UNIVERSITÄT LUZERN

Book of Abstracts

BOA Structuring Diversity - Structruring Religion Religious Diversity and Human Heterogeneity in Society

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, 30TH MARCH - 1ST APRIL 2023, UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE & ONLINE

CONTENT

ORGANISED BY the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Lucerne (Switzerland), in cooperation with the Study of Religions, Philipps University Marburg (Germany), the department for cultural studies, University of Lucerne, the department of History, Federal University of Paraná (Brazil) and the Swiss Association for the Study of Religions (SGR-SSSR).

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1 Venue

Location

Universität Luzern

Frohburgstrasse 3

6002 Luzern

Conference Venue

Hörsaal 8 – Ground floor

Public Lecture

Hörsaal 7 – Ground floor

T +41 41 229 55 82
relsem@unilu.ch
www.unilu.ch/diversityreligionconference

2   Speakers

2.1   Keynotes and public lecture

Lene Kühle, Professor with special responsibilities and Research Program Manager at the School of Culture and Society - Department of the Study of Religion at Aarhus University. She teaches Sociology of Religion and Religion and Politics. Her research interests include sociological theories on religion, religious pluralism, religious minorities, and Muslims in Denmark. As a member of the research project Critical Analysis of Religious Diversity (CARD Network), Lene Kühle is editor and co-author of *The Critical Analysis of Religious Diversity*, as well as of a wide range of publications on religious diversity, Muslims in Denmark, radicalisation and religion in public institutions.

Melissa Steyn, Professor at the Wits Center for Diversity Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. She is Founder and Director of the Wits Center for Diversity Studies and holds the South African Research Chair in Critical Diversity Studies. Her research interests focus on Whiteness, Critical Whiteness Studies, Critical Diversity Studies, Postapartheid South Africa, and Critical Diversity Literacy. Her book *Whiteness just isn't what it used to be: White identity in a changing South Africa* won the 2002 Outstanding Scholarship Award in International and Intercultural Communication from the National Communication Association in the United States.

Zeinab Ahmadi, Junior Researcher at the Swiss Center for Islam and Society at the University of Fribourg and Scientific Associate at the office for integration and social affairs of the Canton of Berne. Her master's thesis deals with the effects of the media discourse on Islam on the lives of Muslim women in Switzerland. In her former position as head of education and deputy director at Haus der Religionen Berne she gained expertise in working in interreligious and intercultural contexts. Zeinab Ahmadi is also involved in the expert commission for migration and racism issues of the city of Berne and in the expert committee "Religionslandkarte" of the Canton of Berne.

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2.2   Presentations by

Atena Abdoli Masinan, Tehran (Iran)

Yuliya Aliyeva, Baku (Azerbaijan)

Kwabena Asamoah Gyadu, Accra (Ghana)

Jennifer Ball, Bangor (United Kingdom/Wales)

Yasmina Burezah, Bonn (Germany)

Tabea Eugster-Schaetzle, Basel (Switzerland)

Maggie Goldberger, Cambridge MA (USA)

Abdelmjid Kettioui, Meknès (Morocco)

Iuliia Korniichuk, Kyiv/Warsaw (Ukraine/ Poland)

Alice Küng, Fribourg (Switzerland)

Maham Naseer, Göttingen (Germany)

Mischa Piraud, Geneva (Switzerland)

Tatiana Roveri, Geneva (Switzerland)

Richard Saville-Smith, Isle of Skye (United Kingdom/Scotland)

Narciss M. Sohrabi, Paris (France)

Patrícia de Souza, São Paulo (Brazil)

Leandro de Paula, Salvador (Brazil)

2.3   Convenors

Dr. Anne Beutter, University of Lucerne, Switzerland

Dr. Ramona Jelinek-Menke, Philipps-University Marburg, Germany

Prof. Karina Kosicki Bellotti, Federal University of Paraná, Brazil

Sahra Lobina, MA, University of Lucerne, Switzerland

Brian McGowan, MA, Zurich University for Applied Sciences, Switzerland

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3   Full Conference Programme

