

PRAYER, POP, AND POLITICS

: RESEARCHING POST-MIGRANT RELIGIOUS YOUTH CULTURE

WORKSHOP AT UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA, 29-30 SEPTEMBER 2017

Both in migration studies and in religious studies there is an increased interest in research on the religious engagement of (post-) migrant youth. While the first are for example concerned with identity politics, processes of boundary drawing and minority representation, the latter focus on issues of a changing religious landscape and the diaspora situation of religious communities. From both scholarly perspectives, developments in youth culture are crucial to understand the consequences of the renewed role of religions in Western societies. Here, young people set a course for the future development of religions among their peers and through pop cultural practices and artefacts.

This workshop brings together scholars from different disciplines, interested in empirical research on migrant religious youth culture. We are interested in a broad spectrum of research questions, from macro-sociological perspectives covered in large scale surveys to micro-perspectives on individual aspects of migrant religious youth culture. In particular, we invite contributions addressing one of the following aspects:

- Politics of belonging: intersectionality and the negotiation of ideas, ideals and identities among migrant religious youth
- Religions in mobile times: migrant religious youth cultures and their confrontation with/influence on/relation to established religious traditions and communities
- Migrant religiosity in secular societies: migrant religious youth cultures as an expression of vital/revitalized religiosity and their interactions with secular environments

The workshop provides an opportunity to exchange ideas and research experiences. Together, we want to discuss the opportunities, challenges and limits of empirical research among migrant religious youth. We aim to publish the results of this workshop and thereby make a contribution to the interdisciplinary research on migrant religious youth.



The workshop is organized by the research platform 'Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society'. The platform is formed by an interdisciplinary research community, bringing together scholars from seven faculties at University of Vienna and presenting a point of contact for international researchers interested in religion and societal transformation processes in contemporary contexts.

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Location: Schenkenstraße 8-10, Seminar Room 5, 1st Floor, 1010 Vienna

29.09.2017

9:00 WELCOME ADDRESS

9:30 – 10:20

COMMITTED, BUT NOT BOUND: SWISS MUSLIM YOUTHS AND YOUNG ADULTS IN SEARCH OF RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION, Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, University of Lucerne

10:20-11:10

CHILDREN AND YOUTH INTERVIEWED IN DIFFERENT MOSQUES COMMUNITIES AND THE NEGOTIATIONS OF BELONGING IN MIGRANT SOCIETIES, Christine Hunner-Kreisel and Jana Wetzel, University of Vechta

11:10-11:30 COFFEE BREAK

11:30 – 12:20

DOING RESEARCH WITH YOUNG SELF-IDENTIFIED MUSLIMS BEYOND THE WHITE GAZE. OLD EPISTEMOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND NEW METHODOLOGICAL PATHWAYS IN RESEARCH WITH RACIALISED INDIVIDUALS, Christoph Novak, Austrian Academy of Science/ University of Vienna

12:20 -14:00 LUNCH BREAK

14:00 -14:50

BLUE FOR PRASAD, YELLOW FOR LANGAR – DIFFERENT REFERENCES IN THE IDENTITY BUILDING OF SECOND GENERATION HINDUS IN VIENNA, Katharina Limacher, University of Lucerne

14:50 – 15:40

THE YOUTH: AN ENIGMA TO COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM, Rüdiger Lohlker, University of Vienna

15:40 – 16:00 COFFEE BREAK

16:00 – 16:50

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY OF ALEVI AND SUNNI YOUTH, Marina Loth, Center for Religious Studies of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum

16:50 – 17:40

FIGHTING (FOR) IDENTITY: RELIGIOUSLY ENGAGED ADOLESCENTS IN THE AGE OF MIGRATION, Astrid Mattes, University of Vienna

19:00 DINNER

30.09.2017

9:30 – 10:00 REVIEW

10:00 -12:00 WORKSHOP SESSION ON PUBLICATION

12:00 -12:30 CLOSING DISCUSSION

Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, University of Lucerne

Which are the authorities and sources of orientation Muslim youths and young adults in Switzerland turn to when seeking religious information, counselling or encouragement? This has been the guiding question of a research project conducted from 2014 to 2017 at the University of Lucerne. The research question can be connected to current scientific debates about changing features of authority in Islam, especially in Western diaspora contexts, or to changes of diasporic religion in general. The proposed contribution will outline the research design of the project, present its main results (for a short and popular version see www.unilu.ch/imracy) and reflect on their implications for future research as well as for the public debate.

