



11th Meeting of European Geographers of Religion: International Colloquia on the Changing Religious Landscape of Europe

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Session 1: Religious diversity in Europe

Differences in religiosity across current Europe: Testing the cultural insecurity hypothesis in the set of 34 societies

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The contribution is concerned with the hypothesis that religious belonging, belief and behaviour emerges in response to the general perception of social and ecological threats. Differences in key existential conditions and in perceived vulnerability to risks have significant impacts upon religiosity. People perceive threats at the national and personal levels and seek security and the religion provides sources of meaning and control for people experiencing risks and high levels of vulnerability. Shifts to post-industrial society (i.e. higher education and technological complexity), in general, leads to secularisation by reducing threat associated with vulnerability and deprivation. Experience of risks and higher levels of vulnerability leads, also in some of the current European societies, to relatively tighter societies characterized by high threat perceptions and by self-concepts which tend to result in religiously intolerant and ethnocentric responses. The contribution uses outcomes of PEW surveys which were carried out in 2015-2017 in 34 societies in Western and Eastern Europe stretching from Ireland and Norway to Russia and Armenia.

Religious diversity, social trust and perceived tensions. A cross-European study

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As Stuart Hall surmised (1993), the coming question of the 21th century is "how to fashion the capacity to live with difference" i.e., with the increasing pace of mixing ethnic groups, languages, religions etc. In recent years, and particularly since the 2015 refugee crisis, the potential impacts of migration and cultural diversification have indeed become hot topics almost everywhere in Europe. The quintessential question of my paper is the following: How did religious affiliation, the social trust and the perceived religious tensions changed in the European countries between 2006 and 2016? What role does religious diversity play in this process? In order to answer these questions, I will use the database of the European Social Survey (ESS) and the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS); initiatives which have been monitoring the life quality and the behaviour patterns of the population since the millennium. Altogether 43 European countries are involved in the analysis. On national level the SMRE database provides the stock data on the population number by religion (input for the diversity index as independent variable).

Is Poland in the postsecular time? An attempt to analyze and evaluate

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The dynamic changes that has been taking place since the beginning of the 21st century in Poland are undoubtedly part of postsecularism. The aim of the speech is to discuss the features of the transformation of Poland's religious landscape in the context of post-secularism.

Contemporary Poland is dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. According to various data, they constitute from 87 to 92% of the total population of the country, and people who do not belong to any religious organizations account for approximately 9%. Such a high index of Catholics is often used, as an argument in debates about the presence of religion, especially Catholicism, in public space.

Despite the declining population and increasingly visible changes in religiosity, Poland in comparison with other European countries, has high rates of Sunday Mass participation (about 39%) and taking Holy Communion on Sunday (about 17%), but at the same time there is a decline in the number of baptisms, First Holy Communion, the Confirmation and people who decided to begin preparation for the consecrated life. New parishes are being founded and new churches are being built. The dynamic sacralisation of public space (e.g. processions) and time is visible. On the other hand, there are protests of non-believers against the increasing presence of public spaces."

Modern religious situation in Ukraine

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The state independence of Ukraine is manifested in the revival of national traditions. That is why, in the first years of independence, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church sought to gain independence from the Russian Orthodox Church and, as a result, a split occurred. But in the beginning of 2019 a number of Ukrainian Orthodox denominations united in the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Today, over 500 parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate have been transferred to it, and the number of communities is about 7,000. This process is most active in the west and in the center, although it takes place throughout the country.

Ukraine is a multi-confessional country, but Christianity is dominant (97.1% of the number of religious communities in the country, 2018). In the structure of Christianity, Orthodox make up 55.7%, Catholics - 14.4%, (most of them are Greek Catholics), Protestants of all denominations - 27%. During the years of independence, the number of Protestant communities increased very quickly, but during the war, their number decreased by more than 200, mainly due to the eastern regions, where Protestantism different directions and new religious organizations were very common. The change of the religious situation reflects the process of national self-identification."

Session 2: Postsecular city and the role of FBOs

A church as a meeting space: Religious institutions providing cultural and social activities for communities in Prague

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The contribution discusses the role of church institutions in the cultural and social life of different communities in Prague. Because religiosity declines over the last few decades and inhabitants become more deinstitutionalized and religiously individualized, the religious institutions need to look for another way to succeed, apart from worship and spiritual services. Thus, many churches organize cultural, social and educational activities such as concerts, exhibitions, open lectures, art classes, English classes, parent centers, etc. They declare these activities as open for public and, in some cases, they really represent an important part of social and cultural activities of the given community. The church activities are often focused on marginalized groups of people such as children, youth, mothers or seniors. Further, this 'secondary' space within the churches is for some believing participants even more important than the 'officially sacred' space because they put stress on the 'lived' religion and meeting with the religious community. The contribution is based on the quantitative data about all Prague churches and their activities and interviews with church representants. It analyzes the church activities in the public space of Prague in comparative perspective with a special focus on the differences in church activities between traditional, established churches and new, progressive and small religious communities. It answers the questions about the importance of such activities to the public, the separation of worship and cultural-social role of churches and overlap of church and everyday space.

