviting others from the global South and North to join in conversations exploring questions such as: How should “engaged scholarship” be understood in relation to unfolding urban contexts? How can theological education as engaged scholarship contribute to urban governance and policy-making? How can theological education contribute to the formation of urban leadership able to facilitate inclusive and just urban futures? How can theological education as engaged scholarship help nurture future urban imaginaries that are inclusive, just and sustainable? How should theological education be transformed or remodelled – research, pedagogy, epistemologies, presence – for it to contribute to inclusive urban futures?

## **5. The Reformed Tradition and Global Public Theology**

Dr Matthew Kaemingk (Fuller Theological Seminary)

Dr George Harinck (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

This working group seeks to host papers and conversations for scholars interested in the intersection between public theology and the Reformed tradition. It is particularly interested in three sorts of papers: 1) contemporary explorations of Reformed public theology in the global south. 2) Comparative studies in which the non-Reformed voices in public theology are placed into creative conversation with the tradition. 3) Historical studies of past Reformed figures and the implications of their work for public theology.

## **6. Gender, Sexuality and Public Theology**

Dr Ester McIntosh (York St John University)

Dr David Tombs (University of Otago)

Dr Charlene von der Walt (University of KwaZulu Natal)

This GNPT working group aims to challenge patriarchal theological norms that promote hierarchies and rely on binary notions of sex and gender. Public theology has established itself as a field in which political and ethical issues of social injustice in churches and wider society can be critiqued and addressed; nevertheless, it remains a field that is frequently dominated by male voices. Public theology often pays homage to male theological figures, whilst giving insufficient attention to feminist and womanist insights. By bringing together theologians and activists at the forefront of intersectional feminism, this working group seeks to hear the missing voices; to centre the concerns of the marginalised; and to critique theological doctrines, motifs and practices that either legitimise male domination or fail to redress the subordination of others. In particular, we are keenly aware of the damage that has been done by theologies that tell victims and survivors of abuse and trauma to forgive; by theologies that promote heterosexuality and exclude queer theologies and bodies; by theologies that advocate stereotypical notions of gender and marginalise trans and non-binary folk. At the centre of this working group is the intention to be inclusive, to respect self-identification and to expose theological blind spots and problematic linguistic constructions. We understand the concepts of sex and gender and the language of identity to be fluid and evolving. We aim to expand the notion of what counts as public theology and who benefits from its activity. We welcome presentations and proposals that share our critical ethos and we hope for future collaboration, funding bids and research projects.

## **7. Liveable Cities**

Dr Clive Pearson (PaCT / Sydney)

Dr Peter Walker (PaCT / Sydney)

Dr Murray Rae (Otago, NZ) – in Dunedin

Dr Andrew Shepherd (Otago, NZ) – in Wellington

Every year various agencies release their ranking of the world's most livable cities. The Economist Intelligence Unit makes its assessment based on five criteria: stability, health care, culture, environment, education and infrastructure. The Mercer Quality of Living Report employs thirty-nine such criteria: the purpose in mind here is to assist

multinational companies in their decisions as to where to open branch offices. Loughborough University ranks the internal life and well-being of cities and their relationships to one another through its GaWC (Globalization and World Cities) project. In more recent times the IPCC and a network of mayors around the world have been examining the viability of cities in a time of climate change. It is evident that cities of a particular size and location offer score highly in these league tables; the opposite is also true. It is not uncommon for several cities in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand to feature in the top ten most livable cities but they have also been subject to pandemic lockdowns and climate threats. In what ways can theology and religious studies address the inequality between cities as well as contribute to urban planning to deal with the risks liveable cities face.

## **8. Digital Public Theologies**

Dr Frederike van Oorschot (FEST Heidelberg/Bonn University)

Dr Stephen Garner (Laidlaw College, New Zealand/Australian College of Theology)

Dr Thomas Schlag (Centre for Church Development at the University of Zurich)

Digital media and technologies create new spaces for human expression and interaction, while also extending and challenging existing spaces. During the COVID 19 pandemic, these digital spaces have increasingly been used by religious communities for worship, pastoral care, and theological reflection where physical gathering was limited. These digital spaces, both religious and secular, possess their own unique characteristics and form various public spaces to be engaged with theologically. Some of this engagement is consistent with existing strands of public theology, while new strands encourage people to think about new ways of being and doing theology publicly in digital spaces. The emerging discipline of digital theology, which embraces aspects of digitally supported theological education, theological research using digital tools, intentional and theologically-resourced engagement with digital culture, and a theological ethical engagement with digital culture and spaces (Phillips et al, 2019). The latter two categories of theological engagement and ethics overlap with public theological ventures that engage with digital spaces and culture, seeking to offer something robustly that contributes to human flourishing and asking the questions: how does public theology function in digital spaces?; what does faithful and effective engagement look like in digital culture?; and, how might theology be shaped through its engagement with this digital public spaces? The working group aims to combine parallel discourses on public theology and digital theology to bring insight to these questions, and is organized by members from the Global Network for Digital Theology.

