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GORABS Newsletter

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NEWSLETTER
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Please send comments, questions, letters, and newsletter submissions to David J. Butler, GORABS Secretary, d.butler@ucc.ie

GORABS at AAG 2015 - CHICAGO

Dear Members,

Please note the following GORABS-related information, with reference to our forthcoming annual AAG meeting at Chicago, Illinois, this April:

1. **Annual GORABS Business meeting**, THURSDAY 23 April, 8.15 to 9.15 PM in Columbus G, Hyatt, East Tower, Gold Level.
2. **The 7th Annual GORABS Lecture 2015** - 'The post-secular problematic' is scheduled on Tuesday 21 April from 4.40 to 6.20 PM in Stetson E, Hyatt, West Tower, Purple Level, Banu Gokarikel and Anna Sekol.
3. **GORABS Field Trip** on Thursday 23 April (see full details on final page).
4. **GORABS has 4 sponsored paper sessions** this year (one in two parts) comprising 19 papers. There are some 31 presentations of GORABS interest, chronologically listed for members overleaf.

The Working Group Religionsgeographie of the German Geographical Society has a list of new publications (books and articles, mainly in English and German) on the geography of religions on its website, regularly updated - <http://www.religionsgeographie.de/literatur.htm>
If you have new items please send them to reinhard.henkel@geog.uni-heidelberg.de.

The 9th International Colloquium on the Changing Religious Landscape of Europe will take place in at the University of Zadar (Croatia) from 3rd to 5th September, 2015. Its topic is: Development and Transformation of Religious Landscape in the New European Context. See further online at <http://www.religionsgeographie.de/aktuell.htm>

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The GORABS listserv is on JISCMail. To sign up, please use the following link:
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AAG 2015 Papers, sponsored by (or thematically linked to) GORABS interests: Tuesday April 21 to Saturday April 25

TUESDAY

Paper Session: Urbanization and Development on the Chinese Frontier: The Political Stakes of "Progress": Tuesday, 4/21/2015 at 8:00 AM.

The confluence of migrant remittances and transnational Islamic charity

Author(s): Marta Bivand Erdal* - PRIO

Abstract: Migrant remittances have received increasing attention in both policy and academic circles in the past decades, but interest in Islamic charity as a source of development funding coming from diasporas has been limited. This is an intriguing paradox, as remittances and Islamic charity are both substantial, private flows of funds, which can flow internally or internationally, and can both be individual or collective. The paper explores the confluence of migrant remittances and transnational Islamic charity in the context of international monetary flows between Norway and Pakistan. Migration from Pakistan to Norway started in the late 1960s as labour migration, with subsequent chain-migration and family reunifications. The monetary flows from Pakistani migrants and descendants in Norway are transfers to family and friends, business investments, emergency assistance and school fees, also including prescribed or voluntary Islamic alms, such as zakat or sadqa. The data this paper builds on consists of 65 semi-structured interviews with Norwegian-Pakistani migrants and descendants, exploring their Islamic charity practices, remittance-sending and other transnational ties. The paper draws on the concept of remittance scripts as an analytical tool for understanding the nature of transnational Islamic charity, understood as forms of collective and individual remittances.

Keywords: Migration - Remittances - Transnational - Religion - Charity

Ambiguous Limits of Expression: The Politics of Tibetan Religion in the Chinese Built Environment

Author(s): Andrew Grant, MA* - UCLA

Abstract: As investment continues to pour into western China, bolstering infrastructure and urban construction projects, low-rise and high-rise housing subdivisions are flourishing. This paper looks at how Tibetan minorities in the city of Xining in Qinghai province are adapting to the environment of these housing projects through the use of religious art and objects in public spaces. Based on structured and unstructured interviews, this paper shows the ways that religious projects are legitimized or rejected by local power brokers. The struggles over these spaces have themselves become important expressions of Tibetan-ness. Indeed, material manifestations of region such as prayer wheels have become prominent

signs of identity and markers of the very possibility of maintaining a distinct identity in a demographic and social environment that leaves only very circumscribed venues for the expression of minority culture. I argue that the ambiguity of what constructions are permitted in shared housing spaces betrays shifting notions of what is acceptable behavior for an ethnic minority. Furthermore, the designs and common sense rules of housing projects in non-autonomous regions silently assert the unremarked background noise of a normative Han space.