The core of the data corpus consists of 61 semi-structured interviews with youths and young adults (aged 14-32) of different ethnic and linguistic background living in the country since two years or more. Analysis of the interviews showed a vast spectre of authorities among which imams and internet preachers are not the most influential for the young people. Especially significant are those relatives and acquaintances in their religious milieu whom they credit with relevant qualities (religious knowledge, life experience). Another important finding is that young Muslims do not follow any authority blindly but insist on being given logical reasons for recommended behaviour; still they will finally decide themselves if they follow a specific advice or not. By continuing their search for religiously informed orientation they are developing more and more clearly their own criteria for a lifestyle aiming at integrating a sense of being Muslim with that of being a full-fledged part of Swiss society.

Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, born in 1961, has studied Islamic studies, Oriental languages and History at the University of Berne, supplemented by study stays in Vienna and Tunis. His doctoral thesis, completed in 1994 in Freiburg (Germany) and published in 1996, is about relations between Tunis and Istanbul, 1860-1913. After working as a foreign news editor in a regional Swiss newspaper from 1999 to 2006 he returned to academia. Since 2007 he coordinates the Center for Research on Religion at the University of Lucerne. His major fields of research are Islam in Switzerland and in Western Europe, religions in a religiously plural context, religion and the public sphere, processes of recognition in society and law, interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Christine Hunner-Kreisel and Jana Wetzel, University of Vechta

In our presentation we will present the empirical findings of group interviews in various mosques in Germany with female and male children and youth, aged between eight and 24 years.

Our main analytical focus will be on the negotiations of belonging within the data. Our theoretical perspective is that the children and youth have to be seen as subjects, situated and positioned in contexts and structures. Therefore we ask how these negotiations have to be related to the situatedness of the interviewees in migrant societies. As evaluating tool we use the intersectional multilevel approach by Winker & Degele (2009). This intersectional approach is to analyse social inequalities following the methodological idea that they are engrained in subjects by processes of identity constructions. Social inequalities within the praxeologically grounded, multilevel approach are understood as a complex phenomenon not only with impact / effects to the socioeconomic status of subjects, but referring to lack of acknowledgement and belonging, or experiences of discrimination along normative social orders.

In a first step of our presentation we will present different empirical examples that show how children and youth deal with orders of belonging facing experiences of inequalities. The intersectional perspective reveals how power relations, manifest along the structural categories of class, race, gender, body and generation, are strengthened, as well as are possibly weakened depending on how social categories of differentiation may interplay respectively to an each specific context realizing agency or preventing it. The reconstruction of the data reveals that negotiations differ with respect to the "strategies" chosen to cope with these experiences. Along these "strategies" we want to highlight in a second step of our presentation - using the analytical tool of the intersectional analysis therefor - the complexity of the persons' experiences of vulnerable and empowering processes at the same time. Finally we want to have a closer look at specific contexts and therewith their dominant orders of belonging and the situational/contextual positioning of the interviewee. Our analysis shows for example that the mosque is a location which, within an intersectional perspective, can provide a "safer space" where experiences of racial discrimination are weakened through the belonging to a religious community and the hereby constituted, shared inter- and intragenerational space.

Christine Hunner-Kreisel is Professor for Transculturality and Gender at the University of Vechta. Her research within the field of international child- and youth research is focussed on the analysis of education and socialization processes in relation to questions of difference, gender, migration and religion in particular. In her research, Christine Hunner-Kreisel works with qualitative social scientific methods.

Jana Wetzel studied Educational Sciences and Sociology at the University of Bielefeld. Her research interests are anti-racist social work, social inequality, and youth in migration societies. Previously, Jana Wetzel worked on youth empowerment and mechanisms of exclusion.

DOING RESEARCH WITH YOUNG SELF-IDENTIFIED MUSLIMS BEYOND THE WHITE GAZE. OLD EPISTEMOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND NEW METHODOLOGICAL PATHWAYS IN RESEARCH WITH RACIALISED INDIVIDUALS.

