

## **CARD Critical Analysis of Religious Diversity Network: Theory and Methodology**

International Workshop: 24-25 May 2013 Organised by the Centre for Contemporary Religion, Aarhus

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### *Abstracts*

#### **Peter Beyer**

Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Ottawa, Canada.

#### **Key note: Religious Diversity and the Re-Institutionalization of Religion**

As a globalized pattern, religion as religious diversity in contemporary states, law, mass media, education, and institutionalized religions themselves is generally recognized and understood primarily as consisting of a variable but limited set of religions, including discrete subdivisions of these religions. Individual religious identities are therefore judged primarily with reference to these religions and subdivisions; and the importance of these identities in terms of their degree of cognitive and performative correspondence to the individually or collectively understood programmatic content of these religions ("orthodoxy"). Accordingly, less correspondence becomes less religion or weaker religious identity, and deviation of "religious" orientation and action outside the putative bounds of the religions tends to be referenced – by others or the individuals concerned – with contrasting correlative terms such as spirituality, culture, cult, superstition, humanism, or atheism. A current academic and popular discussion – in the wake of the loss in popularity of the idea of secularization – attempts to see transformations in contemporary religion in terms of a shifting balance between the religions and its contrasting correlatives, very often positing a zero-sum relation in which the decline of one means the increase of the other. The paper sets itself three tasks. First, it offers an analysis of this situation as just described; second, it outlines certain aporias to which this way of understanding religion and religious diversity leads and the offers a way of avoiding them by distinguishing between religious identity and religious system; third, it illustrates both the first and second parts through a presentation of some results of recent research carried out among young adults of a great variety of religious identities in Canada.

#### **Kocku von Stuckard**

Department of Comparative and Historical Study of Religion at the University of Groningen, Netherlands.

#### **Theorizing Pluralism from a Discursive Perspective**

In the academic discussion about religious pluralism a fruitful position has emerged that looks at two ways of

describing cultural pluralisms: a pluralism of religious identities and traditions on the one hand, and a pluralism of societal domains (religion, science, law, art, politics) on the other. The lecture introduces this concept and discusses the use of discursive perspectives in our understanding of these pluralisms. From a discursive point of view, the demarcations between "religions", as well as the construction of something *as* religion (and *not* as science, law, etc.) are themselves an attribution of meaning through communication and discursive practice. Consequently, these demarcations are both historically contingent and legitimized in discourses. What does this mean for scholarly analysis?

### **Paul Bramadat**

Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria, Canada.

### **Practical, Political, Professional: Challenges in the study of religious diversity**

In this presentation I discuss my work as a scholar often engaged in collaborations with policy makers and as the director of a research centre coordinating projects on religion and diversity in Canada. From the vantage point of these two professional roles, I consider specific illustrations of broader problems associated with and solutions to the study of religious diversity in Canada and abroad. What challenges face scholars of religion interested in engaging with colleagues from the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, not to mention those from distinctive religious perspectives and from the political arena? I discuss the way one can engage the often narrow political interests policy makers may have in promoting a particular understanding of religious diversity (e.g., as a problem to manage, an anachronism to tolerate, or an electoral or cultural resource to exploit). Fortunately, in Canada there is often enough latitude within governmental departments engaged in such collaborations that scholars can both work within the intellectual and political horizons of one's partners and challenge some of the assumptions that determine their understandings of religious diversity. Moreover, in my work at the CSRS, I often encounter colleagues (from Canada or around the world) conducting research on some dimension of religious diversity according to radically unfamiliar perspectives. In the examples I will discuss, it is problematic to assume that all participants in a given research agenda operate according to common intellectual principles – instead, establishing open relationships and basic, limited operational definitions of phenomena are crucial starting points for moving toward more accurate and interesting research perspectives.

### **Mel Prideaux**

Philosophy, Religion and the History of Science, University of Leeds, England.