03/30/2023	*Day I – Opening and Keynotes*
10:00-11:00 (GMT+1)	Arrival and Registration
11:00-11:15 (GMT+1)	**Opening** Organisational Team **Greeting** Martin Baumann, Lucerne (Switzerland)
11:15-13:15 (GMT+1)	**Keynotes** **Melissa Steyn,** Johannesburg (South Africa) and **Lene Kühle,** Aarhus (Denmark) Chair: Anne Beutter, Lucerne (Switzerland), Brian McGowan, Zurich (Switzerland)
	Lunch Break
	Day I – Religions and Critical Diversity Literacy *Chair: Karina Kosicki Bellotti, Curitiba (Brazil)*
	PANEL I – DIVERSITY STRATEGIES
14:30-15:00 (GMT+1)	Talk I **Maggie Goldberger,** Cambridge MA (USA) *Suburban Holy Lands: The Battle for Hindu Presence in Suburban New Jersey*
15:00-15:30 (GMT+1)	Talk II **Iuliia Korniichuk,** Kyiv/Warsaw (Poland/Ukraine) *Celebrating diversity in modern Ukraine: the role of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and religious organisations*
15:30-16:00 (GMT+1)	Talk III **Abdelmjid Kettioui,** Meknès (Marocco) *Un/Doing 'critical diversity literacy' from outside the Islamic field: The case of Moroccan nonreligious activists in the diaspora*
16:00-16:30 (GMT+1)	Talk IV **Alice Küng,** Fribourg (Switzerland) *Religion in the diversity management in companies in Switzerland*
18:15-19:45 (GMT+1)	**Public Event** **Zeinab Ahmadi,** Fribourg (Switzerland) Facilitator: Sahra Lobina, Lucerne (Switzerland)
	Dinner

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03/31/2023	*Day II – Inter- and Intrareligious Diversity*
	Chair: Karina Kosicki Bellotti, Curitiba (Brazil)
10:30-11:15 (GMT+1)	**Reflection I – looking back together on day I**
	Facilitator: Ramona Jelinek-Menke, Marburg (Germany)
	PANEL II – INTRARELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN CONTEXT
11:30-12:00 (GMT+1)	Talk V
	Yuliya Aliyeva, Baku (Azerbaijan)
	Religious diversity strategies and non-traditional Christian communities in Baku: Negotiating Intra-Religious identity and intercommunity Solidarity
12:00-12:30 (GMT+1)	Talk VI
	Patrícia de Souza, São Paulo (Brazil)
	The subversive saints of Brazilian Umbanda
12:30-13:00 (GMT+1)	Talk VII
	Kwabena Asamoah Gyadu, Accra (Ghana)
	Being the body of Christ in the European diaspora: Challenges of diversity among African immigrant churches in Europe
	Lunch Break
	PANEL III – INTERRELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS
14:00-14:30 (GMT+1)	Talk VIII
	Mischa Piraud & Tatiana Roveri, Geneva (Switzerland)
	Dynamics of space production in mapping cantonal religious diversity
14:30-15:00 (GMT+1)	Talk IX
	Narciss M. Sohrabi, Paris (France)
	Space, architecture and visibility of religious diversity under socio-political conditions. Case Study:Tehran
15:00-15:30 (GMT+1)	Talk X
	Atena Abdoli Masinan, Tehran (Iran)
	How to structure diversity and religion in ancient societies. A case study: The religion of the Mithra
	Coffee Break
16:00-17:30 (GMT+1)	**Response and Discussion**
	Lene Kühle, Aarhus (Denmark)
	Dinner

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04/01/2023	*Day III – Religions and human heterogeneity* *Chair: Ramona Jelinek-Menke, Marburg (Germany)*
10:00-10:45 (GMT+1)	**Reflection II – looking back together on day II** Facilitator: Anne Beutter, Lucerne (Switzerland)
	PANEL IV – SEX, GENDER AND RACE
11:00-11:30 (GMT+1)	Talk XI **Maham Naseer,** Göttingen (Germany) *Devotional bliss and sensual amorousness – religiosity, sexuality, and femineity of a courtesan in the eighteenth-century Deccan of Mughal India*
11:30-12:00 (GMT+1)	Talk XII **Jennifer Ball,** Bangor (United Kingdom/Wales) *A queer path: An investigation into heteronormativity within contemporary paganism*
12:00-12:30 (GMT+1)	Talk XIII **Leandro de Paula,** Salvador (Brazil) *Religious diversity and racial politics in Salvador, Brazil*
	Lunch Break
	PANEL V – ABLEISM AND INEQUALITY
13:30-14:00 (GMT+1)	Talk XIV **Tabea Eugster-Schaetzle,** Basel (Switzerland) *Un/doing precariat – Diaconic work and the asymmetry in society*
14:00-14:30 (GMT+1)	Talk XV **Yasmina Burezah**, Bonn (Germany) *The materiality of diversity –Kanye West between religion, race and disability*
14:30-15:00 (GMT+1)	Talk XVI **Richard Saville-Smith,** Isle of Skye (United Kingdom/Scotland) *Introducing 'Acute Religious Experiences' as a contribution to structuring diversities*
	Coffee Break
15:30-17:00 (GMT+1)	**Response and Discussion** **Melissa Steyn**, Johannesburg (South Africa)
17:00-17:45 (GMT+1)	**Reflection III – looking back together on day III – and Closing** Facilitator: Brian McGowan, Zurich (Switzerland), Anne Beutter, Lucerne (Switzerland), Sahra Lobina, Lucerne (Switzerland)

