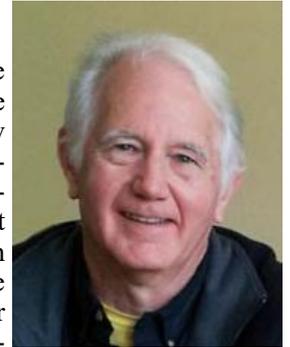




NEWSLETTER

Published by the Research Committee 22

Letter from the President



Letter from the President	1
3rd Forum of Sociology	2
List of RC22 Sessions	2-5
Scenes from the Conference	3
A Special Request & Opportunity	6
Looking Towards the 2018 World Congress	7
From our Secretary-Treasurer	8
Sociology of Religion in the ISA Journals	8
Join the Research Committee	8
The Sociology of Religion in Latin America	9
'Theory' in the Sociology of Religion	10-11
Opportunities for You	12
Three Ways to Contribute to our Next Newsletter	12
Send News for our Blog	12
Opening for a Deputy Newsletter Editor	12
RC22 Board Members	13

Greetings from the ISA! The Research Committee for the Sociology of Religion had a successful and intellectually exciting summer. Nearly 150 of us met in Vienna for the 3rd Forum of Sociology. The conference wasn't as big as our quadrennial World Congresses, but it has grown into quite an event. Our 19 sessions were of excellent quality and were very well attended. You can find their titles, organizers, starting on page 2 of this newsletter, then view the session participants and paper abstracts online. Pictures are on page 3.

Our two plenary sessions were especially popular. On Sunday, about 90 people attended the Presidential Session, at which four senior sociologists of religion shared their views about our discipline's future. Meredith McGuire, Gary Bouma, Afe Adogame, and Ed Tiryakian gave their impressions of the current issues facing the sociology of religion and their ideas for future topics that are worth scholarly attention. This was followed by an extended audience discussion.

On Monday, Professor Hans Joas delivered our first Distinguished Lecture. Titled "Sacralization and Desacralization: Political Domination and Religious Interpretation," it was drawn from his newest book, which is tentatively titled "The Power of the Sacred: An Alternative to the Narrative of Disenchantment." It, too, generated a spirited discussion. I am certainly looking forward to reading his book when it appears.

The conference was certainly a success. I especially want to thank Vineeta Sinha and Olga Breskaya for their work on the program. They structured the program to include as wide a selection of papers as possible. I also want to thank those who organized sessions. I hope that many of them will also organize sessions for our next World Congress in Toronto, in July 2018.

That brings us to our next topic. The World Congress theme will be "Power, Violence, and Justice". This continues the ISA's recent concern for making sociology

a force for positive social change. We don't yet know how many sessions we'll be allowed there; that all depends on how many people have joined our research committee by this the end of October. If your membership in the RC has lapsed, please re-join. That will let us accept more papers.

This newsletter contains several other items of interest. On page 6, former RC22 President Grace Davie asks for your online comments on a draft document on "Religions and Social Progress", solicited by the ISPS. That international consultative body collects scholarly consensus on social issues. Your voice will help them understand religion in the contemporary world.

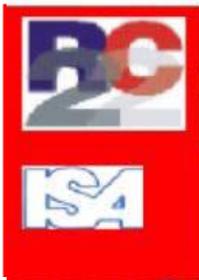
On page 8, Eloísa Martín, our Secretary-Treasurer describes recent articles about religion in ISA journals and gives hints about how to publish in them. On page 9, she summarizes the state of the sociology of religion in Latin America. Can you do the same for your part of the world? Write us at newsletter@isa-rc22.org with your ideas.

To stimulate further discussion, I've posted the plenary talk I gave at the Vienna Forum, on the current state of 'theory' in our discipline. Read it, then send your comments to the same address.

Finally, send us your news items. Go to the "News and Events" section of our website and follow the instructions: www.isa-rc22.org/news-events. While you're there, sign up to get our weekly summary of what others have sent in.

Best wishes to you all,

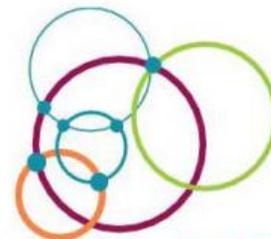
Jim Spickard
 University of Redlands
president@isa-rc22.org
jim_spickard@redlands.edu



3rd Forum of Sociology — Vienna, July 2016

The Futures We Want: Global Sociology
and the Struggles for a Better World

ISA 3rd ISA Forum of
SOCIOLOGY



July 10-14, 2016
Vienna, Austria



Report from the Forum

The 3rd Forum of Sociology met this July in Vienna, Austria. It was a great success. RC-22 was well-represented at the conference, where we hosted 19 sessions. That was among the largest of the RCs. An average of 35 people attended each of our sessions, not counting the Presidential Session (which attracted over 90) and our Distinguished Lecture (which attracted 120). We accepted papers from nearly 200 scholars from all parts of the world. Two-thirds of these were able to attend and present their work. The intellectual level was high.

