Episcopal Leadership: Shaping Power in Gaul and Hispania (IVth-VIIIth centuries)

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During the Christianization of the Western Roman Empire, bishops established themselves in prominent positions in the cities from the 4th century onwards. They looked after the poor, acted as judges, were responsible for “construction booms”, and negotiated with dues, kings, or the emperor, not least when it came to ransoming prisoners. According to the communio opinio, we find this urban episcopal leadership particularly in Gaul, but research with a view to the late antique urban world of Hispania also states this phenomenon. This international and interdisciplinary conference aims to explicitly compare episcopal rule in both regions through archaeological and thematic approaches. The case studies of paradigmatic cities will allow an analysis of the material manifestations of episcopal leadership. At the same time, the thematic approaches enable us to discuss the same process from diverse perspectives: administrative, political, economic, civic, literary and liturgical. Concerning these, how does the urban episcopal leadership differ in both regions? Is it the same type of phenomena? Did it happen simultaneously? Last but not least, to what extent did Rome continue to function as a paradigm for Gaul and Hispania?