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4   Abstracts

03/30/2023	*Day I – Religions and Critical Diversity Literacy*
PANEL I – DIVERSITY STRATEGIES	

Talk I

Maggie Goldberger, Cambridge MA (USA)

Suburban Holy Lands: The Battle for Hindu Presence in Suburban New Jersey

This paper will examine two case studies that centered around disputes between Hindu religious organizations and suburban municipal zoning boards over the construction of temple sites and the organization of public festivals. By examining these two cases—Indo-American Cultural Society v. Township of Edison, and Sri Venkateswara Temple v. Township of Bridgewater—I will look at the ways in which seemingly benign zoning regulations centered around "noise" and "traffic" have functioned in suburban communities to limit the public participation of non-white and non-Christian groups. Going beyond the legal facts of these cases, I will additionally examine the ways that these disputes are contextualized, not simply in anxieties over the changing demographics of suburban spaces, but in deeper anxieties about a shift in the dominant symbols and ideologies that shape discourses about the suburbs. I assert that the American suburb has been constructed in the American imaginary as sacred space. In light of these cases, I will examine the way that the suburb has been shaped as imagined space through religiously imbued narratives about citizenship, the American Dream, and the American immigrant experience. These conflicts, I argue, are fundamentally conflicts over sacred land—in which sacred space is both the broadly imagined suburban landscape and specifically Hindu sacred space. Implicit in the debates that surrounded these disputes that were, on the surface, around zoning, are deeper debates over what religious space and expression should look like in the American suburb—and fears over who has the power to control that narrative.

Talk II

Iuliia Korniichuk, Kyiv/Warsaw (Poland/Ukraine)

Celebrating diversity in modern Ukraine: the role of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and religious organisations

The research seeks to analyse the complex and ambivalent role of the All-Ukrainian council of churches and religious organisations in building and celebrating diversity in modern Ukraine. Created in the late 1990s as a platform for the minimisation of interreligious tensions after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Council became the most respected interreligious player in the country. Uniting leaders of the largest Ukrainian Eastern Orthodox, Roman- and Greek Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim communities, the organisation actively participate in Ukrainian public life – from collective blessings of the presidents during inauguration to offering mediation at the national and international level (negotiating cooperation between religious and state institutions, peace during the protests on Maidan square or the Russian-Ukrainian war). At the same time, it takes a conservative position on a number of social issues (such as gender, family or reproductive rights). The author examines conflicting initiatives of the organisation that create tensions between respect for religious freedom and celebrating social diversity in the context of international obligations and aspirations of Ukraine. Research relies on content analysis of official documents, statements and interviews with religious and political leaders.

Talk III

Abdelmjid Kettioui, Meknès (Marocco)

Un/Doing 'critical diversity literacy' from outside the Islamic field: The case of Moroccan nonreligious activists in the diaspora

This paper asks to what extent Moroccan nonreligious activists in the diaspora manage to unpack the diverse and intersectional politics that produce Muslim ontologies. Their critique of Islam is the result of their auto-ethnographies of leaving Islam in the diaspora. These activists identify as cultural Muslims and act as engaged citizens who aim through subversive and subcultural creativities and epistemologies to make light of the Islamic tradition. Some do so through questioning the discourses of Arabness and pan-Arabism, favouring the vernacular to embark on the task of enlightenment. While this project focuses on questioning Muslim 'sources of the self' (Taylor 1989) such as the Quran and Sunnah, etc., it fails to address intersectionality factors other than religion, namely authoritarian politics and coloniality. Following a close analysis of interviews with some leading activists, this paper proposes the mobilization of 'critical diversity literacy' (Steyn 2015) to counter essentialist, culturalist and apolitical readings of Islam and to foster pluralistic positionings vis-à-vis the non-secular.