Christoph Novak, Austrian Academy of Science/ University of Vienna

This talk focuses on the challenges posed by doing research with people who are targeted by racist discourses (e.g. anti-Muslim discourses), while coming oneself from a privileged position in society (as white, male, cis-gendered, heterosexual, non-religious, etc.). This part is informed by three strands of literature: first, by feminist approaches to social research (Sprague, Kleinman); second, debates on “groupism” (Brubaker) and “methodological nationalism” (Glick Schiller, Wimmer, Çağlar); and third, critical approaches in research with racialised individuals (Ramazanoglu, Brotherton). I discuss the problem (and the occasional necessity) of using racialised categories in conceptualising research trajectories and the inherent danger of reifying such categories in the process of knowledge production. Furthermore, I talk about the vital importance of being aware (and showing awareness) of social power hierarchies in general and one’s own positionality in particular, without jumping to wrong (essentialising) conclusions on any of these aspects. Additionally, I formulate some guiding principles for doing research with people targeted by racist discourses.

I do so, by presenting my own approach to fieldwork – a combination of narrative biographical interviews (Riessman) and photo interviews (Kolb) – undertaken as part of my PhD project on the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis) of young self-identified Muslims in Zurich and Vienna. In this project, I have tried to avoid any overdetermination of people targeted by a specific (anti-Muslim) racist discourse, while remaining aware of discriminatory discourses and their (possible) effects on the lives of my research participants. However, this awareness must not result in denying people’s agency to construct themselves apart from the white gaze (Morrison) of neither the racist nor the social scientist interested in the critical study of racism.

Christoph Novak read Political Science at the University of Vienna (2012, Mag.phil.) and continued his studies with an MA in Culture, Diaspora, Ethnicity at Birkbeck College, University of London (2013, MA). From 2014 to 2016 he worked as a project scientist for Swiss Paraplegic Research, Nottwil, Switzerland on different research projects in the fields of Health Sciences and Disability Studies. He started his doctoral research (cotutelle de thèse) at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Geneva (supervisor: Prof. Matteo Gianni) and the Department of Political Science, University of Vienna (supervisor: Prof. Sieglinde Rosenberger) in 2015. Already since 2014 he is associated with the Doctoral Programme in Gender Studies at the University of Zurich. He is a DOC-Fellow of the Austrian Academy of the Sciences since 2016.

Rüdiger Lohlker, University of Vienna

Countering violence extremism (CVE) is facing a problem: there is an object to be enlightened that violence is evil. In a comparative view examples of CVE purportedly aiming at a 'youthful' audience will be analyzed and a project in Vienna that can be understood as countering the CVE-business as usual will be presented.

Rüdiger Lohlker is a professor of Islamic Studies at the Oriental Institute, University of Vienna. He is also the head of Training Course for Imams at University of Vienna. His research focuses on history of Islamic Ideas, Islam and the Arab World Online, modern Islamic movements and Jihadism, especially online.

Katharina Limacher, University of Lucerne

Apart from a few contributions, current research on second-generation Hindus has not seen a similar boom as work on Muslim migrant youth in Europe. This paper therefore explores the subject by means of a comparison of migrant Hindu youth in the cities of Vienna and Zurich. Based on fieldwork I conducted from 2013-2016 my paper focuses on two topics: *First*, I'm interested in methodological concerns while faced with a field – Vienna – that is small and rather diverse in its migrational history. How is research on migrant religious youth best approached conceptually when we encounter very different aspects of generational, religious and ethnic belonging?

Secondly, I will present selected results from my fieldwork in Vienna and Zurich that deals with the methodological concerns outlined above. I argue that researches predominant take on Hindu migrant youth is influenced by the analytical setting of a so-called religious mono-culture i.e. migrant Tamil Hinduism (Qvortrup Fibiger 2010, Marla Küsters 2016). This religious mono-culture produces a rather consistent religious network within which a second generation develops a religious identity, oscillating mainly between the religious heritage of their parents and the dominant religious culture of their environment. In contrast, Austrian Hindu Youth, due to the many differences in ethnic origin and migrational history, reference more often *different* religious and ethnic minority cultures besides the religious heritage of their parents and the Austrian religious environment they live in. This difference becomes visible in various aspects of religious practice, learning and belonging. Therefore, I conclude that the range of references in conjunction with the formation of a religious identity I found in Austrian Hindu Youth is a strong indicator that the absence of a significant mono-cultural background supports the creative identity building, the so-called bricolage, of religious migrant youth.

Katharina Limacher completed a Master's Degree in Sociology and Religious Studies at the University of Lucerne. After different engagements in research in Switzerland, Austria and Italy she is currently completing her PhD on Hindu religious practice in Switzerland and Austria.