The Community Religions Project at the University of Leeds (<http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/>) has been in existence for over 35 years and provides a unique model for observing development in the way religious diversity and pluralism have been conceptualised and studied in the UK. Many leading scholars of religion in the UK have produced monographs, research papers, or other work in conjunction with the CRP. The increasing engagement with concepts and challenges of religious diversity and pluralism are visible in the greater emphasis on interreligious relations, and religion(s) or 'faith' and the state; largely through sociological and policy studies, rather than ethnographic studies of discrete

religious communities. Issues concerning religious categories and conflation of religious with national or ethnic identity are notable in early CRP studies, but are now more clearly articulated as a focus for study. The continuing focus on qualitative methods is revealing of prevailing UK models of study of religions, though the move from micro (very local) to macro (UK-wide) studies involves increasing use of secondary and quantitative data. Using the archive of the CRP, this paper will provide an intellectual history of study of religions in the UK which highlights the changing engagement with pluralism and diversity. Using example studies issues concerning terminology, method and theory will be identified. The move to a focus on interreligious studies and religion and policy will also provide a framework for considering how study of religion in the UK is articulated in response to both academic and non-academic interests and concerns.

### **Andrew Dawson**

Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, Lancaster University, England.

### **The Politics and Practice of Religious Diversity**

The paper opens by briefly outlining three recent episodes in the UK involving minority and nonmainstream religious groups. It also builds upon my experience as an academic associate (but non-member) of an interest/pressure group which is currently interfacing with political and ancillary State institutions in the cause of greater equality and inclusion for minority and nonmainstream religions. The three episodes to be outlined are: i) the refusal of the publicly-funded 'Inter Faith Network for the UK' to grant membership to the Druid Network; ii) the arrest and attempted prosecution of two religious leaders of the Santo Daime religion on charges of drug trafficking; and iii) the refusal to legally recognise a Scientology chapel as 'a place of meeting for religious worship' and, as a consequence, a registered location for the solemnisation of marriages.

Starting from this empirical base, the paper reflects upon the theoretical and methodological issues raised by the variation in the ways in which the State conceptualises and defines religion and the manner in which it is theorised and engaged by the academic community. In effect, while scholars emphasise the importance of 'methodological atheism/agnosticism' and contemporaneity to their treatment of religious belief and practice, the British State employs a normative and anachronistic approach in its conceptualisation and definition of religion. Having identified this variation, the paper concludes by outlining its implications for contemporary understandings of religious diversity and by suggesting that the State and academy have lessons to learn from each other.

### **Kim Knott**

Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, County South, Lancaster University, England.

### **A Spatial Approach to Researching Religious Diversity in Context**

Having studied local religious diversity with the Community Religions Project at the University of Leeds from the late-1970s, and worked with teams of students to map religion in the city's neighbourhoods (see paper by Melanie Prideaux), I developed an approach to locating religion in ostensibly secular contexts (*The Location of Religion*, 2005). I have

gone on to apply the methodology I developed at that time to the location of religious and secular values in various contexts, including the hands, urban landscapes, media discourse, everyday ritual, a health centre and high school.

In this paper I show how a spatial analysis can be profitable for interrogating places of diversity and engagement, taking examples from organic, religiously plural neighbourhoods and intentional multi-faith spaces. Such an analysis takes seriously the idea that all spaces presuppose and are shaped by bodies, and are social and cultural, mental and discursive as well as physical. Places of religious diversity are interconnected with wider configurations of time, knowledge, power and other peoples and places, and contain within their present formation the traces of earlier regimes. A spatial analysis can reveal their dynamism and show how they are brought into being and sustained by habitual and sometimes ritual practices, shaped by normative conceptions (e.g. of church/state relations or multiculturalism), whilst having the potential to discipline and harden boundaries but also at times to transform social relations and the way places are lived and experienced. By concentrating on particular, notionally bounded things, organisations or places, a spatial approach focuses our attention on diversity, relations and movements within the space, and on interconnections beyond it.

### **Alexander-Kenneth Nagel**

Sociology of Religion, Center for Religious Studies, Bochum, Germany.