Keywords: China, Tibet, urbanization, housing, religion, political geography

Paper Session: Land Tenure Systems: Tuesday, 4/21/2015 at 10:00 AM.

Ethiopian Church Forests as Sacred Groves and Common Pool Resources

Author(s): Peter Klepeis* - Colgate University Catherine Cardelus - Colgate University
Eliza Kent - Skidmore College Peter Scull - Colgate University Carrie Woods - Colgate University Izabela Orłowska - Bahir Dar University Alemayehu Wassie Eshete - Bahir Dar

Abstract: Sacred groves are a worldwide phenomenon where forests are protected because of their sacredness or connection to religious traditions. They play a key role in maintaining both cultural and biological diversity in regions affected by land system change. Ethiopian church forests are a particular type of sacred grove. In the South Gondar region, most of the surviving forest belongs to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (established as early as AD 300). Each of the 1,022 church forests documented in the study area has a church building in the center, which is surrounded by a ring of forest (average size is approximately 5 ha). Tradition dictates that a "blanket" of forest should protect the "tabot" and sacred spaces within and surrounding the church building. But the forests also serve as burial sites, provide spaces in which community associations congregate, and increasingly include cash crops (primarily eucalyptus trees). Incorporating data and analysis from a multidisciplinary project - including in-depth interviews with community stakeholders - findings show that church forests have persisted on the landscape for hundreds of years due to an unusual form of community-based natural resource management that bridges preservation (sacred grove/non-material emphasis) and conservation (common pool resource/material emphasis) models. The preservation-conservation hybrid results in a highly effective system for protecting forest cover and community cultural practices, and historically it protected species richness, as well. In recent decades, however, external pressures threaten the coherence of community-based forest management regimes, which affect negatively the regenerative capacity of many of the forests.

Keywords: land use, Africa, religion, cultural and political ecology

Paper Session: Religion, migration, and transnational practices scheduled on Tuesday, 4/21/2015 at 12:40 PM.

Religion & Social Integration in Dublin, Ireland: Bridge or Barrier?

Author(s): Neil Conner* - University of Tennessee

Abstract: This paper explores the role of religion concerning the social integration of migrants in Dublin,

Ireland and investigates how religious beliefs and actions can be both beneficial (i.e. a bridge) and/or a deterrence (i.e. a barrier) to this process. It specifically examines the Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF), which is a multi-cultural, non-denominational Christian Church whose congregants include a mixture of Irish-born citizens and recently arrived immigrants and refugees from twenty-eight different nation-states around the world. Within the VCF, Irish-born and non-Irish-born congregants frequently interact with one another; suggesting religion is a bridge that is encouraging social integration. Alternatively, non-congregant Irish-born members in the larger community where the church is located are skeptical of the VCF and maintain that it is a type of religious cult organization. In this case, religion can clearly be seen as a barrier that is hindering the social integration of migrants in Dublin. Consequently, this paper analyzes the dichotomous function of religion and religious identity within the social integration process in Dublin, Ireland through a mixed methods research approach that is based on ten-weeks of ethnographic field work conducted between June 2013 and June 2014.

Keywords: Religion, Integration, Identity, Community, Belonging, Ireland

Religious Home-making in Globalising City-centres of the North: Church Growth and Diversity in London and Berlin

Author(s): Sebastian Schlueter* - King's College London & Humboldt University Berlin

Abstract: Inner-city spaces are mainly understood as secular spaces in cities of the global north. Religions have been theoretically pushed out of the global north and were more or less irrelevant for urban theory for decades. This paper scrutinises patterns of church growth in inner-city neighbourhoods and shows how Churches (re-)engage with their environments shaped by a growing diversity. Since Jose Casanova (1994) authors have shown how different religious groups make their claims in the public sphere and how religions are again part of public discourses (Habermas 2008). These accounts of religion in city landscapes largely focus on the drawing of social, cultural and material boundaries, social conflicts and exclusionary processes between 'us' and 'them'. But it has rarely been asked in how far a revitalised vivid role of religion helps to facilitate spaces of mutual understanding and collectivity and can therefore be understood as an act of religious 'home-making' (Eade 2012).