Talk IV

Alice Küng, Fribourg (Switzerland)

Religion in the diversity management in companies in Switzerland

Not only the Swiss society in general is characterised by diversity. Also the employees in Switzerland are religiously diverse. Then religion doesn't only stay in private life. It might as well be present at work. To manage that many companies have a diversity management. The diversity management is a human resource strategy that deals with the diversity of the employees. Religion is one of the diversity dimensions. But often it is one of the least dimensions that get looked at. One of the reasons for that is the ban for Swiss employers to collect any data of the religious identity of their employees. On the same time though employers are obligated to protect the personal integrity of their employees including discrimination based on religion. Consequently, companies cannot neglect the topic of religion. First, the paper examines the role of religion in the diversity management and how diversity managers perceive the diversity dimension religion. The main questions to be answered here are: What importance is given to this dimension and how does this topic gets approached? Second, the paper shows how religion becomes present at work, meaning how religion gets material in private companies. Examples for that are clothes, symbols, canteen menus, religious festivals, and religious practices. Third, the paper evaluates the perspective of the employees. I ask what options employers provide their employees to express their religious identity at work and how these opportunities are perceived and used by employees.

03/31/2023	*Day II – Inter- and Intrareligious Diversity*
PANEL II – INTRARELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN CONTEXT	

Talk V

Yuliya Aliyeva, Baku (Azerbaijan)

Religious diversity strategies and non-traditional Christian communities in Baku: Negotiating Intra-Religious identity and intercommunity Solidarity

The focus of my research is the growing number of Non-Traditional Christian Communities in Azerbaijan, predominantly Muslim post-Soviet country. Represented mainly by the Protestant evangelic churches these communities are actively engaged in missionary work promoting the conversion to the evangelical Christianity in its polyphonic variety. The present essay attempts to discuss two religious diversity strategies used by the groups in attempt 'to localize': (1) engagement of intersecting religious and social/cultural identities in struggle for recognition and acceptance, (2) establishment of the horizontal ties foregoing internal differentiations for intra-religious solidarity and mutual support in hostile environment. While the religious landscape of Azerbaijan is notable for its plurality and the centuries-old co-existence of 'traditional' Muslim (Shia and Sunni), Jewish (Mountainous, Ashkenazi and Georgian) and Christian (Orthodox, Lutheran and sectarians, such as Molocans, etc.) communities, for the majority of modern Azerbaijani citizens religion acts mostly as marker of belonging and not the manifestation of individual religiosity. In this respect these "conversion-led movements", defined by David Lehman (2013), are acting as disruptors, bringing complications to the established religious 'status-quo', and re-defining religion as a matter of personal choice and rather than a nominal status acquired at birth. In my paper I argue that embracement of the dominant collective identity of being 'Azerbaijani' and inclusion of the patriotic narratives to the worship helps these communities to negotiate for acceptance in diverse religious environment and refute their status as 'socially dangerous'.

Talk VI

Patrícia de Souza, São Paulo (Brazil)

The subversive saints of Brazilian Umbanda

Brazilian Umbanda is composed by different religious traditions, merging different pantheons: the presence of catholic saints and Christian symbols in Umbanda has helped it to be accepted, whereas the presence of unconventional saints originated among African slaves, native Amerindians, gypsies, street people, rascals and liberated women has given Umbanda a controversial reputation, frequently generating prejudice from outsiders, especially pentecostalists. On the other hand, Umbanda saints seem to reflect true human condition, as well as Brazilian people's character. Embodied in mediums, such saints are manifested during Umbanda rituals where they talk to devotees and perform healing procedures using herbs, tobacco, and alcohol. They dress, speak, and behave according to the time when they lived incarnated. They mention their past lives without guilt but showing the natural ways in which, every human learns and evolves through several existences. From time to time, new lineages of spirits manifest in different terreiros (Umbanda temples) and are eventually absorbed by Umbanda's pantheon. Recently, a lineage of rascals (men and women) started been manifested frequently in several terreiros. They dance samba, play cards, dices, and drink liquor. They are very witty, cheerful, tell jokes and make people laugh as part of their healing rituals. Their ways question the "universal" model of saintliness shaped by medieval Christianity (Mulder-Bakker, 2002) – binary/Manichean. In Umbanda there are no rules to make saints, they are not canonized, but spontaneously venerated. Their hagiography comes from material-and-

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corporeal sources (objects they use, bodily gestures and practices), as well as from what they tell people about their past lives. Umbanda's rascals lived in the 19th century in Recife or Rio de Janeiro frequenting bars and gambling. Rascals' spiritual lineage is highlighting Umbanda's nonbinary characteristics breaking dichotomies such as "sin/virtue", showing that saintliness or holiness may have many other interpretations.