RC22 Sessions at the 3rd Forum of Sociology

Full details about these sessions can be found online at
<https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2016/webprogram/Symposium284.html>

Sunday, 10 July 2016

- **Welfare and Civil Society: The Role of Religion**
Session Organizer: Per PETTERSSON; Chair: Afe ADOGAME
- **Negotiating Religion and Citizenship in Global Context**
Session Organizers: Olga BRESKAYA and Afe ADOGAME
Chair: Olga BRESKAYA
- **Presidential Session: Where Do We Go from Here? an Agenda for the Sociology of Religion**
Session Organizer & Chair: James SPICKARD
Panelists: Meredith McGuire, Gary Bouma, Afe Adogame, Ed Tiryakian
Each of the panelists reflected on the state of our discipline and made suggestions for future research. A lively audience discussion followed.

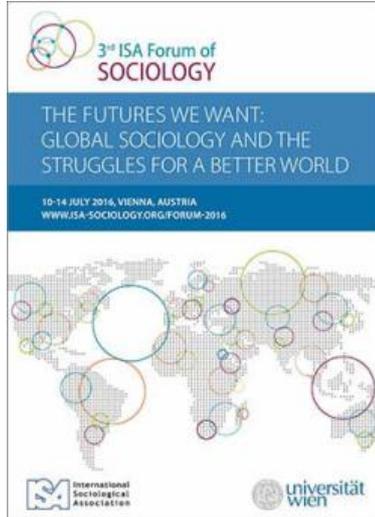
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Scenes from the 3rd Forum on Sociology



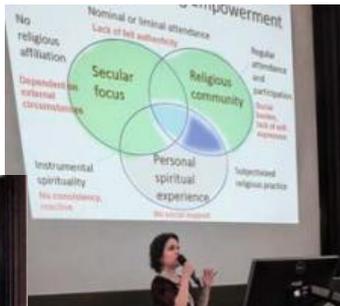
Michael Okyerefo addresses the session on "Religion & Citizenship in Global Context"



Vienna was a culturally stimulating city for our conference. The weather (and meeting rooms) were hot and humid, but the university building had a lovely courtyard and lots of spaces for conversation. RC22 had 19 well-attended sessions.



Hengameh Ashraf Emami presents on British Muslim women



Distinguished Lecture by Hans Joas

Rosemary Hancock presents on Muslim Women's blogs.



Anna Brinkman presents on women's empowerment in Korea



Afe Adogame poses a question to the session on "Welfare and Civil Society"



Yoshihide Sakurai and his panelists take questions at the session on "Religious Engagement and Spiritual Empowerment in Asian Countries".



Said Arjomand presents on Islamicate civilizational analysis



RC22 Sessions at the 3rd Forum of Sociology

Monday, 11 July 2016

- **Roundtables I**
Session Organizers: Olga BRESKAYA and Miroljub JEVTIC
Roundtable Topics:
Religious Radicalization Chair: Yoshihide SAKURAI
Religion's Role in Peace and Violence Chair: Lovemore NDLOVU
Africa and the African Diaspora Chair: Michael OKYEREFO
Inter-Religious Understanding Chair: Miroljub JEVTIC
- **Roundtables II**
Session Organizer: Roberta RICUCCI
Roundtable Topics:
Religious Mobilization in Europe Chair: Sinisa ZRINSCAK
Religious Communities and Civil Society Chair: Ephraim SHAPIRO
Multiple Secularities Chair: Anna HALAFOFF
Individual Religiosity and Power Relations Chair: Vineeta SINHA
- **Religion and Human Rights**
Session Organizers & Chairs: Adam POSSAMAI and Giuseppe GIORDAN
- **Distinguished Lecture: Hans Joas**
Session Organizer & Chair: James SPICKARD

Tuesday, 12 July 2016

- **World Religions and Axial Civilizations. Part I**
Session Organizer: Stephen KALBERG & Said ARJOMAND; Chair: Said ARJOMAND
- **The Categories of Religion and the Secular in the Post-Secular Discourse**
Session Organizer and Chair: Mitsutoshi HORII
- **The Politics of Religious Heritage: Memory, Identity and Place. Part I**
Session Organizers: Mar GRIERA, Marian BURCHARDT, & Avi ASTOR
Chair: Marian BURCHARDT
- **Religion in the Public Sphere. Part I**
Session Organizer: Orivaldo LOPES, JR & Vincenzo PACE
Chair: Orivaldo LOPES JR