This paper focuses on contemporary Christian landscapes in London and Berlin. It shows how Christian communities produce spaces of belief that have the potential to loosen cultural boundaries within neighbourhoods that are under pressure of gentrification. The comparative analysis draws on ethnographic studies and semi-structured interviews with pastors and parishioners in two inner-city boroughs in London and Berlin.

Keywords: Diversity, Gentrification, Church, London, Berlin

Geographical imaginaries and urban planning in a secular age: towards a postsecular city

Author(s): Giuseppe Carta, Mr.* - University of Bristol

Abstract: The increased religious pluralism in many European cities has recently clashed against established orientations around faith in law-making procedures. State neutrality towards religious argumentation has been criticized for creating asymmetries between different social groups and subjectivities. Many now call for the enactment of a postsecular reason, able to pursue a counter-hegemonic challenge to establishmentarian as well as anti-religious attitudes. While most have been focused on the difficulties encountered by religious minorities in accessing public space, little consideration has been given to the significance of historically dominant religion in geographical

imaginaries, how it may orientate deliberative processes around urban politics and thus ground political legitimacy to spatial inequalities. This paper will discuss the current articulation of postsecular theories in geography and critically assess the current approaches to the postsecular city (Cloke and Beaumont 2012). By reviewing Habermas' (2006) modes of participatory democracy through a critical engagement with the literature around the just city and the right to the city, the paper will pay specific attention to the political and imaginative orientations that precede and address democratic practices. Through an ethnographic research conducted with a number of religious and non-religious families across Italy and the UK, it finally aims to demonstrate that a reflection on geographical imaginaries can improve interfaith policies and the cultivation of religious freedom, as well as the enactment of postsecular ethics in city governance and life.

Keywords: geographical imaginaries, religion, family, postsecular, pluralism, urban planning .

"Why are you not off for Eid?" "I am not a Muslim!": misrecognition, racism and interethnic relations for black and minority ethnic young people in Scotland

Author(s): Peter E. Hopkins* - Newcastle University Katherine Botterill - Newcastle University Gurchathen Sanghera - University of St Andrews Rowena Arshad - University of Edinburgh

Abstract: This paper explores how experiences of being misrecognised are negotiated and managed by black and minority ethnic young people in Scotland. Focusing specifically upon Glasgow, Scotland's largest city, we outline how, despite the arrival of different migrant groups (including Pakistanis, asylum seekers and refugees, and Eastern European migrants), the 'ultimate other' (Archer, 2001) continues to be those who affiliate with the Islamic faith. Drawing upon focus group and interview data, we explore how complex landscapes of racialization interweave with debates about religious identities in general and Muslim identities in particular. We chart the ways in which different ethnic and religious groups (such as black African young people and Sikhs) are assumed to be Muslim and the ways in which they respond to such misrecognition. In doing so, we contribute to ongoing debates about the contested nature of Islamophobia and geographies of intersectionality focusing on youth, race and religion.

Keywords: young people; race; religion; Scotland

The Mission Field: An Idealized Landscape and Its Impact on Two Generations of a Missionary Community

Author(s): John S. Benson, Ph.D.* - Minnesota State University Moorhead

Abstract: As missionaries grew up in one country, they often formed an idealized landscape where they desired to move in their adult lives: the mission field. When they moved there as adults and raised children in this environment, their religious sensibilities informed their perceptions of this place. However, their children were often not constrained by this religious lens of seeing this place and while their parents formed religious ideals early in their childhoods, it often took the children of missionaries long into their adulthoods to form their own religious faiths. This paper is based on a study done on two generations of an American Lutheran missionary community who lived in Tanzania for at least twenty years. The study examined how both generations formed differing connections to the Tanzanian landscape and their varying religious development despite the second generation being raised in this idealized landscape of the mission field.