Talk VII
Kwabena Asamoah Gyadu, Accra (Ghana)
Being the body of Christ in the European diaspora: Challenges of diversity among African immigrant churches in Europe
African migrant churches have in the last thirty years transformed the European religious landscape through the establishment of Christian congregations that are often filled with indigenes of their original countries. The factor of diversity in church life is in these migrant churches, restricted using African languages and styles of worship that appear "alien" to Christians in the host countries. In the light of accusations that these migrant churches practice "encapsulated church communities", we are confronted with the question of how Christian diversity can be lived within the new way in which "church" is done within the community. This presentation seeks to reflect on the challenges to diversity that have come with the establishment of African migrant churches in the European Diaspora. In learning about the motivations and challenges of the churches themselves, the paper seeks to provide a critical analysis of factors that account for the inability of the migrant churches to fully open up to accommodate the sort of diversity that one would expect in a church family as the body of Christ.

PANEL III – INTERRELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Talk VIII
Mischa Piraud & Tatiana Roveri, Geneva (Switzerland)
Dynamics of space production in mapping cantonal religious diversity
Since 2012, the Cross-cantonal Center of Information on Beliefs (CIC) has been mapping religious communities in the Swiss cantons of Geneva and Vaud. Currently leading a research project aiming to map religious diversity in Ticino, this paper focuses on the spatial analysis of local religious diversity. Through the mapping, it is indeed possible to investigate religious diversity through the lens of the variety of places of worship, thus shedding light on the close links between religion and the production of space. If the secularization process seemed to have blurred these links in the public space, the research shows new spatial dynamics. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre (1974) and Martina Löw (2016) in the light of our research's first results, we will examine how the spatial anchoring of religious communities is both a determining factor, most notably for the production of a "religious landscape", and in turn spatially determined as regards to the conditions of access to places. Indeed, previous mappings made by the CIC show how diversity largely accesses spaces initially intended for other functions (commercial premises, housing, etc.), thus deploying residual, interstitial and emergent forms of places' occupation. Presenting the first results of mapping religious diversity in Ticino will aim to further reflect on how a spatial analysis enables to understand religious diversity strategies in a public space marked by constant interactions and repositioning of multiple actors and groups.

Talk IX
Narciss M. Sohrabi, Paris (France)
Space, architecture and visibility of religious diversity under socio-political conditions. Case Study: Tehran
Studying architectural works is a method of understanding the lifestyle and interaction of religious minorities in the urban context and neighborhoods. On the one hand, the religious architecture of various religions is an influential factor in the urban context, and on the other hand, it is influenced by the sociopolitical conditions and structures ruling the society. As a result, studying religious architecture in the urban context can reveal the way religions interact in these social structures. Religions building form a significant part of the socio-political situation. Tehran, as a metropolis with a Shia Muslim majority, includes many religious architectural constructions related to religious minorities, which have been affected by the sociopolitical developments of the Qajar, Constitutional, and Pahlavi periods. The urbanization and visibility of religious buildings of Muslims, Jews, Armenians, and Zoroastrians, Bahai's in the context of the cities of Islamic lands has been influenced to some extent by religious, i.e., jurisprudence, factors, with the extent depending on the political and social conditions of the government. Based on investigating the urban context, this study examines how the diversity of religions in the neighborhoods and constructions are formed and related to the intra-religious diversity and sociopolitical conditions of the city of Tehran from pre-modern period - the time of the formation of the oldest church in Tehran to the end of the second Pahlavi period, considering the concept of visibility. Religious buildings of Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians and Armenians in Tehran are studied and analyzed by collecting library and field information and the descriptive-analytical method.

Talk X
Atena Abdoli Masinan, Tehran (Iran)
How to structure diversity and religion in ancient societies. A case study: The religion of the Mithra
The structure of diversity and religion are related to each other and affects social structure in different ways. The integrated existence of religions due to diversity becomes heterogeneous and disturbed according to traditional differences, individual ideas and actions; eventually societies place different and alien religious in their structure. The new arrival religion turns into a strategic center for the management of diversity in a wide range of political, administrative, economic and educational fields. This phenomenon has been common not only in today's modern societies but also in different eras, religion and ancient societies. To prove this claim, according to the archaeological evidence, a case study of the ancient and widespread religion from the east to the west of the Mehr or Mithra is discussed. Contrary to the fact that Mithra worship was a foreign and imported religion for the Roman and the goddess Mithra, the ancient god praised by their ancient enemy Parthian, was placed among other religions as a god with the highest rank in the social structure of ancient Rome. The way of Mithra worship in the east is different from its western model. This can be a reason of its transition from different religions and cultures from the east to the west and it also indicates the diversity resulting of religion, in social structure.

