

	<p style="text-align: center;">ESA Research Network 34 - Sociology of Religion</p> <p style="text-align: center;">in cooperation with the  <i>German Section for Religionssoziologie</i> in the DGS</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Call for papers - Mid-term Conference University of Potsdam,, Germany, 3-5 September 2012 <i>Transformations of the Sacred in Europe and Beyond</i></p>

The thesis of secularization, once sheer uncontested in the social sciences, is increasingly under fire. Secularization is nowadays often deconstructed as an ideology or mere wish dream that is intimately connected to the rationalist ambitions of modern Enlightenment. Such alleged blurring of morality and science, of what ‘is’ and what ‘ought’, informing sociological analysis obviously obscures clear sight on recent developments in the Western world.

Countless empirical and theoretical studies convincingly demonstrate that religion is alive and well in Europe and beyond. Particularly after the attacks of 9/11 in 2001, religious identities have become salient in a situation of cultural polarization and religious pluralization. Moreover, we are witnessing a trend towards ‘believing without belonging’ (Davie, 1994) and – particularly in those European countries that are most secular – a shift from organized religion to ‘spiritualities of life’ (e.g., Heelas and Woodhead, 2005), paganism and ‘popular religion’ (Knoblauch, 2009). And although the thesis of secularization has always been highly problematic from a non-European or global perspective, the rapid globalization of Islam and the Evangelical upsurge – especially in Africa, Latin America and East Asia – fly in the face of the long-held expectation that religion is doomed to be a marginal or socially insignificant phenomenon.

Evidently, then, the focus of sociological analysis has shifted over the last decades from religious decline to religious change. More than that: it is theorized that we are living in a “post-secular society” (Habermas, 2005) where religion is re-vitalized, de-privatized and increasingly influences politics, voting behavior, matters of the state and ethical debates in the public domain (e.g., Casanova, 1994). Motivated by such observations, the mid-term conference calls for papers addressing changes in the field of religion and, more in particular, transformations of the sacred in Europe and beyond. Particularly we welcome studies covering the following topics:

- Studies on how and why conceptions of the sacred, religious beliefs, doctrines, rituals and organizations of **long-standing religious traditions** – such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism or Hinduism – transform under the influence of processes of globalization, individualization, mediatization as well as changing gender relations.
- Studies dealing with trends of **believing without belonging**, i.e. non-institutionalized beliefs, personal ‘bricolage’ and privatized conceptions of the sacred outside the Churches, Chapels and Mosques. Encouraged are also studies addressing new, more informal ways of ‘belonging’, religious communication and collective effervescence, i.e. in loose social networks, discussion groups or virtual communities on the internet.
- Studies covering **popular religion** and **post-traditional spirituality**, i.e., New Age, esotericism, paganism, occultism, discussing for instance an epistemological turn from belief to experience and emotion; a shifting emphasis from transcendence to immanence; from seriousness to playfulness; or a transition from dualism to monism.

- Studies dealing with **implicit religion**, i.e. addressing a re-location of the sacred to seemingly secular domains in society such as self-identity, sports, modern science and technology. This avenue of research may also include the place and meaning of the sacred (i.e., religious narratives, symbols and images) in popular media texts – in novels, films, series on television or computer games.

These topics are rough guidelines; papers dealing with religious change and the transformation of the sacred in Europe and beyond other than these outlined above are also very welcome. Furthermore we invite PhD and post-doc candidates to contribute to a **poster session**, including work in progress; the best poster will get a – small, but nice – prize.

Dates & Deadlines in 2012

March 15	Submission of abstracts and online registration starts
April 20	Submission of abstracts ends
May 10	Acceptance of abstracts
June 30	Early-bird registration ends
September 3 – 5	Conference

Conference Fees:

for ESA-Members & Students:	€ 30,-- plus € 20,-- for Conference Buffet
for Non-Members	€ 50,-- plus € 20,-- for Conference Buffet
for late registration	€ 80,-- plus € 20,-- for Conference Buffet

For further information, please visit: <http://www.esareligion.org>

Contact: esa-religion@uni-potsdam.de

Conference Venue

The University of Potsdam turned 20 this year. More than 20,000 students are enrolled in more than 100 degree programmes, located at three different sites. The mid-term conference will take place at **Griebnitzsee Campus**, which is directly located at the S-Bahn that connects Potsdam City and Berlin.



The campus is close to the lake *Griebnitzsee*. It invites to make a beautiful canoe tour or a ride by bicycle, and it is close to the *Filmpark Babelsberg*, one of the oldest movie production sites in the world. Furthermore, *Babelsberg Castle*, *Sanssouci*, the *Glienicker Bridge* and the *Cecilienhof* are impressive historical sites awaiting your visit.