Wednesday, 13 July 2016

- **World Religions and Axial Civilizations. Part II**
Session Organizer: Stephen KALBERG & Said ARJOMAND; Chair: Said ARJOMAND
- **In-Depth Studies on Religion and Society**
Participants:
Arpana INGLE: **Religious Practices and Human Rights in India**
Haydn AARONS & Paul WIDDOP: **Exploring Religion and Musical Taste: Evidence from the UK**



RC22 Sessions at the 3rd Forum of Sociology

Hengameh ASHRAF EMAMI: **British Muslim Women's Identities**

Pei-Ru LIAO: **A Mediatized Sacred War: Examining Multimedia Strategies of Anti Same-Sex Marriage Movement in Contemporary Taiwan**

Viviana PREMAZZI & Roberta RICUCCI: **Traditional Religious Institutions Vs “Cut and Paste” Online Religions: Challenges to Religious Education**

Esmeralda F. SANCHEZ : **El Shaddai Dwxi-Ppfi: A Filipino Catholic Charismatic Movement’s Vision And Mission**

- **The Politics of Religious Heritage, Memory, Identity, and Place. Part II**
Session Organizers: Marian BURCHARDT, Mar GRIERA, & Avi ASTOR
Chair: Julia MARTINEZ-ARINO
- **Religion in the Public Sphere. Part II**
Session Organizer: Orivaldo LOPES, JR & Vincenzo PACE; Chair: Vincenzo PACE

Thursday, 14 July 2016

- **From New Age and Spiritualities to Different World Views**
Session Organizers: Tilo BECKERS & Pascal SIEGERS
Chair: Tilo BECKERS
- **Religion, Gender, and the Internet**
Session Organizers: Anna HALAFOFF, Emma TOMALIN, & Caroline STARKEY
Chair: Caroline STARKEY
- **Religious Engagement and Spiritual Empowerment in Asian Countries: Quest for Human Security and Self-Fulfilment**
Session Organizer: Yoshihide SAKURAI; Chair: James SPICKARD
- **Rhythms and Rituals**
Session Organizer & Chair: Bianca Maria PIRANI

Full details about these sessions can be found online at

<https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2016/webprogram/Symposium284.html>



Photo credit: Transnationalism & Migration (Flickr)



Special Request & Opportunity

Former RC-22 President Grace Davie sent the following letter, asking sociologists of religion to comment on a chapter written by a team of twelve scholars. As she explains, this is part of a program to “harness the competence of hundreds of experts about social issues”, in order to guide social policy. She would like RC22 members to go to the IPSP commenting platform (comment.ipsp.org), read the document, and make scholarly comments. Here is her letter:

Dear RC22 Colleagues:

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce the International Panel on Social Progress (IPSP). You can find more about the IPSP and its ways of working here: <https://www.ipsp.org/>. You will see that it exists to ‘harness the competence of hundreds of experts about social issues’ and to ‘deliver a report addressed to all social actors, movements, organizations, politicians and decision-makers, in order to provide them with the best expertise on questions that bear on social change’.

We Grace Davie (University of Exeter, UK) and Nancy Ammerman (Boston University, US), are the Coordinating Lead Authors (CLAs) for the chapter on religion, entitled ‘**Religions and social progress: Critical assessments and creative partnerships**’. Altogether we are a team of twelve.

Here is our Abstract:

This chapter starts from the premise that some 80 percent of the world’s population affirms some kind of religious identification, a proportion that is growing rather than declining. Emphasizing the significance of belief and practice in everyday lives and local contexts, we analyze the impact of religion and its relevance to social progress in a wide variety of fields. These include the family, gender and sexuality; differences and diversity; democratic governance; violence and peace-making; health and economic well-being; and care for the earth.

We argue that researchers and policy makers pursuing social progress will benefit from careful attention to the power of religious ideas to motivate, of religious practices to shape ways of life, of religious communities to mobilize and extend the reach of social change, and of religious leaders and symbols to legitimate calls to action. All of that, however, can be put to either good or ill, for which reason assessment of particular religions in specific contexts is essential.