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	Chair: Ramona Jelinek-Menke, Marburg (Germany)
PANEL IV – SEX, GENDER AND RACE	

Talk XI

Maham Naseer, Göttingen (Germany)

Devotional bliss and sensual amorousness – religiosity, sexuality, and femineity of a courtesan in the eighteenth-century Deccan of Mughal India

The Deccan region of south-central India reveals the diversity inherent in Islamic culture from the beginning in the medieval period but extending into our modern time there. Muslim Devotion and Urdu poetry both flourished and were intertwined in a unique way. Not only the Šīʿi Muslims and Ṣūfī Muslims coexisted and often reinforced each other but the Deccan region shaped an ethnic-linguistic peculiarity and a vast diversity in cultural and religious terms. Even though from the viewpoint of gender and sexuality South Asia was largely patriarchal, hence these cultural phenomena may have allowed new creativity for women. Hindu and Muslim views stressed women's inferiority and restricted their mobility and opportunity. Yet there were always important exceptions to general rules as we can find extraordinary women such as Māh Laqā Bāī Čandā (1768-1824,) a courtesan dancer, a devoted Muslim, and a passionate poet, who transported her seduction of men into pursuit of mystical love. As a high-ranking courtesan, she could cross the boundaries imposed by marriage and child-rearing and negotiate patriarchal forces. Māh Laqā Bāī was a powerful figure. Her poetry contains couplets about mystical love, addresses the controversaries about gender and illustrates how women's sexuality symbolizes power in the arrangement of gender relations in Islamic communities. Exploring Māh Laqā Bāī means to address questions of gender in language, literature, and society – as well as religion – in order to provide a clearer understanding of the dynamics of women's space, their influence and struggle in the context of patriarchal Mughal India.

Talk XII

Jennifer Ball, Bangor (United Kingdom/Wales)

A queer path: An investigation into heteronormativity within contemporary paganism.

Contemporary Paganism is often praised for its inclusivity, boasting over half of its reported members belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. However, there are undertones of internal conflict relating to some of the heteronormative ideals that are popular within many of the different Pagan traditions, particularly Wiccan branches. A lot of common Pagan teachings that were thought of as revolutionary when compared to the male dominated Western religions, have potentially now become a hinderance for its development with societal attitudes toward gender and sexuality. The inclusion of an equally celebrated Goddess and God has now become a symbol for gender binary restrictions, leaving those of alternative gender identities and sexualities with a feeling of rejection – and in some cases, discrimination. This discussion, supported by my own research, aims to look at the severity of this issue and the extent to which the LGBTQ+ communities are left to feel like "lesser" Pagans because they do not adhere to the heterosexual sexual imagery and practices, reflected within the mythology of the Great Goddess and the Horned God.

Talk XIII

Leandro de Paula, Salvador (Brazil)

Religious diversity and racial politics in Salvador, Brazil

Salvador, in the Brazilian State of Bahia, is the center of black culture in the country and the city with the largest black population outside the African continent. The city has historically dealt with the co-presence of Catholicism - a hegemonic stream since the colonial era - and an influential religious form bequeathed from African cosmology, named Candomblé. In 2019, before arriving in the city to develop missionary activities, an international Protestant organization declared that Salvador was "known for people's belief in spirits and demons." The population soon received the statement as an offense to the Candomblé deities and regarded the declaration as "religious racism." My presentation will draw upon the transformation of this case into a public problem, which demanded different forms of legal reparation and positive affirmation of diversity by religious groups, including the Christian ones. We will notice how principles of "freedom" and "tolerance" have been re-elaborated by new keys for adjudicating religious conflicts, as shown by a social movement from Salvador. Composed of Afro-Brazilian religious people, the group has been performing, since this case, an innovative form of civil protest entitled "Ebó Coletivo." "Ebó" is a liturgical act in Candomblé, which seeks different purposes by managing cosmic forces mediated by the body of the devotees and organic materials of mineral, vegetable, or animal origin. By moving the rite from the "terreiros" (the temples) to the public space, the "Ebó Coletivo" claims reparation and justice, dissolves borders between religion and politics, and suggests an instigating conviviality regime.

