

# Invitation and call for papers: Women negotiating secularism and multiculturalism through civil society organisations

Centre for Trust, Peace & Social Relations, Coventry University, UK, June 30 – July 1st 2015

This workshop is the second of a series of international workshops on the theme "Is secularism bad for women? Women, Religion and Multiculturalism in contemporary Europe" focusing on the relation between the role of religion in women's lives and gender equality (<https://womenreligionandsecularism.wordpress.com>). This is an important question to debate, given the increased visibility of religion in the globalized world of the 21st century. While some scholars and political actors argue that a form of political secularism is the best way to ensure gender equality, others consider secularism a bad political arrangement for religious people, because it excludes them from the political and public sphere. Taking forward discussions initiated by Susan Moller Okin's controversial 1997 essay 'Is multiculturalism bad for women?' and continued recently in works of scholars including Saba Mahmood, Joan Scott, Nilüfer Göle, Nadjé Al-Ali, Linell Cady and Tracy Fessenden, these workshops address the following questions: how can European societies secure religious women's freedom and flourishing? What political arrangements offer the most to those who are religious and female? Is religion – at least some forms of it – an impossible impediment, something that must be destroyed in order for women to be free? Or can religion be a positive force in women's lives, something that enhances their wellbeing and aids social justice?

This workshop will approach these issues by focusing on the organisational or group level; the first workshop at Uppsala University (May 2015) examines the individual or everyday level, and the third at University of Coimbra, Lisbon (November 2015), will address the public and political context. In the Coventry workshop we will investigate what women's and religious organisations are doing to address issues of secularism and multiculturalism. How do these differ by geography or faith group? To what extent do faith-based organisations working for religious inclusion in civil society press for gender equality too? How do women's organisations approach religion, and do they consider religion to be an equality issue alongside ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability? How are women's faith-based organisations' working across secular/religious spheres and with other civil society organisations? How do theological/hermeneutical approaches inform religious organisations' work on gender and women's issues?

Keynote speakers: Dr Line Nyhagen (Loughborough University) and Dr Niamh Reilly (National University of Ireland, Galway)

We invite papers that discuss these questions. Abstracts should be sent by 10th April, written in English and not exceed 300 words. Notification of acceptance will be given by April 30th. Please send abstracts to: [wrsworkshops2015@gmail.com](mailto:wrsworkshops2015@gmail.com)

## Practical information:

The workshop will run from 4 pm on 30th June to 5 pm on 1st July. Papers will be presented in thematic, parallel sessions. Participation fee is £15 per participant or £10 for PhD, post-doc or civil society organizations, which includes refreshments. The workshop is funded by the International Society for the Sociology of Religion and organized by Dr Kristin Aune (Coventry University), Prof Mia Lövhelm (Uppsala University), Dr Terhi

Utriainen (University of Helsinki), Dr Alberta Giorgi (Centre of Social Studies, University of Coimbra; GRASSROOTSMOBILISE, Eliamep) & Dr Teresa Toldy (Fernando Pessoa University, Porto; Centre of Social Studies, University of Coimbra). A book publication featuring some of the papers is planned.