On apophatic translation: Islamophobia and the postsecular city

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Drawn on Talal Asad's work on translation (2018), this paper discusses the nexus between Islamophobia, postsecularity, and the urban. It advances two arguments. First, it proposes that, rather than the locus of ecumenical religiosity, the postsecular city should be thought as a philosophical project for theological specificities to be fostered. Sharedness, it is stressed, can only be built at the intersections between a wide plurality of spaces for autonomous theological elaboration, practice, and aesthetics. Second, it suggests that geographers of religion should actively engage in mitigating Islamophobia by setting new modalities for non-Muslims to encounter Islamic theologies. On these lines, the paper argues that postsecular urbanism ultimately aims at pluralizing geographical imagination through apophasis. Theoretical arguments are illustrated in reference to the workshop on poetic improvisation led by the Muslim writer and activist Shagufta K Iqbal for the project 'Rethinking the Mosque, Opening the City', held in Rome, May 2017. Conducted in a contested Islamic prayer hall, the workshop has been concluded with a public urban walk across the neighborhood of Torpignattara, wherein a mobile shared space has been constructed with a public audience. This space, it is maintained, effectively represents the ethos of postsecular urbanism.

Faith-based organizations focused on ex-prisoners and their local impact in the Czech Republic

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Most of the prisoner re-entry activities in the Czech Republic are provided by church-related and faith-based organizations (FBOs). Housing and job opportunities, addiction treatment, and individual counseling constitute the majority of these activities, which may also lead to the spiritual growth of those seeking these faith-based services. This presentation inquiries about how these organizations, often located in rural and suburban areas, affect the local community, culture, and environment. The emphasis is on how these organizations define themselves, address the local issues, how they are viewed by the community, and what their presence means for the specific area. The re-entry FBOs Nová Šance (Ostrava, Roman Catholic Church), Dům sv. Dismase (Stráž pod Ralskem, Roman Catholic Church), Bétel (Kralupy nad Vltavou, non-specified evangelical church) and Teen Challenge (Šluknov and Poštovice, Apostolic Church) are presented as case studies. This data presented here are the outcome of a post-doctoral project aimed at religious care for ex-prisoners. Policy implications that are specific for re-entry services in the Czech Republic are also discussed.

Session 3: Sacred places and landscapes

Regional differences in the development of religious landscapes: the case of two Austrian provinces

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Religious affiliation is receiving much attention in the public debate throughout Europe, with Austria being no exception. However, data on the number of affiliates to different religions are rather scarce: the 2001 census was the last collection on religious affiliation and thus demographic modelling techniques are needed to provide estimates beyond this point. Furthermore, there are substantial variations at the regional level, particularly depending on the impact of secularization patterns and differentiated migration. We compare the religious landscape in Austria and two Austrian provinces – Vienna and Vorarlberg – with special regard to secularization and the diverse composition of countries of origin within different religious groups. Furthermore, we analyze the development of religiosity over time as a result of different migration waves and changes in religiosity patterns. The reconstruction of the population's religious composition for 2018 shows that Vorarlberg follows similar trends as those observed in Vienna since 2001: a decline in the share of Roman Catholics, an increase in the share of Muslims and a strong rise in the religiously unaffiliated population. We will point out similarities in trends as well as notable differences between the two regions in terms of their changing religious landscapes and secularization patterns.

Rituals at memorial crosses in Poland

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Roadside memorials (e.g., crosses accompanied by flowers and/or candles) commemorating people who died in motor vehicle accidents flourish in many countries. Memorial crosses are the most popular type of roadside memorials in Poland. The aim of the paper is to investigate rituals associated with these structures. A two-year observation (2016-2018) of 12 memorial crosses placed in the right-of-way of public roads (northern and southern, rural and urban) was conducted quarterly (Easter, summer, All Saints' Day, Christmas). Following analysis of photographic documentation, we constructed a typology of roadside crosses according to the variability/reproducibility of artifacts with which they were decorated. The most vivid activity in the course of the year is the common practice of decorating memorial crosses in the last week of October and first week of November, including All Saints' Day, linking traditional cemetery rituals and roadside memorialization in Poland. Interviews conducted with 10 people who erected or maintain memorial crosses facilitated a deeper understanding of rituals undertaken at these commemorative sites. This paper is part of the research project, "Memorial crosses along Polish roads". It has been sponsored by the National Science Centre, Poland according to decision number DEC-2016/21/B/HS1/00823.