PANEL V – ABLEISM AND INEQUALITY

Talk XIV

Tabea Eugster-Schaetzle, Basel (Switzerland)

Un/doing precariat – Diaconic work and the asymmetry in society

Christian congregations that are strongly committed to diaconic work are in danger of reflecting the asymmetry that is in society. The congregations face a dilemma: On the one hand, by addressing people they perceive as "needy" they aim for improving their living conditions. But on the other hand in this process they reinforce social structures of inequality. People suffering under precarious living conditions lack economic, political and cultural, and social rights. This leads to a lack of social participation and marginalisation. While international networks for the precariat, for instance Euromayday, depict "the precarious" as both hero and victim in order to help them to their rights, the communities also construct the "needy" for whom they stand up. Using various case studies from two congregations in Switzerland, it can be shown that doing and undoing difference are mutually dependent. The charitable work, such as giving out clothes and food, but also liturgy such as intercession, promote the binary of "poor" and "rich" and the structure of giving and receiving. Through practices and theologies, however, congregations also manage to break down this one-way street and establish a cycle of giving and receiving. Through opportunities for participation or by calling upon homogenisation in the body of Christ, belonging is produced beyond established groups. In this way, the congregations show challenges and strategies for dealing with diversity.

Talk XV

Yasmina Burezah, Bonn (Germany)

The materiality of diversity – Kanye West between religion, race and disability

It is impossible to think about religion, without taking into account its intersectional interrelations to race as well as our ideas and imaginations around these two categories. One field where we can observe these complex dynamics of religion and race is Hip-Hop.

Kanye West as one of the most influential artists in Hip-Hop since 2004 centers the complex ambivalences and contradictoriness realities of race, religion and mental health.

West's views on religion reach from portraying himself as Jesus, to being a devout Christian, especially in his Sunday Services, where he conceptualized worship services that are organized in a circle with a Gospel Choir in the center in order to decentralize him as an artist and focus on the music and community. West has been very vocal about the racial commodification of Black people while simultaneously celebrating luxury goods. After he was diagnosed with bipolar 1 disorder in 2018, he released his album "Ye", consisting of reflection on his bipolar disorder as both a (bodily) disability and a "superpower" (the artwork of the album shows the sentence "I hate being Bi-Polar, its awesome" [sic!]).

In the center of all these approaches is Kanye West as an artist and the sonic and visual aesthetics he chooses to articulate his existence as a Black bipolar man in white Capitalist America. In my presentation I want to analyze on the basis of Kanye West and his work, if materiality is a sensible approach to understanding and capturing the intersection of Religion, Race and Disability.

Talk XVI

Richard Saville-Smith, Isle of Skye (United Kingdom/Scotland)

Introducing 'Acute Religious Experiences' as a contribution to structuring diversities

Visions, voices and possessions marble the world's holy texts. These inter-religious phenomena are the tip of an intra-religious challenge as around 25% of those incarcerated by psychiatry in the West currently articulate themselves in religious language. I introduce the idea of Acute Religious Experiences as a distinction which allows diversity to be structured. This operates firstly by rejecting the homogeneous human and allowing experiences of the extraordinary/anomalous/extreme to be distinguished, on a species wide epidemiological basis, from the generality of experiences. And secondly, by distinguishing the social recognition and valuation of extraordinary/anomalous/extreme experiences as 'religious' in, for example, shamanism, mysticism, spirit possession, sufism and (some) sadhus in contrast to similar experiences which are socially pathologised. Drawing on my monograph Acute Religious Experiences – madness, psychosis and religious studies (Bloomsbury 9/3/23), I advance a mad-studies reading to expose the 'political' strategies humanities scholars have deployed in a protective effort to avoid their subjects being branded insane, whilst deconstructing the pathologizing instinct of psychiatry. I also highlight current developments in psychiatry which have begun the journey towards explanatory pluralism – at least in the DSM-5's dissociative identity disorder chapter which now allows that disruption of self/possession may not be a disorder if it's 'a normal part of a broadly accepted cultural or religious practice'. This critical interdisciplinary analysis affirms the need for better ways of speaking about extraordinary/anomalous/extreme experiences - freed from both the shame of psychiatric reductionism and the essentialising defence of terms such as 'holy', 'sacred', 'divine' etc. found in the humanities.

5   Topic (BOA Structuring Diversity - Structruring ReligionCall for Papers)

Structuring Diversity – Structuring Religion
Religious Diversity and Human Heterogeneity in Society

Religion and diversity are intimately entangled in manifold ways. Can we systematically unpack this entanglement in a way that enables us to understand it in different eras and regions, on an individual as well as a societal or global scale; and in a way that includes its potential for creating as much as for resolving conflict? In short, how does religion structure diversity, and how does diversity structure religion? This conference addresses these questions by systematically bringing different approaches and perspectives into conversation with each other.

