

# On the crossroads of modernity

New perspectives on religion, culture and society since 1750

CCSCE conference in cooperation with the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum and KADOC-KU Leuven

## Welcome

Monday 24 June 2019

*Florian Bock*

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

I am happy to welcome the *Research Network on Christian Churches, Culture and Society in Contemporary Europe*, also on behalf of Wilhelm Damberg, here at the Ruhr-University Bochum. Bochum is not Rome, Venice or Leuven. And here I am just naming a few cities our network members are from. But Bochum has equally as much charm, and we would like to convince you of that in the next two days.

In the 1960s the RUB was mainly built for the children of mineworkers and blue-collar-workers and retrospectively is in many respects exemplary of what our conference is calling the “crossroads of modernity”. Firstly, this applies in terms of architecture: if you look around all you will see is concrete structures, which belong to the architectural style of brutalism. But not here at our conference venue the Beckmannshof. The farmer Berta Beckmann defended her old timbered house resolutely against the continuously growing Ruhr-University. And she was successful as it was eventually put under preservation order and today serves as a noble address for international conferences just like this one.

But we are also “on the crossroads of modernity” when we look beyond the concrete buildings at cities like Bochum, Dortmund or Essen. We are in the middle of the largest industrial area in Europe, where the transport axes cross north-south and west-east. Here economic and social transformation processes of the present happened significantly earlier and more severely in comparison to other regions in Germany. Wim Damberg once coined the term “cookshop of modernity” for this phenomenon: The long farewell to coal and steel lasted for 30 years, still ongoing, and forced reconstruction upon the so called “Ruhrgebiet”, the Ruhr area early on. A result of this structural change is a particularly dense occurrence of universities and platforms for knowledge, in which interdisciplinarity is very important. I myself taught at six different universities, but the exchange between historians and sociologists of religion for instance has nowhere been as intense as in Bochum.

Eventually “on the crossroads of modernity” applies to the religious life at the Ruhr. We see a constant balancing act between tradition and innovation, between remembrance and future.

Catholics must learn to manage saving measures and XXL parishes. New pastoral processes are getting off the ground. Simultaneously an utterly diverse religious space developed here at the Ruhr, which is characterized by globalization and migration.<sup>1</sup>

Taking all this into account we can say that the CCSCE network could not have chosen a better conference location than Bochum. Thank you to Kristien Suenens and Alina Potempa who professionally and quietly organized everything. I hope for a successful conference. Or as we say in the Ruhr area: Glück auf!

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<sup>1</sup> Vgl. Wilhelm Damberg/Johannes Meier: Das Bistum Essen 1958–2008. Eine illustrierte Kirchengeschichte der Region von den Anfängen des Christentums bis zur Gegenwart. Unter Mitarbeit von Verena Schmidt, Münster 2008, S. 278.