Faith spaces and places of Catholics and Neopagans: Case study of Ústecký Region

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Ústecký Region is considered to be very irreligious and “secularized” region, at least according to statistical data and usual saying. What does mean secularization in Ústecký Region and how this phenomenon can be perceived or even criticized? Neopaganism, or Modern paganism, is a new current usually ranked among “new religious movements”, meanwhile Catholicism is the most traditional Czech religion. How the Catholic tradition is perceived in the region, where the society ceases to know Christian rites, and where the sacral monuments are sometimes even vandalized? Which are the faith spaces and places of selected religious currents? The methods consisted in semi structured interviews with adherents of Neopaganism and Catholicism, and also with local priests in the case of the latter. The results point to the specific conditions of resettled and “complicated” region which are reproduced by various manners by subsequent generations.

Young adults’ re-imagining of postsecular spaces in Czechia

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The process of postsecularisation is present not only in Western Europe but also in post-communist countries. This presentation focuses on the way young adults who do not have personal experiences with communism and its anti-religious ideology create their own religion in postsecular society and re-imagine (post)secular spaces through personal belief. The primary assumption is that young adults, living in the specific environment of postsecular society of Czechia, have a unique relationship with religion and spirituality. For this research, we conducted focus groups with young adults (25 – 35 years of age) in three religiously different Czech regions, the pluralized city of Prague, the secular area of Teplice, and the Catholic region of Kyjov. The results point to a subjective turn within the perception of religion and spirituality, connected with the separation of subjective belief from institutionalized religion and the formation of a personal ‘religious hodgepodge’. All these attitudes are reflected in the formation of postsecular spaces in Czechia. Participants in focus groups consider traditional sacred spaces (such as Catholic sacred sites) as an important part of the cultural landscape but add different connotations to them. The spaces of subjective belief were more diverse and creative in their imagination. We sum up that a subjective belief is formed by the space where people dwell, by their mobility, attempts at authenticity, education, relationship with other people, and self-reflection. The young adults in Czechia re-imagine the traditional sacred places through their own understanding of religion and spirituality within postsecular characteristics.

Session 4: Religious landscapes in cartography

Where have minority religious communities gone? Challenges in representing the religious composition of the population cartographically

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Religion is an important part of social reality which to a large extent influences the formation of human communities. It is an important formational factor in culture and leaves a strong imprint on the landscape. In accordance with dispersion and relocation processes regarding different religions, regardless of their causes, a complex, global religious mosaic has emerged consisting of adherents of various religions and those who declare themselves to be atheists or agnostics. One of the most frequent outcomes of geographic research into the religious composition of the population, regardless of whether it is based on official census data or estimates (which of course depend on the reliability of the statistical data available), are thematic maps. If the religious composition of the population is shown on a diagram map, the presence of individual religions among the total population in the area of research can be shown. However, if the spatial distribution of religions is shown on a diagram map or choropleth map, it may be difficult to depict the religious composition in areas where there is a mix of adherents of different religions. In such cases, it is not enough merely to depict the distribution of the dominant religion, since this does not give a true picture, and may have serious implications, given the sensitivity surrounding individual religious freedom and numbers of members of religious groups. The unsuitability is stressed of maps with surface signatures depicting the spatial distribution of world religions by country on maps of the world and individual continents. Greater authenticity in depicting the religious composition of the population on maps of countries or smaller spatial units can be achieved by the deft use of a combination of various cartographic means of expression. Even then, it is impossible to include all details, as there are many registered religious communities which only have a few, scattered members.

Diocesan spatial organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina between geopolitics and ethnopolitics

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The article presents a review of diocesan spatial organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina by putting it, in the narrow sense, in the context of geopolitical consideration on the space of this country, while in the broader sense, the article contextualizes this spatial organization in relation to geopolitical concepts referring to the wider regional (Balkan) and European context. In the theoretical sense, the article deals with theoretical settings of political geography, geography of religion and identity studies. In the methodological sense, the article uses a historical method for explaining the historical context of the emergence of diocesan spatial organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, based on available data from the population censuses and other relevant sources, the article brings the correlation between the diocesan and ethnic boundaries of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and presents them in cartographic terms. Finally, unlike the ethnic approach, the article confirms the geopolitical approach as crucial in the spatial organization of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mining multiple online sources of historical data: The example of a standardised dataset of medieval monasteries in France