## **9. Common home and new ways of living interculturally: public theology and cultural ecology in (post)pandemic times**

Dr Alex Villas Boas (Universidade Católica Portuguesa)

Dr Jefferson Zeferino (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná)

Dr Alexandre Palma (Universidade Católica Portuguesa)

By thinking places and spaces, or the aspect of living in vibrating cities, the Global Network of Public Theology sustains global perspectives such as the one brought up with the topic of our Common Home. This is a shared concept between the UN Agenda 2030

for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* (Ls) which was published months earlier. The new (post)pandemic time and humanitarian crisis demands even more the adoption of public issues for a collective political and social effort that overcomes the cultural contradictions of economic determinism and calls for shared responsibility supported by a culture of solidarity. At times like these, religions have a great potential for empathy and social cooperation with public demands. The aim of the group is to think a public theological hermeneutics and epistemology that incorporates the 2030 Agenda into a religious culture based on the notion of Common Home by (i) developing an epistemological model that interacts with the potential for cooperation and solidarity in the religious field with the diverse areas in an intercultural and interdisciplinary approach; (ii) promoting cultural and ecological creative languages that intertwine critical sense and common sense, and; (iii) everyday practices that promote the thinking of vulnerability as a central category of an ethics and aesthetics of care. Finally, the Working Group highlights the concept of cultural ecology and its role in integral ecology, as well as its interdependence with the ecology of everyday life (de Certeau) that unveils the challenge of recognizing otherness, especially from those arising from the contradictions of society such as excluded, immigrants, minorities, and the worsening of the gender inequality. These challenges demand the creation of a common place of cohabitation, conviviality, coexistence based on a relational perspective.

## **10. Political and Public Theologies**

[submissions welcome in English, Portuguese, or Spanish]

Dr Ana Rosa Cloquet (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas)

Dr Dion Forster (University of Stellenbosch)

Dr Rudolf von Sinner (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná)

This working group receives proposals within the conceptualization and theoretical as well as empirical analysis and discussion of political and public theologies. The understanding is that while political theologies refer to a sacralized or secularized form of politics, often co-opting religious communities, public theologies are actions and positions of religious communities in the public sphere, sometimes giving significant contributions to the common good, but sometimes with projects to occupy the public sphere and take hold of political power. The discussion, therefore, deals, on the one hand, with politics, especially in formally secular states like Brazil and South Africa, whose society is highly religious with a growing religious plurality and upcoming projects of power. On the other hand, it deals with the self-understanding and action of religious communities as they seek to position themselves within a plural and vibrant public sphere. The proponents have been collaborating previously on these issues, by promoting international lecture series on public theologies in pandemic times and populism, politics and public theology and publications on political and theological dimensions of public theologies in Brazil and South Africa. While this is the traditional co-operating focus, given that this South-South dialogue originated within the GNPT as early as its foundation in 2007, the proposed working group is by no means restricted to these two countries.

### **11. Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Public Theology**

[submissions welcome in English or Portuguese]

Dr Dianne Rayson (Charles Sturt University/Canberra, Australia)

Dr Carlos Caldas (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais)

Dr Wilhelm Sell (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) might be labeled as a public theologian *avant la lettre*, due to his concern in thinking a down-to-earth theology, a theology that, as he said in one of his “letters from prison”, looks to reality from the vantage point of “those in the underside of history”. Therefore, this Working Group intends to receive proposals of short papers, in English and in Portuguese as well, that using the theology of Bonhoeffer as a theoretical framework, addresses to issues related to public theology, broadly speaking. In other words, the main aim of this Working Group is to answer to the following question: what the theology of Bonhoeffer has to say to issues and questions that are debated in the public arena today?