Keywords: Immigrants, Religion, Missions, Tanzania

Paper Session: Thinking the Urban from....(II) relations: Tuesday, 4/21/2015 at 12:40 PM.

Ruled by the Logic of 'Trans-': The Research Approach of the Project 'Global Prayers'

Author(s): Stephan Lanz* - Europa-Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), Germany

Abstract: Whereas western-centric urban studies classically associated urban modernity with secularity, the transregional and transdisciplinary research project 'Global Prayers - Redemption and Liberation in the City' analysed urban religion from a global perspective as an integral factor of the production of the urban and as an articulation of urban modernity.

The presentation discusses the projects research approach which built on diverse strategies of "de-centering" and "de-familializing" (Jane Jacobs) and aimed at transgressing the hierarchical dichotomy between cities of the North and South, thus contributing to the endeavour of postcolonializing urban studies. The comparative approach of its inductive case studies in 12 cities worldwide focused less on similarities and differences between these cities than on transformations and connections, or the melding of practices of urban religion or religious urbanity. In view of their global/local manifestations and their material and imaginary interconnections they were analyzed as 'worlding practices'.

In a wider sense, comparison became a mode of thought, a strategic tool in configuring a trans-disciplinary, trans-institutional and trans-regional project. Thereby, academic forms of knowledge production were brought into dialogue with artistic and activist ones. The collaboration between academic and artistic research methodologies irritated the classifications systems of both epistemic practices and stimulated reflexive interrogations of taken for granted assumptions. Not least, the transgressions undertaken enabled the reflection of the "geopolitics of knowledge" (Walter Mignolo) that follows global power disparities and is reflected in the configuration of any research project.

Keywords: comparative urban studies, urban religion

Paper Session: Geopolitical Imaginaries & Eurasian Post-War Narratives: Tuesday, 4/21/2015 at 12:40 PM.

Religious Geopolitics and Resistance in China

Author(s): Weihsuan Lin* - National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Abstract: This presentation outlines aspects of the Chinese state's 'religious geopolitics' (Sturm, 2013). Here, I refer to the party-state's domestic religious work within its territory. Since the beginning of the reform era in 1978, administrative rationality has been exercised to promote autonomous citizenship, whereby the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has attempted to uphold its sovereignty over society and government. Religion, which can offer radical, utopian or millenarian geopolitical discourses that challenge the existing social-political structure, has been an important domain which the PRC's party-state has not privatised, unlike other domains such as employment, education or health. This presentation will examine the CCP's religious geopolitics at the institutional level by looking at its religious regulative framework, its legislative and spatial practices towards unwanted religious practices and its 'evil cult' discourse, targeted especially towards the Falun Gong. Such 'evil cult' discourse and the practices of 'othering' and regulating religions for the purposes of a harmonious and prosperous society reveals two forms of power

exercised by the party-state: sovereignty and governmentality based upon Agamben and Foucault's ideas. This analysis corresponds with Kearns' (2014:762) argument that '(t)he techniques by which states regulate life are both spatial and geopolitical'. Furthermore, Foucault (2007:390) also argued that '(p)olitics is no more or less than that which is born with resistance to governmentality, the first uprising, the first confrontation'. In this light, the presentation will also outline various forms of religious resistance to the above in China.

Keywords: Political Geography, China, Religion

Paper Session: The Politics of Faith on Tuesday, 4/21/2015 at 14:40 PM.

