



ERSTA
SKÖNDAL
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COLLEGE



CIVIL SOCIETY
AND NEW FORMS
OF GOVERNANCE
IN EUROPE



STIFTELSEN
Riksbankens
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The Netherlands Institute for Social Research | SCP

The Social Dimension of Religion in Civil Society A Comparative European Perspective

Conference held at Ersta Sköndal University College
Stockholm, Sweden
September 17 - 19, 2009

Invitation

Objectives

The place of religion in modern European societies has for some time been a relatively neglected question among scholars outside of departments of theology and religion. This absence of interest has to be understood against the background of both the relatively secular character of many European societies and the dominance of a secularization thesis that understood religion to be a relic of a past soon to be entirely overtaken by a post-religious, secular social order.

In fact, Europe stands out as an oddity in a global context where even other Western countries, prominently the United States, are intensely religious. Furthermore, with increased immigration and the rise of new forms of religiosity in Europe, it now appears that claims of the imminent decline of religion may have been premature. Moreover, in the wake of the many challenges faced by the European welfare states has followed an increased interest in the character and role of European civil society, not least the role of civil society in the provision of welfare, identity and community.

In this context some have argued that faith-based organizations constitute a very important part of civil society, both from a sheer quantitative point of view and in terms of range, durability, and personal significance. Thus, religious institutions, it is claimed, do not simply provide an opportunity for practicing a personal faith; it also serves a strong base for community and identity. This translates into both tangible social services for its members and a more subtle sense of belonging. In a world increasingly dominated by the cold logic of the market and the formal care provided by the institutions of the welfare state, religious communities are often said to constitute a “haven in a heartless world.”

On the other hand, the revival of religiosity, and not least overtly political and at times aggressive expressions of religious belief, has created a significant backlash – at times dubbed “Enlightenment fundamentalism” – that has been steeped in an anxiety that cherished modern and secular values such as gender equality and the

equal civil rights for sexual minorities will now come under attack by faith-based political parties and movements that promote repressive practices hostile to equal right for gays and women. These concerns regarding a resurgent religiosity is often linked to related worries about the effects of increased immigration and the specter of a multiculturalism that will fundamentally alter European social and cultural life.

In this conference we aim to focus on the role of religion in modern Europe with an emphasis on the social dimension and by viewing religious institutions as important parts of civil society, while regarding the normative claims and worries cited above as empirical questions. It will include a number of perspectives, such as consideration of the particular historical and theological legacies that continue to shape the role of religion in Europe; religion as a matter of personal faith vs. religion as community and social identity; religious beliefs and networks as context for social and political mobilization, religion and its instrumental aspects, including the provision of education, culture, and social welfare.

Our goal is to bring together a diverse group of scholars from both Europe and elsewhere with the aim of bringing a comparative perspective to our analysis and discussion of religion in contemporary European civil societies. By inviting not only theologians and students of comparative religion, but also sociologists of religion, historians, and scholars focused on the social dimension of civil society, we hope to allow for a broad context to investigate one of the most crucial developments in modern Europe: the return of religion.

Call for papers

Submissions to present papers on the conference themes are welcome. The deadline for submission of abstracts (max 200 words) is June 1 and deadline for papers is August 10, 2009.

Who

The conference is open to all members of the CINEFOGO Network as well as to other interested colleagues. PhD students are also welcome to apply.

Where

The conference will be held at Ersta Sköndal University College in Stockholm, Sweden. It is situated in the heart of Stockholm. For more information, please see www.esh.se

Organizers

The conferences is collaboratively organized and funded by the CINEFOGO Network of Excellence on Civil Society and New Forms of Governance in Europe, Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation), Ersta Sköndal University College, Sweden and The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, Holland. Additionally, the Church of Sweden Research Unit is supporting the open introductory lecture.

Costs

The conference fee will be 40 Euro (or 75 Euro including a welcome buffet style type dinner). The conference will be free for paper-givers, while travel and accommodation costs will be covered by each individual participant/institution.

Registration and further information

For registration and practical matters please contact Lena Blomquist, e-mail: lena.blomquist@esh.se, telephone +46 8 55505130

The conference programme will be continuously updated. Please see the latest version at www.esh.se

Deadline for registration is August 10th. Your registration is binding.

Please mention which meals you would like to attend:

- Buffet type conference dinner September 17
- Lunch September 18
- Lunch September 19

Regarding professional matters and submission of abstracts, please contact Charlotte Engel, e-mail charlotte.engel@esh.se or Paul Dekker, p.dekker@scp.nl.



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Conference Program

To be continuously updated

Thursday 17 September

17:00

Welcome (Aulan)

17:15-19:00

Open introductory lecture

The Social Dimension of Religion in Civil Society.

Lecturer: José Casanova, Dep. of Sociology and Anthropology, Georgetown University, USA

Commentary:

Inger Furseth, KIFO Center for Church Research, Norway

19:30

Buffet type Dinner at Ersta Terassen

Friday 18 September

Plenary Session: A Comparative Perspective on The Role of Religion in Contemporary European Civil Society (Aulan)

09:00-09:45

Lecture: The European Value Study: Religion, public morality and civic participation – Diversity and Change in Europe. Loek Halman, Tilburg University, Holland, Joep de Hart, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP and Paul Dekker, Tilburg University & The Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP

09:45-10:30

Lecture: Schizophrenia about Religion: The Difficulty of Religion in the Public Sphere. Linda Woodhead, Lancaster University, Great Britain

10.30 – 10.45

Questions and Open Discussion

10:45-11:15

Coffee

- 11:15 – 12:15 **Seminar:** Paper Session 1 and 2 (room 1 and room 4)
12:15 – 13:15 **Catering lunch**
- 13:15–14:40 **Plenary Session: Confessional
Perspectives on the Social Dimensions of Religion**
(Aulan)
- 13:15 – 14:00 **Lecture:** European Religious Diversity
Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, University of München,
Germany
- 14:00–14:40 **Lecture:** A Muslim Confessional Perspective,
Yilmaz Esmer, Bahcesehir University, Turkey
- 14:40 – 14:55 **Questions and Open Discussion**
- 14:55 – 15:15 **Coffee**
- 15:15 – 16:15 **Seminar:** Paper Session 3 and 4
(room 1 and room 4)
- 16:30 – 18:15 **Plenary Session: The Role of Religion in Civil
Society - Historical Perspectives** (Aulan)
- 16:30 – 17:15 **Lecture:** Relocating Faith? Religion and Civil Society
after 1945. Jürgen Nautz, University of Vienna, Austria
and Peter van Dam, University of Munster, Germany
- 17:15– 17:55 **Lecture:** Religion and Peacebuilding in the Post
Communist Southeast Europe. Ina Merdjanova,
University of Sofia, Bulgaria
- 17:55-18:15 **Questions and Open Discussion**

Saturday 19 September

- 09:00-12:00 **Plenary Session: Religion and Politics across Eu-
rope: Social Policy Implications** (Aulan)
- 09:00-09:45 **Lecture:** Faith-based Organizations: Education,
Welfare and Care
- 09:45-10:25 **Lecture**

10:25-10:40

Coffee

10:40-12:30

General concluding discussion with introductory comments from Europe and Beyond; José Casanova, USA, Inger Furseth, Norway and Erik Amnå, Sweden

12:30

Concluding Open Discussion

Closing of conference