

Final Report of
The European Science Foundation Explorative Workshop
Religion and Society.
Cross-disciplinary European Perspectives.
University of Aarhus
May 18-20, 2006.

1. Executive summary

The workshop brought together 24 participants among them the two co-conveners Dr. Viggo Mortensen & Dr. Marco Ricceri. For details see *Participants list*.

As seen from the *attached program* all the participants contributed to the program, either in a leading capacity as chairs of sessions or working groups or presenters of papers. The edited papers will be published in the Series Occasional Papers from the Centre for Multireligious Studies, University of Aarhus, Denmark. In addition the following themes were dealt with in 4

Working groups:

- “Changing religious and cultural landscapes in Europe.” “How do we best analyze and interpret the development?”
- “On values, beliefs and ideologies as forces behind the changing Europe.”
- “Challenges in cross-disciplinary work. What are our experiences and how do we overcome the problems?”
- “Religious Studies and social sciences. How do we move from cross-disciplinary to cross-fertilizing?”

The *main objectives* for the workshop was

- Developing and testing of new approaches to research in and analysis of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity across Europe and their implications for the future of the discipline religious studies.
- Engaging and training students to apply multidisciplinary approach and exposing students to various research traditions and contexts.
- Stimulating and facilitating exchange of teaching staff and research personnel
- Creating and developing systems for joint collation, management and publication of data and knowledge centred on the internet in order to enable cross-European comparative studies.
- Establishing a point of reference and a consultancy network for national policy making bodies and civil society institutions concerned with the implications of religious and cultural diversity in Europe.

2. The scientific content of the event.

After a thorough introduction to the themes and cross cutting issues related to religion and society in Europe the following papers were presented:

Regina Polak	Re-emergence of religion
Peter B. Andersen	Religious Studies as a resource in the Social Sciences
Klaus Hock	Mainline Churches, Christian Diaspora and Secularity in Europe: The Challenge of “the Next Christendom” to European Societies.
David Cheetham	Some Preliminary Reflections on the Role of Theology and Religion in Public Discourse.
Viggo Mortensen	Mapping, Analyzing and Interpreting Religious Pluralism in Denmark, Europe and Beyond
Marco Ricceri	Italians and the Church: Faith and Disobedience
Kimmo Ketola & Tuomas Martikainen	The Religions in Finland Project
Martin Baumann	Lucerne and Religious Plurality: Report of a Research Project
János Wildmann	The Hungarian Catholic Church Challenged by the European Integration
András Máté-Tóth	Holy Nation. Nationalism as Civil Religion in Central and Eastern Europe.
Farid El Asri	Different Ways around the World: The Achievement of Singer Sami Yusuf
Alejandro Torres Gutiérrez	Religion and Social Sciences in Spain
Anne Kull	Religion and Society: A Few Remarks on Estonia

After each of the presentations there were lively discussions of the pertaining issues. In conclusion the following summary of the subsequent discussion can be given.

It was often reiterated that overall there is a need to get a clearer picture of what is actually going on in the religious marketplace in Europe. Is what we are experiencing decline, revival, recycling or

transformation of religion? Obviously conflicting tendencies can be observed, both privatization and de-privatization leading to an increased eclecticism on the background of a weakening of the traditional family structures of religious transmission. The ensuing fragmentation of the personal religious structure raises the question if it is at all possible in a modern European context to share common beliefs. There is a need for studying what this “liberalization of the symbol market” entails for the individuals, for the institutions and for society as a whole. The weakening of the institutional governing systems of truths puts a heavy burden on the individuals. That can lead somebody to move towards more structured religious communities, groups closing in upon themselves falling back to “bunker values” or “refuge identities”. Thus individualization can paradoxically lead to constitution or invention of small closed community identities and strengthening traditionalist and fundamentalist trends within the religious traditions. This constitutes also a crucial political issue for society as a whole and a challenge for democracy.