### **Beyond Topography: The Negotiation of religious diversity in interreligious activities**

My contribution draws from experiences and results from an ongoing research project on religious pluralization and interreligious activities. In contrast to descriptive endeavours aiming at a topography of religious diversity in a given locality and in contrast to statistical macro-analyses of the general impacts of religious pluralization I focus on the religious encounters which are brought about by an increased visibility of religious minorities in modern immigration societies.

My analysis is to explore the meso-level of structured interreligious activities, such as dialogue meetings, neighbourhood councils, peace prayers or open days. The main research question is: *How are religious differences articulated and dealt with in these activities?* In conceptual terms, I draw from the work of Erving Goffman about the dramaturgical analysis of social interaction. Hence, I consider interreligious activities as interaction rituals trying to keep a balance between the maintenance and presentation of religious differences and the governance and moderation of religious diversity. In terms of methods, I make use of participant observation to identify events of embarrassment and appeasement. In my talk I will present six interactive and discursive mechanisms to convert articulations of difference and diversity into a sense of cohesion and unity.

### **Louis Rousseau**

**Département de sciences des religions, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada.**

I have directed an interdisciplinary project in this field since 2004. It brought together historians of religion, sociologists and geographers who engaged in four case studies centering on ethnoconfessional groups composed of migrants of

recent arrival in Québec, and also submitted those four localized groups to three transversal and comparative analysis (historic-demographic, women, 1,5 generation). It was the first study ever done, centered on religious diversity in the historical and cultural context of Québec society. Due to the role of religion (catholic majority, protestant domineering majority) in the identity formation process of Québec's majority, the public appearance of new religious practices claiming their right through judicial decisions was straining a public opinion still in the process of rapid secularization. Thus our project focused on the contextual role of religious reference in the interaction between various ethnic conscientiousness in the broader process of identity recomposition. Our study used census data and participant observation of four local communities amongst whom religious practitioners were selected for interviews. A common conceptual framework was developed to support such a large team enterprise. Our results have recently been the object of a book whose problematic, architecture and methods sheds light on the focus of the meeting. Surprisingly the contemporary Québec context, where religion has been a fundamental identity reference whilst at the same time the realm of such a low rate of actual religious practices, has stronger analogies with the Denmark situation than with France's.

### **Rosalind I. J. Hackett**

The University of Tennessee, USA.

### **Studying Religious Diversity in Africa: Methodological Shifts and Reflections**

You do not stand in one place to watch a masquerade, say the Igbo of Nigeria, and my paper will track the evolution in my nearly four decades of research on African religious landscapes. My earliest study of religious pluralism in Africa mapped out the various religious organizations in the town of Calabar, south-eastern Nigeria, and traced their provenance and trajectories. Additionally, it sought to explore extra-/trans-institutional forms of religious belief and practice through ethnographic analysis of communal life-cycle rituals, popular religious music, and emerging televangelism. It also introduced notions of religious affiliation and association, rather than conversion, to capture patterns of religious mobility and multiple belonging. My subsequent studies of religious diversity have been more attentive to the power relations of the increasingly competitive religious public spheres in contemporary Africa. As democratization, neoliberalism, media deregulation, and global religious activism increasingly change the stakes of coexistence between religious groups, and between such groups and the state, the management of Africa's increasingly competitive religious public spheres has become a more compelling area of investigation. This leads into questions of how the state regulates and registers religious organizations, and how the latter (particularly minoritarian groups) may invoke constitutional and international human rights standards pertaining to freedom of religion and belief. No current studies would be complete without factoring in the way the critical role played by the media sphere in legitimating/delegitimizing religious groups. Indigenous or "traditional" religions as a category remain challenging for scholars and governments to assess, given their relative invisibility and conflation with cultural practice.

### **Maria del Mar Grier**

ISOR – Sociology Department, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain.