The Baha'i Faith in Mid-America: From Shi'ah Sect to Universal Religion

Author(s): Richard N. Dodge, Ph.D* - Desert Rose Baha'i Institute

Abstract: The eclectic qualities often attributed to the Baha'i Faith belie its turbulent past and historic roots within a sect of Shi'ah Islam. Remarkably, it spread from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, initially bypassing both Europe and the Eastern Seaboard, taking root in Mid America, more specifically in the city of Chicago. The first public mention of the religion took place at the World Congress of Religions held concurrently with the 1893 Colombian Exposition. Chicago has remained its spiritual and administrative center in North America from that time forward, given impetus by the construction of the first Baha'i House of Worship in the western world along the shores of Lake Michigan in the north-side suburb, Wilmette. Currents of thought in 19th Century American Protestantism were an important prelude to its establishment in the U.S. and Canada from whence it spread to all major countries and territories on the planet. The social and religious New World milieu in which it found itself will be examined along with the key personalities involved. Since the early years of the Twentieth Century its dispersion, development, and consolidation have been planned at national and international levels, but its initial founding in Chicago seems almost accidental.

Keywords: Baha'i Faith, geography of religions

Paper Session: Migrant identity perceptions; bodies, narratives, places and objects: Tuesday, 4/21/2015 at 14:40 PM.

The Performativity of Religious Identities among Newcomers in Ottawa, Canada: Challenging the Religious/Secular Binary

Author(s): Stéphane Paquette* - University of Ottawa

Abstract: In the literature on geographies of religion, religious identities are often conceptualized along the lines of the binary opposition "religious vs. secular". The goal of this paper is to challenge this dichotomous understanding through an exploratory investigation of newcomers' religious identities in Ottawa, Canada, including their performativity in and through space, as well as their role in the settlement and integration process. Specifically, this research seeks to better understand how religious identities may be performed fluidly -along a religious-secular continuum- depending on the various spatio-

temporal contexts as well as their intersections with other identities such as gender. Thus, this paper aims to move beyond the traditional theorizations of religious identities based on a dichotomous "religious vs. secular" framework by examining how various performances of religious identity can contribute to processes of social integration among newcomers. This will be achieved in this paper through the presentation of preliminary findings. Data collection for this project relies on a feminist methodology approach which combines individual, semi-structured interviews and mental maps. These methods are used with newcomers, both men and women, of varying ages who have arrived to Canada in the past 7 years.

Keywords: Performativity, Identities, Religion, Migration, Integration

WEDNESDAY

Poster Session: Human Geography Poster Session: Wednesday, 4/22/2015 at 13:20 PM.

Where geography meets religion: The Indian Nation shaped as a Goddess

Author(s): France Azema* - EHESS

Abstract: This paper examines the interactions between the feminine in Hindu religion and the Indian nationalism. It shows how religion and politics interact in areas such as literature and cartography offering the force both of words and of images.

During India's struggle for independence, the image of Bharat Mata, the popular picture of representing the map of India under the shape of the Great Goddess embodied the national territory. This image was omnipresent and had fundamentally revolutionized Indian understanding of popular pictures. Serving as a visual of the Indian freedom movement, it gave people the freedom to interpret this tumultuous historical event. This symbolic divine anthropomorphic image of the nation, especially in this period, represents on one hand protection and love and on the other hand the suprahuman and godly status of courage and force. Despite the many secular interpretations going around the figure of Mother India, it was impossible for it to go out of the religiosity and Hindu nationalism.

Sumathi Ramaswamy, a cultural historian of South Asia, wrote in her book *Barefoot across the Nation*: "the scientific-geographic imaginary has the capacity to transform national territory into an object of geopiety"

This sentence conditions our understanding of everything from post-coloniality to the creation of India's first nationalist political regime. This nation/goddess incarnated the kind of power that patriots needed for a new deity of territory who is on the same time all powerful but under control of men/ devotees.

Keywords: geography; religion; India; Hindouism; Goddess

Paper Session: A Third Way? Navigating between Russia and the West: Wednesday, 4/22/2015 at 13:20 PM.

"I Am Glad I Am Kyrgyz Because It Means I Am a Muslim": Contesting and Negotiating Religion and Nationality in Kyrgyzstan

Author(s): Vincent Artman* - University of Kansas

Abstract: The process of articulating viable post-Soviet national identities in Central Asian states has entailed the mobilization of history, myth, and symbol. In the Kyrgyz Republic, the epic "Manas" is not only a cherished cultural symbol, but it also serves as the focal point for Kyrgyz nationalist ideology. For many, the epic documents and legitimates the Kyrgyz claim to the territory of Kyrgyzstan itself, as well as serving as a unique "compendium" of Kyrgyz culture and traditions.