### **12. Public Theology and Decoloniality**

[submissions welcome in English, Spanish, or Portuguese]

Dr Heike Walz (Augustana-Hochschule Neuendettelsau - Germany)

Dr José Mário Gonçalves (Faculdade Unida de Vitória - Brazil)

Dr Nicolás Panotto (Otras Cruces/Universidad Arturo Pratt - Chile/Argentina)

This panel proposes to address the intersectionality between public theology and decolonial and postcolonial theories. Its objective is to analyze the colonial matrices that come into play in the construction of the public place of the religious and their incidence today, and how a post/de-colonial critique can contribute to a critical public theology about them. The main axes will be processes of racialization and spiritualities, the intercultural dimension of theology and religions, and the colonial matrix that crosses the definition of the religious in contemporary political practices. Therefore, some of the topics to be worked on in this table will be: redefinitions of the processes of secularization and secularism from its Euro-modern-colonial matrix, the value of religious diversity and plurality as a critical contribution to Christian religious hegemony in the public space, a redefinition of public space from the processes of decolonization that promote minority spiritualities, the impact of a modern-centric definition of the religious in the public space and the need for a decolonization of the term based on religious diversity, a post/de-colonial critique of public and political theology, among others.

### **13. Public Theology and Religious Nationalisms in the 21st Century**

[submissions welcome in English, Spanish or Portuguese]

Dr Graham McGeoch (Faculdade Unida de Vitória, Brazil)

Dr Raimundo César Barreto Jr. (Princeton Theological Seminary, United States)

Dr Wanderley Pereira da Rosa (Faculdade Unida de Vitória, Brazil)

The phenomenon of religious nationalism has gained renewed and growing space in academic research and political analysis in the 21st century. As Mark Juegersmeyer, among others, has demonstrated, in the history of nation-states, from time to time, national identities have merged with a certain religious affiliation. This phenomenon



becomes more accentuated when it involves discrimination or even persecution of religious groups not associated with the dominant religion. Although not a recent phenomenon, religious nationalism has re-emerged in new forms at the beginning of this century. Initially associated with Islamic states (mainly after September 11, 2001), over the last decade several events have demonstrated that religious nationalism has a global reach. The UK exit from the European Union, the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the heist of the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, the rise of Modi in India in the wake of Hindu nationalism, the electoral success of other populist leaders to around the world such as Bolsonaro, in Brazil, and Orbán, in Hungary (both in the wake of Christian nationalism) and the resumption of power by the military regime in Myanmar with the support of Buddhist nationalists are just a few examples of how this phenomenon affects the most diverse traditions. religious organizations around the world. Among the possible causes of the rebirth and expansion of this phenomenon today are: a) the collapse of modern meta-narratives; b) the decline of trust in secular nationalisms and; c) the intensification of globalization, with the subsequent threat to the sense of traditional identities, added to the tensions intensified by the growing displacement of the masses - largely forced to migrate from the south to the global north, thus intensifying the feeling of insecurity of hegemonic populations, mainly in the North Atlantic. In the cases of Europe and the Americas, the growing insecurity of predominantly white populations has fueled the growth of Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism, among others. In these contexts, religious nationalism is mainly white and Christian. This WG will receive proposals that intend to illuminate the bins of this conjuncture that challenges us in the search for public theologies capable of articulating democratic values, advancing a renewed vision of human rights and planetary citizenship, and formulating efficient vocabularies of resistance and overcoming exclusivist and reactionary tendencies associated with religious nationalism in this century.

#### **14. Human Rights, Religions and Gender in a (post)pandemic perspective in contemporaneity**

[submissions welcome in Spanish or Portuguese]

Dr Claudete Beise Ulrich (UNIDA)

Dr Nivia Ivette Núñez de la Paz (UNINI, México)

Dr Celso Gabatz (EST)

Este Grupo de Trabalho pretende descortinar o horizonte compreensivo a partir da reconfiguração da democracia nos dias atuais por meio da mobilização de novos agentes, na demarcação de fluxos e novos domínios das identidades a partir da diversidade de gênero, sexual, cultural, religiosa e política face à pandemia sob o amplo espectro dos problemas e demandas inerentes às cidades. Busca-se ampliar o debate não acentuando apenas assimetrias, desigualdades, diferenças ou estereótipos, mas, também, sugerindo aprofundamentos teóricos que retratem questões correlatas à alteridade, a consolidação de novos direitos, políticas públicas, movimentos sociais, a tolerância e a preservação dos direitos humanos.