Running through the chapter are five interconnected themes: the persistence of religion in the twenty-first century; the importance of context in discerning outcomes; the need for cultural competence relative to religion; the significance of religion in initiating change; and the benefits of well-judged partnerships. The continuing need for critical but appreciative assessment and the demonstrable benefits of creative partnerships are our standout findings.

The IPSP process – see <https://www.ipsp.org/process> – mirrors that of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and includes a period of public comment in the autumn of 2016. The ‘Commenting Platform’ is now open – see comment.ipsp.org. It would be hugely helpful if members of RC22 could take part in this. The IPSP website will indicate how you access our chapter and how you make your comments. Or if you prefer you can simply send us (g.r.c.davie@exeter.ac.uk; nta@bu.edu) an e-mail.



Looking towards the 2018 World Congress

The next ISA World Congress will be held in Toronto, Canada, from July 15-21, 2018. It's not too early to start planning.

The ISA conference website is at <http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2018/>. Though it is still not totally built, that is where you will be able to find information once it is posted.

As you can see from the poster, the conference theme is "Power, Violence, and Justice: Reflections, Responses, and Responsibilities". On the website, ISA President Margaret Abraham describes the theme as follows:

Since the inception of the discipline, sociologists have been concerned with power, violence and justice. Current social, economic and political challenges enhance their relevance.

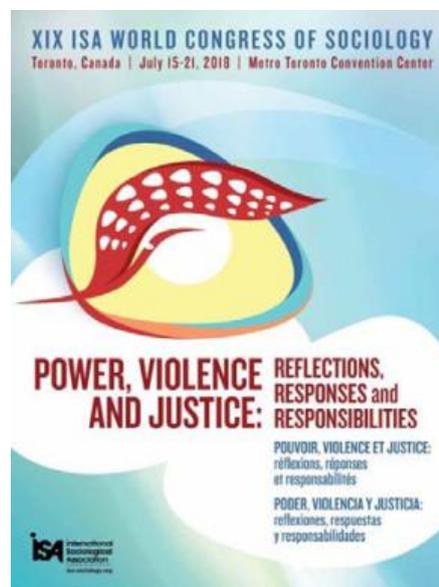
As capitalist globalization expands and deepens, corporate power increases along with global, national and local inequalities. New geo-political power configurations and confrontations are emerging, with violence being used as a tool to oppress and also to resist oppression. Colonial histories and contemporary land appropriations reflect the structures and cultural processes that perpetuate violence against indigenous and minority communities. States' failures to meet their responsibility to provide basic resources are often deflected by blaming the most vulnerable.

Both global economic and geo-political processes create crises and massive displacements of people and, at the same time, fuel racism, nationalism and xenophobia. We have also seen an increasing buildup of a culture of fear as a powerful tool used by states, corporations and other institutions to generate popular support for curtailing freedom in the name of security. Efforts to curtail the flow of desperate refugees, attest to the reinforcement of national and racialized borders.

Despite visible progress on equality issues, violence against women and intersectional violence point to the entrenchment of the gender border around the world. Equally significant is the need to consider the role of state and institutional power relations to ongoing everyday violence.

In response to disempowerment, violence, and injustice we have also witnessed nonviolent movements, humanitarian interventions, and peace processes that have empowered communities, reduced violence, and promoted justice. These diverse communities have built solidarities outside the neo-liberal frames of state-global capital nexus.

This XIX ISA World Congress of Sociology will focus on how scholars, public intellectuals, policy makers, journalists and activists from diverse fields can and do contribute to our understanding of power, violence and justice.



Timetable for Proposing Sessions and Papers (tentative)

2017

15 Jan:

- RCs choose Program Coordinators
- Proposal submissions for Integrative Sessions, Ad Hoc sessions, Author/Critics sessions, and sessions by national, regional, and other groups

2 Feb–15 Mar:

- Call for Sessions announced, including Invited, Presidential, and other RC sessions

16 Mar–7 Apr:

- Program Coordinators create final list of sessions

25 Apr–30 Sept:

- Call for Papers. Participants submit abstracts to CONFEX (online)

5 Oct–15 Nov:

- Session organizers choose papers and organize sessions.
- Unchosen papers either rejected or transferred to the Program Coordinators.

16 Nov–24 Nov:

- Program Coordinators reshuffle sessions, assign transferred papers, create roundtables, etc, so as to include as many good papers as possible.

30 Nov:

- CONFEX sends our notification letters to all authors, informing them of their acceptance or rejection

2018

20 Mar:

- Registration deadline for presenters

14 Apr–30 Apr:

- Session Organizers and Program Coordinators modify sessions based on final registrations.