Concurrent with the consolidation of Kyrgyz national identity, however, has been the rapid growth of interest in Islam. Although these are sometimes seen as countervailing trends, in reality they are often closely connected and mutually reinforcing. However, if religion and national identity are difficult to entirely separate from one another, their relationship is rarely simple or uncontested. For its part, the government hopes to promote Islam as part of Kyrgyz national identity, but also seeks increasingly to regulate it and bring it under control of the state.

Drawing upon five months of fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan, this paper examines some of the ways in which Kyrgyz people make sense of the complex relationship between their religion, their national identity, and the state.

Keywords: islam, identity, eurasia, religion, nationalism, nationality, culture, central asia, former soviet union, religion

Paper Session: Geographies of the Climate Movement: Wednesday, 4/22/2015 at 17:20 PM.

Responding when the Sacred Canopy Burns: Religious Climate Activism

Author(s): Randolph Haluza-DeLay, PhD* - The King's University

Abstract: Before 120 political leaders gathered at the request of the UN Secretary-General and before over 300,000 people marched through the streets of New York, religious leaders from around the world gathered to consider the threat posed by climate change. The head of the UNFCCC urged them to "find their voice" and to tackle what is increasingly being called the "greatest moral issue of our time." Then, an Interfaith Statement on Climate Change was signed by Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Indigenous, and Christian leaders from across the globe. In July the World Council of Churches had voted to divest from fossil fuels. Religious groups have been active in climate justice movements for decades. "Carbon theology" (Latour's words) is on the upswing, at least as measured by books published. Still, there is resistance, most notably among American evangelicals with considerable political sway. So is religious climate activism an emerging movement?

Keywords: Climate, Religion, Activism, Social Movements

THURSDAY

Paper Session: Spatiotemporal Symposium: Space-time dynamics of socio-economic systems I: Thursday, 4/23/2015 at 8:00 AM.

Spatio-Temporal Analyses of Religions Establishments in China: A Case Study of Zhejiang Province

Author(s): Huanyang ZHAO* - Kent State University Jay Lee - Kent State University Xinyue Ye - Kent State University

Abstract: This research will examine the diffusion process of the institutional development of the three major religions (i.e. Buddhism, Daoism and Christianity) in Zhejiang Province, China since the year 1949. A spatio-temporal analytical approach will be implemented to determine the specific diffusion process associated with the development and regional distribution of the religious establishments. The proposed approach emphasizes the use of geographic information system and statistical software that are designed specifically to interpret the relevant data collected for this research and derive analytic results for further analyses and discussion. By identifying the nature of the diffusion process, this research aims to explore the relationship between the fluctuations of institutional development of the three religions and the socio-economic phenomena of the same time period.

Keywords: Chinese domestic religions, Spatio-temporal analyses, Diffusion

Illustrated Paper Session: Landscapes and Resources: Thursday, 4/23/2015 at 10:00 AM.

Religious Landscape in Secular State: the Case of Czechia

Author(s): Kamila Klingorova* - Charles University in Prague

Abstract: The landscape in Central Europe has been influenced by a variety of religious trends. Nowadays, the Czech society is secularized to an extent unprecedented in the rest of the world. Almost 80% of population (2011) indicate that they are nondenominational. The explanation of tensions between (past) sacralization in the landscape and (present) secularization in the society are the main aspects of the research within the new geography of religion in Czechia. This two trends could be seen in Czech landscape, as well as the influence of diversification of religious communities leading to a high degree of disintegration of various religious movements which is connected with the process of globalization. There is also a high increase in occultism in Czech society. The aim of this poster is to analyze the main trends and processes in the Czech religious landscape. The poster is based on the qualitative research in selected micro-regions in Czechia which was carried out during the summer of 2014 to analyze the role of religion in model territories. Sacral objects were documented and local people were contacted. Religious landscape is analyzed on the basis of the regional differentiation of religiosity and on the basis of historical context with the special emphasis on the former Czech-German language border. The sacral objects are forming the character of the landscape in the given regions and there could be seen a strong influence of historical context and of the level of religiosity on the religious landscape.