The conference aims to investigate 'diversity' as a term in the study of religions, and thus develop the field's "critical diversity literacy" (Steyn and Dankwa 2021). That is, the study of religions' capacity to analyse religious and social differences, and the relationships involved therein, by considering the asymmetries of power, and differences in scope of action, of various individuals and groups.

In recent years, the concept of diversity has become the subject of prolific discussion and analysis, both in the public arena and across academic disciplines. The category 'religion' is implied in these discussions in myriad ways, but two core strands of analysis can be identified:

Firstly, there is discussion of the **diversity of religions**, in the forms of both intra- and inter-religious diversity. **Intra-religious diversity** references the fact that religions are not monolithic entities, but are characterised by an internal heterogeneity, stemming from divergences in tradition and in individual ideas and practices. This form of diversity fosters religious transformation, but also power-related conflicts, as reflected in the labelling of religious nonconformism. The perspective of **inter-religious diversity**, meanwhile, notes that societies accommodate many different religions – a phenomenon that has supposedly increased in the globalised modern world. This contention has managed to thoroughly dislodge the hegemony of the secularisation thesis, though it has itself seen criticism from numerous – historically inclined and regionally informed – quarters. The diversity of religions, often combined with conditions of "secular-religious pluralism" (Casanova 2019), is seen as a feature of ('modern') diverse societies, in turn transforming 'religion' or religious affiliation into a diversity category. Consequently, as one of a range of diversity categories, religion becomes a focus of various strategies for managing diversity in, for example, politics, administration, economics, and education. Similarly, religious actors encounter and manage religious diversity through interreligious dialogue, for example.

Secondly, there is discussion of what we call **religious diversity strategies**. Diversity is understood here to mean the heterogeneous conditions of the human body and the varied social affiliations of individuals and groups. It includes social inequality, such as access to social positions and social participation being based on gender. Gender, like other diversity categories such as disability, ethnicity, age, class, language, or culture, interacts and intersects with religion (Brintnall 2016). As cultural studies employing a critical approach to the body and social structures (gender, disability, critical studies of race and ethnicity/ethnic studies etc.) have shown, the supposedly objective body and its meanings emerge from interactions between the material and historically specific social actions. Religions form a significant part of these contingent social actions. One may thus examine how religions generate, influence, and manage the differentiations that together make up human and social diversity. This brings religions into view as both producers and managers of diversity. **Religious diversity strategies** can be directed at both the relationships within a religious community and the community's relationships with other people and social contexts (for example, through social welfare activities). At the same time, religions are themselves shaped by the diversity of humans and social groups. This can be through recognising a given human-bodily and social-practical diversity among their devotees and in society, or in response to explicit demands from these groups and from civil rights activists within and beyond their own communities (diversity policies or social protest). This can lead to intra-religious conflict, which may also strengthen cultural identities and, consequently, reinforce the processes of othering and exclusion. Alternatively, it may lead to a **diversity-sensitive transformation** in religious beliefs, practices, organisational structures, and

T +41 41 229 55 82
relsem@unilu.ch
www.unilu.ch/diversityreligionconference

material culture (for example the creation of special or accessible texts, buildings, and practices). Since religions are inherently diverse, and since the composition of religious diversity varies across different societies, it can be assumed that these processes take a unique form in each individual case.

The above manifestations of the relationship between religion and diversity are often studied separately: Analyses often concentrate *either* on the diversity of religions (intra- or inter-religious diversity) *or* on the interactions between religious contexts and a specific form of physical/social difference (religious diversity strategies).

This conference aims to provide a platform for bridging this divide, bringing these two research agendas into conversation with each other. We seek to further the connection and cross-fertilisation between these research agendas, to conceptionally develop the way the study of religions addresses the relationship between religion and diversity, and to increase its critical diversity literacy.

This bringing together of perspectives is not only justified but necessary, as we believe that the diversity of religions is a crucial factor in how the relationships between different groups in a society (diversity) are structured. Indeed, this interaction is a two-way street, since hegemony in managing both diversity and the transformation of social relations has likewise proven to be a significant field of inter- and intra-religious competition, and has led to confrontations between religious and non-religious epistemic power.

To initiate and substantiate this conversation on the ways diversity structures religion and religion structures diversity, we welcome contributions from various disciplines and regional contexts. Different methodological approaches to case studies and theoretical elaborations on conceptual questions are equally welcome.