From our Secretary-Treasurer

Eloísa Martín, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Reading and Publishing about Religion in the ISA Journals

After the Vienna conference, where RC22 has had very intense and well attended sessions, and coming back from summer holidays in the North, and winter break in the South, most of us are coming back to our writing and our publication projects. At least, in my case, the discussions, during the sessions and after them, in the corridors and over a cup of Viennese coffee, have been very stimulating.

As you may know, the ISA has two main journals: *Current Sociology* and *International Sociology* that traditionally have been publishing on different sociological topics, including religion.

Last July, *International Sociology* published a Special Issue entitled 'The Sacred and the Urban in Asia', edited by Daniel Goh and Peter van der Veer. The Special Issue contains seven articles which discusses the relationship between the sacred and the urban, by focusing on cases from diverse globalizing Asian cities. The journal also offers, as free access, the article by Susanne Schenk, Marian Burchardt, and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr "Religious diversity in the neoliberal welfare state: Secularity and the ethos of egalitarianism in Sweden", published in January 2015.

Current Sociology has also recently published very two stimulating articles on religion: the review article "Popular and lived religions", by Adam Possamai, is a must read for all scholars interested in the topic, was published in October 2015. And more recently, the contribution of Samta P Pandya offers an interesting view in her "Sociality and guru-led movements: Interplay of social issues, action and social service". New articles on religion are going to appear shortly in the OnLine First section.

For those who are planning to submit a manuscript in the near future, *Current Sociology* is now with a very attractive Impact Factor (IF=1,643). The journal has a very timely turnaround time (average 45 days, from submission to first decision), and it works on an editorial policy that tries to engage scholars and reviewers from all over the world. *International Sociology* also receives submissions all year round, and I recommend the journal for those interested to publish multidisciplinary and policy oriented research. Both journals are regularly offering their articles as Free Access, and have very intense presence on social media, what widens the audiences reached by the articles.

Don't Forget to Join the Research Committee!

As you know, there are two parts to membership in the ISA:

1. Membership in the ISA as a whole (\$35-\$225 for 4 years, depending on your country; half that for students)
2. Membership on the Research Committees. (\$10-\$30, depending on your country)

The ISA does a good job of making sure that conference participants join the ISA, paying the rather large 4-year dues that keep the organization going.

It does not, however, make sure that conference attendees join the Research Committees themselves. Nor do we: you can participate in our programs without being an RC-22 member. This increases the number of people who can attend.

Unfortunately, that can cause a problem. **The number of sessions that we have at the next World Congress will depend on how many members have joined the RC.** We had 19 sessions in Vienna because we did such a good job in Yokohama of increasing our membership. We won't have that many the next time around, unless more people join. So:

If you're not an RC-22 Member, please join!

If your membership has lapsed, or will lapse at the end of this year, please renew!



The Sociology of Religion in Latin America Today

Eloísa Martín, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

In Latin American social sciences, scholarship on religion has been relevant and institutionally consolidated for the last 50 years. The study of religion began to gain ground in the 1980s, especially after the dictatorships, due to its implications in political and social studies - researches on Liberation Theology, Catholic Church and state relationship, and the political dimension of religion.

Courses on Sociology of Religion are taught in most universities in the region - in Argentina, for instance, regularly since the 60s. In Brazil it is one of the areas which had most research lines at its National Research Council (CNPq). In Brazil, Anthropology of Religion is a course regularly offered in at least ten graduate programs, many of them the most important in the region, and is considered a discipline "traditional" in anthropological studies.

Interestingly, Sociology of Religion has not been developed in isolation from Anthropology: this may be because of the mixed formation of scientists in different disciplines (it is common to find sociologists with a PhD in anthropology, or a BA in theology or religious studies with a PhD in Sociology), the common use of ethnography as one of the favourite methodological approaches, or due to the reduced absolute number of scientists in the region, that regional networks and associations needed every scholar researching the subject in order to survive as such. This disciplinary flexibility created links and transits that gave Latin American scholarship on religion a peculiar flavour.

The institutionalization of the field could be observed in two endeavours: specialized journals and scientific societies.

Regarding the journals, it is remarkable that, despite regular and cyclical cuts in the funding that happen in the different countries of the region, most journals have survived and grew, keeping their prestige and adapting themselves to the new demands, not just of the editorial market, but the national evaluation systems. All journals are now online, open access, and some of them include articles in English. Among the most important journals, published in Spanish and/or Portuguese, we could count: *Religião e Sociedade* (Brazil, semestral, 1977-); *Sociedad y Religion* (Argentina, semestral, 1985-); *Debates do NER* (Brazil, semestral, 1997-); *Ciencias Sociales y Religión/Ciências Sociais e Religião* (Brazil-Argentina, semestral, 1999-); *Revista Cultura y Religión* (Chile, semestral, 2007-); and *REVER* (*Revista de Estudos da Religião* (Brazil, quaterly, 2001-).