Keywords: geography of religion, Czechia, religious landscape, secularization, sacral objects

Paper Session: Education, Faith and Place 1: Thursday, 4/23/2015 at 13:20 PM.

Catholic schools in super-diverse, secularizing and multi-religious Belgian cities: Faith as a source of solidarity?

Author(s): Nick Schuermans* - University of Antwerp

Abstract: Stimulated by the growing scholarly interest for the intersections between the geographies of education and religion, this paper aims to disentangle the role of Catholic faith in the nurturing of solidarity across lines of class, culture and religion in super-diverse and multi-religious Flemish schools. In the Dutch-speaking north of Belgium, more than half of the primary and secondary school pupils are enrolled in state-subsidized Catholic schools. Yet, especially in (soon-to-be) minority-majority cities such as Brussels, Antwerp or Ghent, most pupils, teachers and principals do not practice Catholicism themselves. In this context, this paper draws on in-depth interviews, document analysis and participatory observation in three Catholic schools to question the extent to which the Catholic roots of these institutions - and the norms and values which are reproduced through them - still function as sources of solidarity. By focusing on the education of the pupils, the communication with non-Dutch speaking parents, the recuperation of school fees, the cooperation with neighborhood organizations, etc., it will be clarified that innovative practices of place-based solidarity are often inspired by Catholic norms and values, but that the role of other sources of solidarity - such as struggle, interdependence and encounter - may certainly not be ignored.

Keywords: Education, Faith, Solidarity, Superdiversity, Flanders (Belgium)

Collisions of Race, Religion and Place: The Case of London's First Black Faith Based School

Author(s): William Ackah, Dr* - Birkbeck University of London

Abstract: This paper is a case study of London's and the United Kingdom's first black school funded by the government. The John Loughborough School was started in 1979 by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, an international Christian denomination established in the United States in 1863. Due to geographical location in inner city Tottenham in London and the ethnicity of the majority of the churches membership in the city, the school had a continuing enrolment of pupils 95% of whom were of African or African Caribbean origin or descent. The education principles of the church emphasise that schools should be established in rural areas and that faith not race should be the basis for education activities.

This paper explores how and why the school was established against the stated principles of the denomination. The story of the school is placed within the wider context of African and African Caribbean post Second World War migration to the United Kingdom. It places particular emphasis on the impact that this migration has had on the religious landscape of urban Britain, arguing that the intersection of race and religion has had a transformative impact on urban religious practice in the inner city.

Keywords: Race, Religion, Seventh Day Adventist, London

Faith Schools, Community and Rurality

Author(s): Peter J Hemming, PhD* - Cardiff University

Abstract: Over the last decade or so, the issue of faith-based schooling has featured prominently in media and policy forums in a number of countries, particularly in relation to concerns about national values, urban social cohesion and community relations. Yet much of the faith-based education sector in England and Wales actually consists of small, rural Anglican schools, which are largely ignored in these debates. Similarly, research on rural primary schools in general has been rather limited to date, and religious character very rarely features in discussions about the relationship between village schools and their

wider community. This paper seeks to heed Lily Kong's (2013) recent call for geographers to pay more attention to faith schools and their significance for wider debates in the discipline by exploring the distinctive role that church primary schools play in two contrasting rural contexts in England and Wales. In doing so, it considers implications for debates on faith schooling and rural education, as well as wider theories about rurality and the role of religion in 'post-secular' public space.

