

EASR Bern 2018 (17-21 June) - Panel Proposal

Us and Them: A Matter of Belonging. Multiple Religious Responses to the Clash of Cultures in the Past and the Present

Diverse religious practices have long baffled scholars of contemporary religion, whose research started with the assumption that individuals commit, or refuse to commit, to an entire institutionally-defined package of beliefs and practices. Social surveys typically ask respondents to self-identify by denominational or other broad religious categories. Sociologists attempt to measure religiosity according to how well individuals conform to the official religious standards, such as frequency of church attendance, scripture reading, or prayer. We have to point the way forward toward a new way of understanding and studying religious behaviour. Rather than try to fit people into prearranged packages, scholars must begin to study religion as it is actually lived and experienced in peoples' everyday lives. We have to explore the many ways that people express themselves spiritually. Quoting the statement by Meredith McGuire, "We have to challenge those who see declining church attendance as the death of religion in the Western world, with the goal of demonstrating that religion is as widespread and vital as ever, if you know where to look" (*Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, Oxford 2008).

By these premises, according to the American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington's hypothesis that people's cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world (*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York 1996), the purpose of this panel session is to analyse the ways by which collimating or conflicting multiple religious identities respond to the so-called "clash of cultures" (already used during the colonial period and the Belle Époque) by means of articulated policies of acculturation and/or strategies of transmission and circulation (of ideas, beliefs, and persons), closely related to religious phenomena such as hybridism, syncretism, or cohabitation facing with the threat of ideological and cultural dispersion or annihilation of religious minorities, religious deviance, atheism and non-belief, and religious violence in its manifold expressions.

In such a perspective, by focusing on inter-and intra-religious dynamics in the history of the religions of the past and the present, the session seeks for papers aiming to assess theoretical models and heuristic pathways of such dynamics in general, as well as to explore particular examples from religious culture of various countries in different times and spaces.

Individual paper proposals (complete with title and a 200-300 max. words abstract) may be addressed to Giuseppina Paola Viscardi (Università degli Studi di Salerno, Post-doctoral research fellow in History of Religions), e-mail: giusiviscardi@hotmail.com, and submitted by November 10, 2017. Potential contributors will get a response within a few days after that.