At the regional level, there are two scientific societies dedicated to the social study of religion (I am not includ-

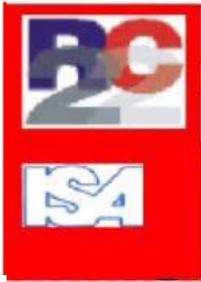
ing here History, Theology or Philosophy).

The Association of Social Scientists of Religion in Mercosur (ACSRM), started as an annual conference for scholars of the South Cone, on "Religious Alternatives" (alternatives to Catholicism, which monopolized the research). These conferences intended to illuminate the presence of other religious traditions and practices in the region, and also the presence of those scholars who studied them. The Association was officially founded in 1994, and since then has been consolidating a prestigious space for academic dialogue in Latin America, including also tight links with scholars and academic networks in Europe and the US. Through conferences (now biennial), prizes for junior scholars, and publications (of edited books and the journal *Ciencias Sociales y Religión/Ciências Sociais e Religião*), it has been the most dynamic institution which maintained and promoted the sociological and anthropological research on religion in Latin America.

The other well-known society, is the Latin American Association for Studies on Religion (ALER, in its Spanish initials) which was founded in 1990. ALER organizes a biennial conference, the Latin American Conference on Religion and Ethnicity, in different countries of the region.

While the Network of Researchers on Religious Phenomena in México (RIFREM, in its Spanish initials) is a national association in its scope and reach, it has been gradually including debates with scholars from all over Latin America, Europe and the US. Differently from ACSR and ALER, it has an horizontal organization (they have a Council, but not a President or other elective positions as in most academic societies) and they seem not very interested in recruiting individual or institutional members. However, they have been organizing meetings every year since 1998, more and more successful every year. In spite the absence of a more institutionalized teaching of Sociology or Anthropology of Religion in the University in Mexico (as it happens in Argentina or Brazil), RIFREM has helped to maintain a certain level of institutional presence of these studies, agglutinating scholars, and building the relevance of the topic.

For more details about the contents of scholarship and debates on religion in Latin America, I suggest the reading of a recently published article I wrote with Renée de la Torre "Religious Studies in Latin America", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 42: 473-492 <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-soc-081715-074427?journalCode=soc>



Let's Start a Discussion: Current 'Theory' in the Sociology of Religion

*Sociologists like good intellectual interchange. As a discussion starter, Jim Spickard has agreed to provide the plenary talk he gave at the ISA 3rd Forum in Vienna. Each of the ISA's 50+ Research Committees was invited to present a 15-minute summary of some topics of interest to their area of study. **Please read this, then send your short comments to newsletter@isa-rc22.org.** What are your views? We will publish the best of these in our next issue.*

Six Narratives in Search of a Future: Current 'Theory' in the Sociology of Religion

James
University of Redlands

Spickard

These Common Sessions are dedicated to exploring "The Futures We Want", highlighting the roles that our various subdisciplines can play in sociology's "struggles for a better world".

This hands the sociology of religion a predicament. Sociologists once expected religion to disappear. They expected religion to retreat from the public sphere as societies industrialize, rationalize, and globalize. The result would be a secular society and a privatized religion, meaningful to many but without the influence it had in former eras.

Not so fast, you say. What about North America's politicized fundamentalism? What about Latin American and African prosperity-Pentecostals? What about radical Islam? To scan the newspapers, religion does not seem to be fading away, at least beyond the failing European state-churches and the American Protestant Mainline.

The fact is, the claim that religion is disappearing was a narrative, not a description of the real world. So, too, the story that religion is becoming more conservative. The sociology of religion missed the discursive turn, which noted that humans chiefly comprehend the world through talk. Talk simultaneously describes and constructs the world, by identifying what parts of the world are worth our attention. This is as true for sociology as it is for anything else. How we talk about things shapes how we treat them.

The story about disappearing religion is but one of six stories about religion that underpin the last century of sociological writing. In those stories, religion is either vanishing or growing conservative, individualizing or creating local communities, shaped by markets, or going global. Each of these six narratives presents a different view of religion and calls on different data to interpret religions' social significance.

