Call for papers

Workshop “Religion and the Public from 1989/1991”

27–28 January 2015
Justus-Liebig Universität Gießen

Keynote speaker
Prof. Dr. Chris Hann, director of Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, editor of the volume “Religion, Identity, Post-Socialism”, The Halle Focus Group 2003–2010

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the formerly socialist countries renounced state atheism and watched as religion assumed a new role in these societies. After religious practices had seemingly disappeared from the public space for decades, Church institutions were again officially recognised – sacral buildings were re-opened or re-built, and religious public holidays were re-introduced. Although the separation of Church and State was proclaimed, religious institutions started to play an important role in post-socialist societies.

Much recent scholarship has focused on the so-called “religious revival” and has sought to grasp the character of post-socialist religiosity in view of the political transformation (Zigon 2011, Hann 2006, Ramet 2014). However, the effects of a religious revival vary among post-socialist states, regions and different communities – whereas the Catholic Church in Poland and the Orthodox Church in the Russian Federation play conspicuously influential roles as a guiding moral institutions, the Czech Republic is considered to be the most atheistic state in the region. There is also a growing visibility of many other religious beliefs, such as Islam in Caucasus and the ‘revived’ Jewish communities of Central Europe.

Moreover the attacks of 9/11 have drawn attention to the increasing importance of religion worldwide. Many scholars have raised the question, whether we have now entered the post-secular era (Koehrsen 2012, Morozov 2008).

The workshop “Religion and the Public from 1989/1991” seeks to trace the multi-faceted public religiosity found in post-socialist countries by placing the renunciation of state atheism in the context of global geopolitical changes after the end of the Cold War. It focuses on the question whether the phenomenon of a so-called “religious revival” has actually been provoked by the transition from socialism to post-socialist societies, and what are the displays of increasing religiosity in post-socialist states.

Although the phenomenon of a religious revival embraces all present forms of social religiosity, it concentrates on the contested field of interpretative authority over moral and political issues. The controversy around Pussy Riot’s performance “Punk Prayer” from 2012 in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow shows not only the strong connection between politics and religion, but also demonstrates the ambiguity of post-socialist secularism.
For our workshop, we welcome papers by PhD students and post-docs that critically trace forms of a ‘revived’ post-socialist religiosity in the public sphere from different perspectives such as media representation, political discourse, art, community building, everyday practices and others. We would like to concentrate on methodological questions such as how we can approach visualisations of religiosity and how visual material is used to produce knowledge about certain forms of a ‘revived belief’. Moreover, this workshop will try to tackle upon transcultural entanglements and transnational phenomena between, within and outside the post-socialist regions.

The texts by Chris Hann will provide a common ground on which we would like to discuss further these issues of a ‘revived religiosity’ in a post-Cold War world. Obligatory reading as well as further literature will be provided in our Dropbox “Workshop Religion&Public”.

We are able to offer a limited amount of funding towards travel and accommodation costs. Please specify if you would like to be considered for this. Further information on accommodation, funding and equipment will be provided after the selection of the papers.

**Proposals**

Please submit an abstract of 250–300 words and a brief bio-note (one PDF-file) to the organisers at religionandpublic@gmail.com by **31 October 2014**. Choice of papers by 14 November 2014.

The workshop is organised by Magda Dolińska-Rydzek, Corinne Geering and Katharina Kühn from the Working Group “Eastern European Identities” at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), University of Gießen.

In collaboration with the Working Group “Religion & the Study of Culture”, the Research Area “Global Studies and Politics of Space” (GCSC) and the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe.

**References**


Zigon, Jarrett (ed.), *Multiple Moralities and Religions in Post-Soviet Russia*, Berghahn, 2011.