Another aspect with pluralism is that it in turn can lead to relativisation. When more than one faith is recognized, all religions are being relativised, which again leads to secularisation and indifference. Others will focus on the supply side and stress that when pluralism increase the supply, then people is given a choice and “sale” is stimulated. Religion is then no longer a matter of necessity, but about choice and like and seen in connection with choice of life style. Sometimes people make the choice in the dark or they may even take over something by tradition. At other times people will— like in other consumer cases—make an informed choice, by which the function of religion in the modern society plays an important role.

Scholars of sociology have brought forward the terms that religion may take care of the “collective memory”, the “common discourse” or the “social capital”. But one question remains: What provides the coherence of societies? Can consumerism and entertainment fulfil that role? Religion has in many societies played the role of giving coherence and identity to a given society. The Christian church used to and can in certain cases still administer part of this social capital in today’s western society, but the share is declining and declining fast because faith does not lead to commitment and taking responsibility.

3. Assessment of the results

The *main outcome* of the explorative workshop was the formation of a European network for **Religious Innovation and Pluralism in 21st century Europe (RIPE)**

As seen from the attached Collaborative Agreement all the members of the network are dedicated to study and analyze the cultural diversity and religious pluralism that is the result of the changing cultural and religious landscape in Europe. The network takes its starting point in the fact that changes are happening and then want to explore the consequences for society, the individual persons and the established religious institutions.

- The consequences for **society** can be explored in relation to such questions as the role of religion in the public domain, including civil religion and the legal framework concerning

freedom of religion and the governing of the relationship between church and state and the recognition of religious minorities.

- The consequences for the **individuals** can be explored in relation to the so called “return of religion”. The reinvention of religion that is happening in contemporary Europe shows itself in many forms, in the emergence of different forms of fundamentalisms and in a more loose turn to spirituality. Individuals are often caught in between and we see a development of hybrid identities and multiple belongings.
- The changes in the religious landscape have consequences for the **religious institutions**. The established religious institutions in Europe, i.e. the churches, are undergoing dramatic changes as they try to accommodate the new realities. A top priority is to study how they develop strategies for building interreligious relations by way of a dynamic theology of religions. New ecclesial models are tried out adapted to the changing religious and cultural landscape. The Christian and other religious diasporic communities contribute immensely to the new religious landscape in Europe so important to study in order to face the challenges of building interfaith harmony.

Religious Innovation and Pluralism in 21st century Europe

is as a network dedicated to contribute to the scholarly research of these topics.

This will be done

- by forming common research groups and coalitions,
- by stimulating the exchange of students, teaching staff, scholars and other personnel,
- by developing common PhD courses and other interdisciplinary training facilities,
- by building databases allowing for comparative pan European comparative studies
- by forming an information hub and a resource for European policy makers and civil society institutions.

The collaboration agreement is attached.

The book documenting the Workshop is released November 2006:

Viggo Mortensen (Ed.): Religion & Society. Cross Disciplinary European Perspectives. Centre for Multireligious Studies. University of Aarhus. 2006.

ESF Exploratory Workshop 2006

Religion and Society Cross-disciplinary European Perspectives

Centre for Multireligious Studies
University of Aarhus, Denmark
May 18 – May 21

Workshop programme

Thursday May 18

Afternoon: Arrival of participants

16:30 Registration and coffee (the Conference Venue – the Foyer)

18:00 Dinner (The Students House - Richard Mortensen room)

19:00 Background and introduction to Exploratory Workshop on Religion and Society.
Presentation of participants (*Viggo Mortensen*) (room 010)

20:00 Introductory papers with discussion (room 010)

- Emerging religious and cultural worldviews in Europe (*Martin Baumann, Regina Polak and M. El Farid Asri*)

21:30 Finish

Friday May 19

9:15 Introduction to day programme (room 010)

9:30 Papers with discussion (room 010)

- Religion *and* society or religion *in* society? How religions take their place in European societies (*Volker Küster, Jyri Komulainen and András Maté-Toth*)

11:00 Coffee break (in the Foyer)

11:30 Papers with discussion (room 010)

- Extent, quality and accessibility of existing research (*Olav Hammar, Tuomas Martikainen and Klaus Hock*)