## **Bonds, bounds and boundaries: religious diversity, academic research and public policies. The case of the “Catalan Map of Religious Diversity” (2002- 2012).**

The paper seeks to critically examine the ten-year research project “Catalan Map of Religious Diversity” (2002-2012) carried out by the ISOR research group and commissioned by the Catalan Government. The project, which has employed two full-time researchers, has aimed at providing “complete information of the utmost exactness accuracy and completeness about all the minority religious groups present in Catalonia” through a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches and the creation of a large database with information of all religious minority centers existing in Catalonia. The project has been reproduced by the Spanish government in other regions and has led to the development of research projects on the governance of religious diversity in particular institutions such as hospitals, schools and prisons among others.

The paper analyses the consequences of defining and explaining ‘religion’ in terms of public policies, and reflects on the political implications of the different research strategies and decisions (i.e. how to classify some small groups or how to measure the group size) that can be adopted in relation to this sensitive policy area. The paper will also provide some analytical insights on the challenges involved in conducting research on the religious diversity topic due to the political significance it has acquired in the last decade in the European context.

### **Marian Burchardt**

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, Germany.

## **Beyond “World Religions”: Culture, Tradition and Religion in the Dynamics of Religious Diversity in post-apartheid South Africa**

Research on religious diversity, religious pluralism and secularity is always indebted not only to definitions of religion but also the relationship of particular research settings to the genealogy and historicity of the concept of religion. This generates immense challenges with regard to settings in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa which were only sporadically considered to have “religious traditions” in the periods when disciplinary knowledge productions on religion took shape. Sub-Saharan African traditions (ancestral lineage-based worship, traditional healing, witchcraft) are generally seen as being “outside” in the perspective of world religions, or “below (the threshold) in the perspective of Axial Age theories. In this paper I analyse how diverse sets of phenomena have been classified as religion, culture and tradition in the South African context, and how these classifications have been authorized and canonized. In particular I will explain the political consequences of such classifications, how African neo-traditionalism and world religion relate to one another, and how they impinge on the dynamics of religious pluralism, secularism and identity politics in the post-apartheid era.

### **Yaghoob Foroutan**

The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

This paper presents research-based evidence to deal with the critical question associated with the validity of data analysis in the context of religious diversity. The paper particularly focuses on official statistical data of population censuses which are the most commonly-used and the most representative sources of data that also provides data on religion. However, this paper argues that these data sources of religion need to be considered carefully as they have a substantial potential to provide incomplete and misleading knowledge on religious identity. More importantly, the paper argues that this potential particularly applies both to multicultural contexts representing religious diversity and to the religious immigrants who experience greater ‘cultural distance’ (e.g. Berry 1992; Chiswick et al. 2003; Bevelander 2005; Foroutan 2009) between the origin and destination societies.

The fields of this study are two multicultural contexts in which religious diversity is substantially visible: Australia and New Zealand. While they are primarily Christian-dominated societies, they also hold a significantly diverse range of religious groups from throughout the world: Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, etc. This substantial religious diversity provides a good opportunity for this study to examine the key research objective outlined above. More importantly, for the following two main reasons, this analysis gives a specific attention to a particular religious group: Muslims. First, they generally experience a greater ‘cultural distance’ as discussed above. Second, while they are all considered as Muslim and their religious identity is ticked as Islam in the official data sources, they came from varying Islamic contexts throughout the world. Finally, logistic regression analysis used in this study also provides a good methodological basis to present a critical discussion on the validity of religion data in the context of religious diversity.

## **Ulrika Mårtensson**

Dept of Archeology and Religious Studies, NTNU-The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Sweden.

### **Religious pluralism and ‘unity in diversity’: Public and Islamic approaches.**

Trondheim city is receiving its ‘first generation’ of immigrants of a wide range of religious backgrounds, and is seeking to develop sustainable integration models. Most migrants are Christians of various denominations. Muslims are the second largest group, followed by Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs. While Trondheim has a strong religious legacy as the seat of the Archbishop, it has never seen such religious *diversity* before in terms of numbers of religions.

