

## 2nd Call for papers: Faith and the 'practising' of social justice

RGS-IBG Annual Conference Tuesday 29 August to Friday 1 September 2017

Session organisers: Louise Waite (University of Leeds) & Hannah Lewis (University of Sheffield)

Sponsored by the Geographies of Justice Research Group

Neoliberal countries are experiencing changing religious landscapes and growing welfare pluralism in times of austerity. Welfare restructuring has offered a renewed role for faith-based organisations (FBOs) in the public realm; acting as inexpensive resource providers to fill gaps in public sector delivery. This trend is lubricated by high profile politicians (e.g. Tony Blair, George W. Bush, Theresa May) linking faith with politics and giving 'theopolitical legitimacy' for community participants to mobilise and deliver service provision. Though this trend is not necessarily new – e.g. some publically active Christian organisations hail from Victorian times - what is perhaps new in the last few decades is the re-emergence of faith-based domains beyond the merely charitable, extending into service provision, capacity building and political campaigning. Some say FBOs can be seen as broadly *supportive* of neoliberal politics (e.g. as puppets of neoliberalism; uncritically contributing to the hollowing out of the welfare state), whilst others maintain they can be *dissenting* of neoliberalism (e.g. as potential sites of resistance against neoliberalism with the ability to articulate alternative philosophies of care for the socially excluded and to act as springboards for 'practising' social justice). What is also re-emerging in this terrain is a discourse on different forms of 'deservingness' and 'undeservingness'. The roll-back of public sector provision has dovetailed with a creeping (re)moralisation of welfare ethics that has fashioned, yet again, the figures of the deserving and undeserving poor.

Concerned with these recent developments, our session aims to identify convergences and divergences between conceptual framings, empirical findings and fieldwork methodologies across recent studies of different FBOs and processes of social action.

We define FBOs broadly to include 'faith-based NGOs' offering support to marginalised groups, but also other types of religious organisations from 'apex bodies' that represent faith traditions (e.g. in the UK - the Church of England, the Sikh Council) to places of worship.

We welcome submissions on any aspect of this broad area, but would particularly encourage papers on:

- FBOs growing role in the gendered world of anti-trafficking efforts to tackle 'modern slavery'.
- The role of particularly Christian organisations in the new abolitionist movement in the U.S and other countries.
- Faith in other areas of the public realm such as urban regeneration, homelessness, voluntary action, forced displacement and international development.
- Instances of postsecular partnerships and multi-faith initiatives whereupon secularly-motivated and faith-based actors develop mutual ethical concerns and forge novel alliances.

This session is being organised by Louise Waite (University of Leeds – [l.waite@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:l.waite@leeds.ac.uk)) and Hannah Lewis (University of Sheffield – [h.j.lewis@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:h.j.lewis@sheffield.ac.uk)). Please submit abstracts of up to 250 words and full contact details to both organisers **by 8th February 2017**.