13:00 Lunch (the Students House – Richard Mortensen room)

14:00 Workshops

- Workshop 1 (room 010): Changing religious and cultural landscapes in Europe. How do we best analyse and interpret the developments (*Chair: Klaus Hock*)
- Workshop 2 (room 110): On values, beliefs and ideologies as forces behind the changing Europe (*Chair: Anne Kull*)

15:30 Coffee break (the Foyer)

16:00 Reporting back into plenary (room 010) (*Chair: Tuomas Martikainen*)

- 16:30 Papers with discussion (room 010)
- Religious studies as a resource in the social sciences. Cross-disciplinary aspects (*David Cheetham, Peter B. Andersen, Alejandro Torres Gutierrez*)
- 19:00 Dinner (the Students House – Richard Mortensen room)

Saturday May 20

- 9:15 Introduction to day programme
- 9:30 Workshops with discussion
- Workshop 3 (room 010): Challenges in cross-disciplinary research work. What are our experiences and how do we overcome the problems? (*Chair: David Cheetham*)
 - Workshop 4 (room 110): Religious studies and social sciences. How do we move from cross-disciplinary to cross-fertilising? (*Chair: Peter B. Andersen*)
- 10:45 Coffee break (the Foyer)
- 11:00 Reporting back into plenary (*Chair: Peter Lodberg*)
- 11:45 Break for fieldtrip to Buddhas birthday including lunch
- 14:30 Papers with discussion (room 010)
- Potential future collaborative research projects and programmes to disseminate our research (*Marco Ricceri, Knut A. Jacobsen and Kajsa Ahlstrand*)
- 16:00 Coffee break (the Foyer)
- 16:30 Summing up the Explorative Workshop outcome (room 010) (*Chair: Viggo Mortensen*)
- Where do we go from here?
 - Do we possess the human and institutional resources we need for a viable network?
 - Publication of workshop papers?
 - The establishment of a collaborative working party?
- 18:00 Breaking up
- 19:00 Dinner in town – restaurant Le Régál, Nørre Allé 55, 8000 Aarhus C.
Evening for further socialising and networking.

Sunday May 21

Departure

List of Participants

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**Statistical information on participants
in ESF Exploratory Workshop 18-21 May, 2006
University of Aarhus Universitet
Denmark**

**Religion and Society
Cross-disciplinary European Perspectives**

Name	M/F	Age	Country of origin
Ahlin, Lars	M	54	Denmark
Ahlstrand, Kajsa	F	47	Sweden
Andersen, Peter B.	M	50	Denmark
Baumann, Martin	M	45	Switzerland
Borup, Jørn	M	40	Denmark
Cheetham, David	M	37	United Kingdom
D'Agostino, Federico	M	67	Italy
Farid El, Asri	M	33	Belgium
Gutierrez, Alejandro Torres	M	41	Spain
Hammer, Olav	M	47	Denmark
Hock, Klaus	M	51	Germany
Jacobsen, Knut A.	M	49	Norway
Komulainen, Jyri	M	38	Finland
Kull, Anne	F	47	Estonia
Küster, Volker	M	43	The Netherlands
Lodberg, Peter	M	47	Denmark
Martikainen, Tuomas	M	34	Finland
Máté-Tóth, András	M	48	Hungary
Mortensen, Viggo	M	64	Denmark
Polak, Regina	F	39	Austria
Ricceri, Marco	M	60	Italy
Tafjord, Bjørn Ola	M	31	Norway
Wildmann, Janos	M	52	Hungary

Viggo Mortensen
Marco Ricceri

Conveners

Attachment

Collaboration Agreement

between

the "**Centre for Multireligious Studies**"
University of Aarhus

and

the Group of Experts and Researchers from universities, entitites and associations who participated at the ESF Exploratory Workshop 2006 on "Religion and Society Cross-Disciplinary European Perspectives" held in Aarhus, 18-21 May 2006 whose names appear on the last page of this document