This paper addresses the question of how to study religious diversity and pluralism in terms of institutional policy and practices. Initial interview-based research on relationships between public institutions, Muslims and Islamic organisations in Trondheim, found that while public institutions identify with human rights and civic dialogue, they often understand this to mean that immigrants need education in this respect. However, it is clear that migrants’ rights are curtailed if public institutions refuse to engage in two-way accommodation. Gender segregation and parenting are two cases where public institutions’ failure to understand migrants’ motivations may curtail their cultural, religious, political and economic rights. Regarding parenting Trondheim’s interfaith dialogue between The Church of Norway and The Islamic Council of Norway has intervened to achieve a two-way dialogue between public and Islamic institutions. Left to themselves, however, public institutions appear to define religious diversity as *identity*, and to exclude diversity of *practices*. Local Islamic institutions and Muslims tend instead to deny diverse *identities* within Islam (‘there is only

one Islam') but to tacitly recognise diverse *practices*, i.e. Muslims operate with a concept of 'unity in diversity'.

*Pluralism* thus implies accepting diversity of practices, not merely of identities.

Much research on European Muslims has concentrated on public non-recognition of diverse practices, using qualitative methods. Thus, we know that there is a recognition problem, but we do not know whether it has effects on employment, education and health for the concerned groups. Nor do we know what is required to overcome the problem, which gives the impression that we are dealing with a virtually insoluble 'clash between Islam and European secularism'. Further research would thus explore:

- Whether religious pluralism requires more than recognition of the right to be different, notably public *knowledge* that there is 'unity in diversity'. For example, local public institutions combat *hijab* and gender segregation measures on the grounds that they symbolise women's submissiveness and dependence, not autonomy and individual choice, which is how many Muslims perceive *hijab*; would public servants' attitudes change if they understood Muslims' motivations as similar to their own norms?
- How Islamic approaches to religious pluralism compare with public approaches, in theory and in practice?
- Whether Islamic and interfaith approaches can be used to develop public educational models for establishing religious pluralism?

Qualitative and quantitative methods should be combined. Migrants' performances on labour market and in education need to be quantified and complemented by interviews/observation to analyse Islamic and public institutions policies and practices regarding pluralism.

### **Anna Halafoff**

Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, Australia.

### **The Study of Religious Diversity in Australia: Theory, Methods and Networks,**

Australia is becoming an increasingly multifaith and non-religious society and adapting to this new reality is one of its greatest challenges. Australian scholars of religion have contributed to local and global debates on the management and governance of religious diversity, shaping the way religion is understood by the academy, state actors, the media and religious communities. This paper provides a critical analysis of the theories and methods utilised by Australian scholars in their studies of religious diversity in and beyond Australia. It also focuses on the networks created between academics, governments and community leaders, arguing that a networked approach to understanding religious diversity has assisted in creating and maintaining social inclusion and harmony, particularly in the Australian state of Victoria. Finally, it explores some innovative theoretical and methodological frameworks applied by Australian scholars in recent years in response to new categories and patterns of religious and non-religious belief that are emerging in Australia and internationally. In so doing, this paper aims to contribute new insights on the theory, methods and networks developing within the academic field of religious diversity in Australia, which can inform research and practice in other societies that are grappling with similar issues.

### **Andreas Tunger-Zanetti**



University of Lucerne, Center for Research on Religion, Switzerland.

### **‘Problematic religion’. Researching religion under changed conditions**

Research on religion takes place under conditions which have fundamentally changed compared to 40 or 50 years ago. In Switzerland by now 70 per cent of the inhabitants are affiliated to a Christian denomination, whereas it was more than 97 per cent in 1970. Today, two thirds of those affiliated are largely dissociated, i.e. they never participate in religious life or do so only on rare occasions. The fastest growing group within increasing religious diversity in Switzerland are people without any affiliation. These facts, indicating a clear loss of importance of religion seem to contradict the constant problematising of religion in the public. The Swiss debate on Islam with the minaret ban as its culmination is a typical, but by far not the only example. Others concern issues such as circumcision, bell-ringing of churches, crucifixes in classrooms or crosses on mountain tops. Such debates, engrossed by the logics of a mediated society, have led many people to perceive religion as something problematic and to have led to distancing themselves further from it.

