

Call for papers

Conference on “Transnational Religious Movements, Dialogue and Economic Development: The Hizmet Movement in Comparative Perspective”

University of Turin, Turin (Italy), 10-11 December 2015

Transnational religious actors, and civil society faith-based movements are a well-established reality of the contemporary world, which is however still understudied especially at the comparative level. Only recently, with the rise of transnational radical Islam, have religious actors started to be regarded as influencing the international and global systems, sparking a significant scholarly production. As a consequence, much of the recent literature in this sub-field has focused on pro-conflict radical and terrorist networks. However, in today’s Europe there are notable cases of transnational faith-based movements which are engaged in education and dialogue, as well as in the economic field, with proposals for interesting new entrepreneurial models merging free-trade principles and social/moral concerns. This conference aims at contributing to a better comprehension of this phenomenon.

Its first day will focus on a relevant example of dialogue-oriented group: the Hizmet movement, inspired by the Turkish preacher Fethullah Gülen, which is portrayed by many as an example of modern, ‘enlightened’ Islam, oriented towards dialogue and co-operation rather than conflict. In recent years the movement has been the focus of extensive international scholarship – both appreciative and critical – dealing with its founder and his teachings, its schools in Turkey and abroad, its relations with Turkish politics and society and the role of women therein. Although many interesting works exist about its development in countries other than Turkey, so far few coherent efforts have been made to understand its development at the transnational level. This is true particularly in relation to comparative works which can highlight the common points and the differences between the movement and other religious groups, either within Islam or belonging to other religious traditions. This conference aims at filling that gap by including papers addressing the Hizmet movement in its transnational perspective: either by analysing its activities, development and institutionalisation in different countries, or by comparing it to other dialogue-oriented religious movements. Different disciplinary perspectives, from political science to sociology, anthropology and law, as well as different methodological perspectives, are welcomed.

The second day of the conference will address more broadly the field of contemporary religious movements by focusing on the economic and entrepreneurial activities carried out by faith-based groups and the economic models which inspired them. The above-mentioned Hizmet movement is an example of a religious movement successfully engaged in several entrepreneurial activities, particularly in the education and media fields. However, religion-related entrepreneurship is widespread also in the Christian world, as shown for example by the Focolare movement, which inspired the ‘communion’ or ‘civil’ economy, marked by a strong solidaristic orientation within the free-market economy. Moreover, some ‘new’ religious movements which are not part of ‘traditional’ religions also propose interesting entrepreneurial activities in a neo-communitarian perspective strongly marked by spiritual values. This section of the conference welcomes contributions about the relationship between religious movements and economy, both through single-case studies and broader comparative and theoretical works.

The conference is funded by the University of Turin and the Compagnia di SanPaolo Foundation, and co-sponsored by the ‘Religion and Politics’

standing group of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), the IPSA RC43 'Religion and Politics' Research Group and the Istituto Tevere based in Rome. It will take place on 10-11 December 2015 and will be hosted by the Department of Cultures, Politics and Society of the University of Turin (Italy) at the Luigi Einaudi Campus (CLE).

Prospective paper givers can send a proposal of up to 250 words, as well as any enquiry, to the scientific coordinator of the conference, Dr.

Luca Ozzano, at the address: luca.ozzano@unito.it, and to the organization assistant, Dr. Chiara Maritato, at the address:

chiara.maritato@unito.it.

The deadline for paper proposals is 15 September 2015.