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In this paper, we present a dataset of medieval monasteries and convents on the territory of today's France and discuss the workflow of its integration. Spatial historical data are usually dispersed and stored in various forms – encyclopedias and catalogs, websites, online databases, and printed maps. In order to cope with this heterogeneity and proceed to computational analysis, we have devised a method that includes the creation of a data model, data mining from sources, data transformation, geocoding, editing, and conflicts solving. The resulting dataset is probably the most comprehensive collection of records on medieval monasteries within the borders of today's France. It can be used for understanding the spatial patterns of medieval Christian monasticism and the implantation of the official Church infrastructure, as well as the relation between this official infrastructure and phenomena covered in other datasets. The primary motivation for compiling this dataset was the DISSINET project (<http://dissinet.cz>), one of whose focus points is the relationship between places of heretical activity covered by inquisitorial records and the coverage of the territory by the official Church infrastructure in south-western France in the 13th to 14th–centuries.

Thematic atlas of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church

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The main aim of the thesis is to create a thematic atlas of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to describe essential information about the Church through maps which are accompanied by texts, pictures and graphs. Partial goals are to obtain suitable spatial data related to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to use thematic cartography methods which finally formed related maps. The theoretical part of the thesis is focused on the presentation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the summary of literature dealing with thematic cartography. These findings are put into practice in the practical part and the output of the thesis is the thematic Atlas of the Seventh-day Adventist Church created in ArcMap and InDesign software.

Session 5: Religious minorities in Czechia

Establishing the Hare Krishna movement in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

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The International Society for Krishna Consciousness was founded by Indian guru Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in USA in 1966. It has seen a great increase of devotees and many centers were established around the world shortly after foundation in 60's and in the beginning of 70's. This teaching spread illegally in the Eastern Bloc countries in spite of the Communist regime. After its collapse, the official centers of the Hare Krishna movement in Czechoslovakia began to emerge. The presentation briefly summarizes the circumstances of the establishment of the Hare Krishna movement in communist and post-communist Czechoslovakia. The main emphasis is on the development and location of the Hare Krishna centers in Czechoslovakia, Czech Republic and Slovakia from 80's to present.

Immigration of foreign clergy to Czechia

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The goal of this theses was to find out if there is clergy migration to Czechia and, if so, how is its structure. The result is that this migration really exists, and these migrants compose indispensable part of clergy, especially in Roman Catholic Church. Most of them are in Prague and its surroundings. From countries of origin predominates Poland and then Slovakia. The majority of foreign clericals comes from other European countries, especially from Poland and Slovakia.

Vietnamese Buddhism in the Czech Republic: an ethnographic study

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This communication aims to contribute an understanding of the historical and current situation of Buddhism in the context of the Vietnamese migration by throwing light on the everyday environments observed in monasteries and religious communities in the Czech Republic. Drawing on an ethnographic research and in-depth interviews conducted with religious leaders and practitioners, we highlight local dynamics, religious practices among Vietnamese migrants in temples situated in three different localities in the country (Prague, Chomutov and Královice). These examples reveal particularities and strategies of adaptation of Buddhism adopted by the Việt Kiều (Overseas Vietnamese) in the Czech context. Studies of ethnic bounded transnational religious communities (Bonifacio and Angels, 2010; Chen, 2002; Hüwelmeier, 2013; Kitiarsa, 2010) have analyzed religion and its implication for identity legitimacy. These researches demonstrate its efficacy for ethnic minority followers to negotiate with their migration experiences and reconcile with the spatial disjuncture between the homeland and host society. In this sense, when considering Vietnamese Diaspora studies, few studies have considered the particularities of the Vietnamese migration to the former communist countries. In this communication we sought to situate the transnational religious literature in a broader context by considering Vietnamese Buddhists in Czech Republic.

Religion of Vietnamese Minority in Czechia: Variety and Resurgence

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Since the constitution of Vietnamese community in former Czechoslovakia in 1970s, no public Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhism worship had been organized, and Buddhist religion – if practiced at all – remained in privacy of houses or backyards of shops and offices owned by Vietnamese migrants. The adherents of the second largest religion in Vietnam, Roman Catholics, were “invisible” in a similar way, as they attended Holy Mass served in Czech together with other Catholics. This situation changed at the turn of centuries. In 1999, the first community of Vietnamese Catholics was organized and approximately at the same time, two Protestant (Evangelical) missions focused on Vietnamese people living in Czechia were started. All these activities exceeded the capital and now, they are based in several other cities of Czechia. Following Christians in their religious and national resurgence, Vietnamese Buddhists established the first Mahayana temple in 2007 and have opened a dozen of temples at other places since. The aim of the paper is to describe religious revival of Vietnamese migrants to Czechoslovakia and Czechia and reflect its possible motives and reasons.