

Call for papers for panel at the BASR Annual Conference, Religion in the Global and Local: Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Challenges, 7-9 September 2015, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK

Panel: Religion, Ethics, and Economic Life

Organizers: David Henig and Anna Strhan (University of Kent)

The interrelations between religion, values, and the economy were central preoccupations in the work of the founding thinkers of anthropology and sociology. With both the growing marketization of different spheres of human activity and the questioning of current economic orders following the financial crisis of 2008, with religion often perceived as providing resources to (re)moralize the markets and challenge the idea that 'the market has become God' (Frank 2001), these questions are once again returning to prominence. Religions have responded to the global extension of market ideologies in the post cold-war era across different spheres of social life in complex ways. Some have provided moral motivations and resources to foster work ethics and practices that closely align with broader logics of economic 'growth' and 'productivity'. Others have offered challenges to the pervasiveness of the idea of human life as shaped by logics of commodification and the socio-economic inequalities associated with the expansion of global capitalism. Others have offered a critique of contemporary economic values while also drawing on market logics and practices to their own ends.

A growing body of recent scholarship has focused on such questions as the commodification of religion and spirituality, how religion is influenced by consumer culture, how faith-based organizations are involved in forms of welfare provision in neoliberal political economies, and how religious groups have responded to experiences of increasing economic scarcity. This panel seeks to open up analysis of the lived interrelations between religion, economics, and ethics. How are the ethical practices, values, and understandings of religious groups shaped by and responding to particular aspects of economic life? How do religious groups seek to engage with the question of what, or where, is the Good in economic and market practices? What does the increasing public prominence of some religious leaders' comments on the economy tell us about the place of religion in wider social life, and how does this relate to everyday religious interrelations with economic structures?

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