Agree that

- All the parties signing this agreement consider that the exchange of knowledge and information and the collaboration of scientific and cultural sectors promote civility and progress leading to reinforced understanding and peaceful cooperation between different peoples
- All the parties signing this agreement agree to share a common interest in the relationship between Religions and Society and to promote a regular exchange of information and organise initiatives for scientific and cultural collaboration -research, lectures, promotion. The objective is to promote a better understanding of religious phenomena, to overcome national boundaries and diffuse a method for the study, research and analysis of religious phenomena and reach an assessment of the social, ethical, cultural, political and institutional effects these have on community life in Europe and on an international scale
- All the parties signing this agreement see this as a work tool and manifest their interest and availability to promote collaboration agreements amongst themselves as well as with third parties and with European and international bodies operating along the same lines.
- All the parties signing this agreement intend to contribute their initiatives for the reinforcement of scientific, cultural and educational cooperation on a European and international scale and, by doing so, contribute to the process of European integration and the strengthening of the international role of the European Union

Taking these premises into account

the "Centre for Multireligious Studies"
University of Aarhus

and

the Group of Experts and Researchers from universities, entities and associations who participated at the ESF Exploratory Workshop 2006 on "Religion and Society Cross-Disciplinary European Perspectives" held in Aarhus 18-21 May 2006 whose names appear on the last page of this document

Agree To

Article 1 - Importance of the Premises

The premises are an integral and essential reference point in the agreement for cultural and scientific collaboration

Article 2 - Exchange of Information

All the parties signing this agreement are committed to:

- a) exchange information on a regular basis regarding programmes on study projects, research, training and publications to be undertaken on national, European and international levels
- b) make the results from these projects available
- c) create an efficient system for the gathering and diffusion of data (internet) which will allow for comparative study

Article 3 - Joint Programme

All the parties signing this agreement are committed to:

- a) develop and promote a joint programme for cultural and scientific collaboration in order to intensify cooperation agreements established during the ESF Exploratory Workshop 2006
- b) verify the conditions to organise a European Research Group E.R.G. according to European Union guidelines
- c) operate according to the guidelines outlined by the European Science Foundation to create a unique European scientific community specialized in the study of religious phenomena and their effects on society

The parties signing this agreement are committed to defining a joint programme which will involve:

- a) research, analysis and study projects
- b) target research projects to promote the active participation of European community and international initiatives
- c) periodic study and updating meetings. Furthermore, all the parties signing this agreement will collaborate towards the success of the next Workshop on "Culture and Religions, Innovation and Pluralism in European Society" scheduled for May 2007
- d) shared initiatives for updating, educating and training to favour the exchange between students, teachers and researchers for a multidisciplinary approach of religious phenomena
- e) organise a pan-European network offering consultancy services for public institutions and civil society bodies dealing with the problems of cultural and religious diversity in Europe

Article 4 - Additional Protocol

If any of the parties signing this agreement would like to extend the range of the agreements or their level of involvement, all the other signees will have to agree and sign the additional articles to be integrated into this current document

Article 5 - Participation and Coordination

In order to promote this joint programme, all the parties signing this agreement agree to operate in the spirit of constructive, sincere and honest collaboration to reinforce their presence and their service role at a national, European and international level.

To promote this objective, a Joint Work Group at the Centre for Multireligious Studies at the University of Aarhus will be created. The Joint Work Group will be regulated by agreement of all the signers of this present act. Participants at the ESF Exploratory Workshop 2006 will provide a contact person for every country represented at the workshop

Article 6 - Third Parties

The parties signing this agreement can extend the terms of this agreement to third parties, be they individual experts, researchers, or institutes in and outside of Europe

Article 7 - Arbitration

This agreement is to be interpreted and applied respecting international and national agreements - with reference to the Nation of each individual party - regarding scientific and cultural cooperation.

Any issues regarding the interpretation or of a contentious nature will be entrusted to a conciliatory work group constituted by the Director of the Centre for Multireligious Studies at the University of Aarhus.

This agreement has a duration of three years and can be automatically renewed for another three years. Each party signing this agreement can withdraw at any moment by writing to the Director of the Centre for Multireligious Studies at the University of Aarhus.

(Signature - Date)