For example, the story of vanishing religion cites the demographic collapse of European state churches and of the American Protestant Mainline and their concomitant loss of public influence. The story of religious resurgence, by contrast, focuses on the growth of self-proclaimed 'conservative' religion, whose vibrancy it interprets as a distorted response to social disadvantage. The story of religious individualization points to such things as 'cafeteria Catholicism', Sheilaism, 'quasi-religions', and to a New Age 'spiritual-not-religious' discourse that is increasingly widespread. The story of local religion emphasizes religious congregations, portraying them as among the few functioning face-to-face communities in an increasingly impersonal world. The market story applies neo-liberal economic ideas to the religious sphere, positing rational religious actors

who freely choosing which spiritual goods to buy in a competitive marketplace. Finally, a growing number of sociologists emphasize religions' increased transnationalism. From studies of immigrant religion to the intercontinental trade in religious paraphernalia, to the worldwide recruitment of religious warriors, it is no longer possible to understand religion within national boundaries. This, too, becomes a master narrative to explain the shape of our era.

Each of these six stories has advocates. Each has generated a good deal of research. The problem is that research alone does not provide a secure picture of what is going on. One can, for example, read the membership declines of American liberal Protestant denominations as the result of growing religious disenchantment or as the result of growing religious conservatism. One can see these declines as a sign of increased individualism or an organizational shift from the national to the local level. Or one can see them as the result of the established churches' failure to deliver a religious product that appeals to consumers. The various narratives too often resist data that does not fit their mold.

I make three points in my full paper, two of which I shall summarize here.

First, I shall argue that narratives are nothing new in sociology, particularly narratives about religion. Our discipline's intellectual beginnings in 19th-century France led it to shape our notion of religion in a rather peculiar way.

The longer paper then describes each of the six narratives, pointing out a few of their strengths and weaknesses. I have no time for that here.

Nor do I have time to do more than hint at the consequences of having a subdiscipline that mistakes narratives for testable theories. These are not just consequences for sociology, but for society at large.

I

The fact is, certain ideas about religion were baked into sociology at birth. Despite German, American, British, and Italian contributions, early sociology arose in France. As Manuel Vásquez has pointed out, like all pioneers, French sociologists had to distinguish their new discipline from other late-19th century intellectual movements. In constructing their science, they posed religion as a conceptual 'Other'. Where sociology was scientific, religion was superstitious. Where sociology was built on intellectual merit, religion embodied authoritarian repression. Above all, sociology looked toward the future and religion was stuck in the past.

This was not just Comte, with his famous three stages (theological, metaphysical, scientific). It also responded to the political fight between Republican France and the ultramontane Roman Catholic Church, whose proclamation of papal infallibility became a compressed symbol for religious authoritarian reaction. The Church did try to under-



Let's Start a Discussion: *Send us your comments for the next newsletter!*

mine the Third Republic; defenders of that Republic — including sociologists — hoped that religion would vanish as science triumphed. Thus secularization theory became sociology's default view.

The resurgent religion narrative stems from a parallel source. First, there is Marx's famous "opium of the people" remark, whose intention was not to denigrate religion but to point out its role in adjusting people to soulless conditions. In this view, religion resurges in response to social dislocation, status anxiety, and as a means of reorienting the self in a rapidly changing world. This says, in effect, that participants think they are doing religion, but they are actually trying to salve secular injuries. To use Rodney Stark's term, religion is a "compensator". It is not the real show.

We find similar attitudes in five of the six stories we are considering. Besides the vanishing and resurgent stories, attention to religious individualism treats religion as primarily a source of meaning in a society where overarching meaning systems can no longer be assumed. Attention to religious communities similarly contrasts those communities with the (supposed) erosion of face-to-face ties in other parts of life. Market models of religion emphasize the 'purchase' of 'religious goods', the consequences of 'religious investment', and, in early versions of the approach, the supernatural compensations that religion brings. Each of these narratives treats religion as an example or a symptom of other social processes.

Only the global-religion narrative sticks mainly to description possibly due to that narrative's newness or the fact that it does not yet constitute an overarching theory of the direction in which religion is moving. Global economic forces happen on the main stage; global religion becomes a sideshow. We sociologists simply do not know how to put religion in the center of the picture.

II

As I said, I shall skip the full description of the six narratives. You already have the basics. These narratives do not cover everything being done in the sociology of religion, but they cover most of it. They are the too-often unexamined underpinnings of our investigations.

III

These underpinnings have consequences, and not just for sociology. They also influence public policy in detrimental ways. The religion-is-vanishing narrative, for example, leads to patronizingly liberal policies toward religion so long as it remains part of private life. Religion is seen as good, but we worry about people being 'too religious', particularly when they are religious in the public sphere. The French headscarf controversy and Americans' fright over resurgent 'fundamentalisms' are two examples. Each involves religion that refuses to stay private. The vanishing-religion narrative encourages people to think that seriously embraced religion is strange.