Martina Loth, Center for Religious Studies of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum

My dissertation project aims at comparing young adults with Turkish migration backgrounds from two different religious communities which have very similar migration histories but at the same time in many aspects very distinguishing ways of life. This fact is barely being recognized by the majority society. Grown from history, Sunni and Alevi have a tensed relationship as Alevi people in Turkey had to suffer many centuries of suppression under the Sunni majority. Through migration the conflict line has been “imported” to Germany and is being reinforced in times of political tensions as we could especially observe in the months before and after the Turkish constitutional referendum earlier this year.

Against this backdrop, I am talking to these young adults about possible tensions in the field of their religious identity and perceived expectations by the majority society.

On the one hand, I am conducting narrative interviews with Sunni believers affiliated to the biggest Muslim organization in Germany, the DITIB (Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği), which has strong ties with the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs. On the other hand, I am interviewing young Alevi affiliated to the Youth organization of the Alevi community of Germany (BDAJ, Bund der Alevitischen Jugend Deutschland). The Alevi community in Germany is the biggest Alevi diaspora organization and plays a significant role in the European Alevi diaspora.

To gain narrative data for my main question, the tensions between religious identity and expectations by the majority society, I use the following questions as starting points:

- In which way is your religious belief influencing your everyday-life? Is it helping you in any kind of situation? Does it represent a challenge or even conflicts in other situations?
- In which way do you think Germany or “the German culture” is attractive to you, where do you see restrictions?
- How do you imagine your future? What kind of role do you think your belief will play?

The comparative study is based on the Grounded Theory Methodology. The continual conjunction between empiricism and theory offers an appropriate access to a field in which little research has been conducted so far.

Martina Loth is a PhD-Candidate at the Graduate School “Regulating Religious Plurality in the Region” at the Ruhr-University Bochum. Before, she was assistant to the Managing Director, German-Turkish Youth Bridge in Düsseldorf. Her educational background is a joint German-Turkish Master’s Program in Social Sciences (GeT MA) at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and the Middle East Technical University Ankara. For her Bachelor’s degrees she studies Comparative Studies of Culture and Religion at the Philipps-Universität Marburg, where she also had the chance to go abroad to spend two terms as ERASMUS-student at Boğaziçi University Istanbul.

Astrid Mattes, University of Vienna

I want to take the opportunity this workshop provides, to sketch a comparative research project on the politics of belonging. In this research project, I am interested in identity claims by religiously engaged adolescents against the background of the age of migration. On the one hand, religion has become a marker for self- and otherness, often used as an ascription, or a label to name essentially racial categories. On the other hand, especially during recent refugee movements, religious communities have acted as enforcer of universal values and human rights. In both cases, we notice a politicization of religious identity.

As Rogers Brubaker argues, young people in Europe cannot be indifferent towards being Muslim. A “taken for granted identification” has become impossible (2013) due to the intensive politicization of the category. Also religious self-commitment to other religions means taking a strong stance against an increasingly secular mainstream and against the background of an increasing politicization of religion. Religious identification is no longer something that is just inhabited in an unreflective manner. Among young people, taking such a stance is part of a wider process of negotiating belonging.

While religion is often associated with dust and boredom, we increasingly observe pop cultural elements in the religious engagement of adolescents. “Hipster faith”, modest fashion weeks, religious rap music and a multitude of blogs, magazines and youtube channels that could equally deal with a trend sports or lifestyle issues transport religious messages young people turn to. The project aims to investigate the following questions:

- How do religiously engaged youth in the age of migration negotiate belonging through religious pop culture?
- Which religious messages are transported in pop cultural products religious adolescents favour?
- Which political claims are entailed in pop cultural products religious adolescents favour?
- How do adolescents integrate these messages and claims into their own lifestyle and life choices?

These questions will be addressed from a comparative perspective to investigate how religious adolescence negotiate their identity as believers in a secular society, as followers of a minority religion, and/or as religious migrants in a minority setting. q

Astrid Mattes is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Vienna and currently working as a coordinator of the interdisciplinary research platform “Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society”. She studied Comparative Religious Studies and Political Science completed her doctoral degree with a thesis on the roles of religion in immigrant integration policies. Her research interests are diversity and liberal democracy, Islam in Austria and Europe, migration and integration policy, and challenges of religious pluralism.