

For the 2021 EASR conference in Pisa, Anja Kirsch and I are preparing a panel titled "**A View to Nowhere: Empirical and Methodological Approaches to the Study of Utopias in the 19th and 20th Centuries**" (see the abstract below).

If you are interested in participating to this panel, we look forward to receiving your proposals for a paper by no later than 20 January.

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A View to Nowhere: Empirical and Methodological Approaches to the Study of Utopias in the 19th and 20th Centuries

In this panel, we discuss the relevance of research on utopian imaginaries, narratives, and projects for a global religious history of the 19th and 20th centuries and for theoretical reflections on religion. The conceptual ambiguity of the term utopia as both a "good place" and as "nowhere" underpins projections of the ideal society onto a specific place or an undefined elsewhere. Utopian imaginations point toward a world that does not exist (yet), but that serves as a reference for radical social, economic, and religious improvement. Therefore, utopian ideas and religious discourses share an inherent normative tension between the world "as it is" and the world "as it ought to be." This tension invites us to reflect on how utopian ideas constitute instruments of resilience and resistance against the dominant social structures by providing an imaginary alternative reality that allows individuals and groups to endure their living conditions. At the same time, utopias may unlock a strong potential for change by inspiring revolutionary projects and constituting powerful calls to action to subvert the status quo.

To actors and to researchers, utopian ideals and practice reveal how different aspects of life are interwoven. Thus, they invite us to connect intellectual and everyday accounts of lived or imagined experiences in our efforts to uncover new facets in the history of religion/s and to push forward our theoretical and systematic reflections on the social and historical consequences of religious beliefs and practices. In this panel, we welcome case studies on literary, scientific, and lived utopias of the 19th and 20th centuries that include methodological considerations on the relevance of the research on utopias for the study of religion.