My presentation addresses some methodological problems in the practical field research as well as in the communication of research to a non-specialised audience. This begins with effects triggered by framing research as concerning ‘religion’ vis-à-vis funding sources or interview partners. It continues with the question of how to deal with the big number of citizens who have become religiously passive and ‘illiterate’. As this group is composed of people with and without formal affiliation, traditional labels such as ‘Roman Catholic’, ‘Protestant’ or Muslim lose their value and need to be replaced or modified. Finally, how to deal with the feedback effects of the ‘religion is problematic’ syndrome on religiously active persons?

**Amy Adamczyk,**

Department of Sociology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, University of New York, USA.

### **Understanding the Role of Religious Diversity in Shaping Cross-National Attitudes**

This study examines the influence of religious diversity in shaping cross-national attitudes about homosexuality. To understand why religious diversity would shape attitudes I draw on the work of Peter Berger and American religious economists, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark. Peter Berger argued that as the number of religious worldviews available increase, the less plausible each will seem and the less likely individuals will be to adhere to a given religion. In contrast, Finke and Stark put forth the thesis that religious diversity increases the quantity and quality of religions available to potential adherents. If individuals are able to find a faith that is appealing, then they will be more committed and likely to abide by the precepts of their faith. Berger’s ideas suggest that religious diversity could introduce highly religious people to alternative religious perspectives that undermine their religious worldview, weakening the influence of personal religious beliefs on the acceptance of religious proscriptions regarding homosexuality. Conversely, Finke and Stark’s ideas suggests that religious diversity will bolster support for religion, increasing the likelihood that religious individuals will hold attitudes that are consistent with religious proscriptions regarding homosexuality. Using data from the World Values Survey and hierarchical modeling techniques this study will draw on these two perspectives to develop and test competing hypotheses about how religious diversity shapes tolerance for homosexuality across nations.

## **Martin D. Stringer**

Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham, England

### **Discourses of Religious Diversity**

This paper will outline a research project based in the city of Birmingham, UK, that looked at the way everyday conversations around the city engaged in issues of religious diversity. Birmingham is one of the most diverse cities in the UK and the physical landscape, as well as the look and language of many of its people, means that issues of religious diversity cannot be escaped. What is apparent, however, is that when we listen to the way in which the ordinary people of the city, many of whom no longer claim any religious affiliation, they are seldom consistent in their understanding of, or reaction to, the fact of religious diversity. Context matters and the complexity of the range of discourses that occur, be they around buildings, dress, festivals, images in the media, or news stories, makes for a nuanced and ever changing environment for the understanding of diversity. It is my contention that we need to be aware of these local and popular discourses, their differences, their complexity, and their changing nature, in order to engage in wider academic and policy decisions about religious diversity at a more abstract level. This paper will outline the methodological issues raised by the project, outline some of the findings in a specific context, and offer possibilities for future research.

## **William Hoverd**

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

### **Critical Reflections on the Study of Religious Diversity in New Zealand**

Religious Diversity in New Zealand has been an understudied area. This seminar outlines the basic changes which have occurred within the nation as it moves from a colonial history characterised by Christian diversity to a “religiously diverse” country, as designated by the New Zealand government in 2008. The paper will outline how this religious change is being measured and evaluated by the nationally representative, longitudinal, empirical data set: The New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey (n=6517), which has been collected annually since 2009. The talk will point to specific projects being undertaken from this survey. These include, but are not limited to, studies of religion and group size, religion and deprivation, religion and wellbeing and the nature of unbelief in the New Zealand population. Lastly, I discuss the limitations of survey data when it comes to studying religious diversity within this nation.