The resurgent-religion narrative goes a step further: it creates an opposition between religion and modern life. It is but a few steps from Martin Marty's Fundamentalism Project and Benjamin Barber's Jihad vs McWorld to the calls

of various American presidential candidates to 'fight back' against (supposedly) 'medieval' Islam. Plus, this narrative has fed an anti-religious reaction. An increasing number of people say, in effect, "If that's religion, I don't want any part of it." They see religion as dangerous and wrong.

The problem is: these two narratives undercut religions' moral critique of the status quo. So do most of the others. Why pay attention to religious critique, if religions are vanishing from the world stage? Or individualizing? Or turning inward to form small communities? Why pay attention, if religions are just self-interested organizations with their own goods to sell? Especially why pay attention, when religions of all kinds seem to be increasingly and violently anti-modern?

None of our six narratives engages social teachings as a core part of religious life. None of them emphasizes the ability of religions to shape social life in intentional ways. Instead, religions are seen as irrelevant, as obstructionist, as inward, or as self-interested. There is no place for Selma, for Cape Town, or for Gdansk — i.e., for religiously driven social liberation — in this story.

Why does this matter to sociology? Here's one idea. Former ISA President Michael Burawoy has argued that we are in the midst an intellectual movement that he calls "third-wave marketization". This is the ideology that free markets cure all ills. The first wave began with the British critique of mercantilism in the 1770s. The second wave began after World War I. The third wave took political power with the Thatcher and Reagan regimes in the 1980s. Each wave increased social inequality. Each destroyed worker's rights. Each led to one or another form of economic collapse. The third wave is with us still.

Burawoy describes some of the counter-movements that opposed (and still oppose) this marketization: worker's movements, unions, political activists, intelligentsias. He does not mention the religious voices that opposed the first two waves, and he does not bother to look for any religious voices that might oppose the third. This is symptomatic of sociology's treatment of religion as a sideshow.

The problem is, the third-wave religious critique is scarcely present. There are few sustained religious critiques of neo-liberalism, and those that exist speak far too softly. This is not just the result of the social trends on which these six narratives focus, though that may matter. More than that, the six sociological narratives themselves reinforce this loss of religious voice. That's because they hide the social-critical aspect of religious life. Our stories don't make room for it. Those who believe our stories don't either.

We sociologists of religion need to pay attention to the consequences of the stories we tell ourselves about the world.

What are your views? **Send your short comments to newsletter@isa-rc22.org**. We will publish the best of these in our next issue.



Opportunities for You

Three Ways to Contribute to Our Next Newsletter

1) Respond to Jim Spickard's think-piece about the state of our discipline

Please read the article on pages 9-10 of this newsletter, then respond in about 250 words. What did he get right? What did he get wrong? What are your views? We will publish the best of these in our next issue. Please send them to newsletter@isa-rc22.org.

2) Write your own think-piece about the sociology of religion

What direction do you think our discipline needs to go? What are the cutting-edge issues? What projects do you find most exciting? We'd like short essays (up to 1250 words) that are scholarly but also provocative. Please send them to newsletter@isa-rc22.org.

3) Tell us about the sociology of religion in your part of the world:

On page 8, we heard about the sociology of religion in Latin America. What's happening to religion in your part of the world? What's happening in your country? We'll publish short pieces in future newsletters: 500-750 words. Please send them to newsletter@isa-rc22.org.

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Opening for a Deputy Newsletter Editor

We need a Deputy Editor for the RC-22 Newsletter. The post is ideal for an enthusiastic PhD student of any nationality. The applicant should have:

- A good command of English
- Familiarity with Microsoft Publisher software (or be willing to learn it)
- Previous experience with writing or editorship (highly recommended)

Duties:

- Assist the Secretary-Treasurer and President put out a twice-a-year newsletter.
- If possible, assist with the ISA-RC22 News and Events blog

There's no pay, but **the RC will cover your 4-year ISA membership fee (at the student level) and your RC-22 membership fee.**

Send a short CV (up to 3 pages) stating your qualifications for the position and a one-page letter of interest to Eloísa Martín (eloisamartin14@yahoo.com.br). Include "Deputy Editor" in the subject line. Applications will be received until the post is filled.

All applications will be reviewed by an ad hoc selection committee who will make recommendations. Best applicants will be short-listed for and contacted for a Skype interview.



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