Keywords: education, schools, faith, religion, rural

Religion and the circulation of knowledge about homosexuality in England's schools

Author(s): Robert M. Vanderbeck* - University of Leeds

Abstract: Commentators have characterised the domain of education as one of the next significant battlegrounds in the struggle between conservative religious interests and proponents of equality based on sexual orientation. This paper examines how religious considerations have influenced, and continue to influence, the legal framework governing the circulation of knowledge about homosexuality and same-sex relationships within state-funded schools in England. The current legal framework both fails to include discussion of homosexuality within the requirements of the National Curriculum and provides a broad right of parents to withdraw children from 'sex education'. This has been defended on the grounds of parental and religious freedom, with official guidance allowing faith schools to teach sex education within the framework of their 'religious ethos'. Within the context of growing calls for a more universal approach to sex education, the paper provides an analysis of ongoing debates regarding whether or not all children should be provided with balanced and inclusive discussions of issues related to same-sex sexuality, irrespective of their background, community of origin, the type of school (e.g. schools with or without a legally designated religious character) and/or parental objections based on religion or other factors. In contrast to high profile claims by religious leaders that religion has become peripheralized within the process of lawmaking, the paper argues that religious considerations continue to contribute significantly to the production and maintenance of an uneven educational landscape in which young people face disparities in their access to instruction regarding issues related to homosexuality and same-sex relationships.

Keywords: sex education, religion, sexualities

Paper Session: Education, Faith and Place 2: Thursday, 4/23/2015 at 15:20 PM.

Sexualized Unions: Cantonese evangelicals, educational politics, and labour unions in Vancouver, BC

Author(s): Justin Tse* - University of Washington

Abstract: Since the late 1990s, Cantonese evangelicals in British Columbia have become known for their socially conservative politics against sexual liberalization, especially with regards to schools. Not only did they oppose the federal legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada, but they have organized against school boards introducing anti-homophobia curriculum and transgender policies while standing in solidarity with Trinity Western University in its struggle against the teachers' union refusing to acknowledge its Teachers' College because its community covenant proscribes homosexual practices. These socially conservative politics have seldom been interrogated in relation to the geographical literature on the

transnational Hong Kong-Vancouver social field, where geographers have observed that Asia-Pacific migrants import a style of neoliberal privatization to Vancouver's property market and educational institutions (Olds 1996; Mitchell 2004; Waters 2008; Ley 2010). Instead of presuming that religious sensibilities predispose Cantonese evangelicals toward social conservatism, my ethnographic findings reveal that economic subjectivities also shape 'grounded theologies' (Tse 2014). I argue that Cantonese evangelicals who oppose sexual liberalization in British Columbian schools do so because their practice of faith is shaped by their neoliberal opposition to labour unions. Cantonese evangelicals suggested that the teachers' union used sexual liberalization as part of a larger public strategy to undermine their private economic and educational aspirations. This paper advances geographies of religion, education, and migration by examining how secular economic subjectivities can be deeply embedded in the practice of grounded theologies.

Keywords: religion, education, sexuality, Vancouver, transnationalism, trans-Pacific, Pacific Rim, labor

Negotiating queer and religious identities in Higher Education: Progressing the 'University experience'?

Author(s): Yvette Taylor* - Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, London South Bank

Abstract: This paper addresses the negotiation of 'queer religious' student identities in Higher Education. The 'university experience' has generally been characterised as a period of intense transformation and self-exploration, with complex and overlapping personal, social, political influences significantly shaping educational spaces, subjects and subjectivities. Engaging with ideas about progressive tolerance and becoming, often contrasted against 'backwards' religious-homophobia as a sentiment/space/subject 'outside' of education, this paper follows the experiences and expectations of queer Christian students. It explores how educational choices are narrated and made sense of as 'progressive' trajectories. Educational transitions allow (some) sexual-religious subjects to negotiate identities more freely, albeit with ongoing constraints. Yet perceptions of what, where and who, is deemed 'progressive' and 'backwards' with regard to sexuality and religion needs to be met with caution, where the 'university experience' can shape and shake sexual-religious identity. How, then do notions of 'queering higher education' (Renn, 2010; Case et al., 2012; Rumens, 2014) 'fit' with queer identifying religious youth? This paper specifically focuses on the university experiences of interviewees who identify as queer and religious, probing at the descriptions of educational spaces and subjects as generating critical and complicit thought; as offering choices and imposing constraints; and as resourced and resourcing transitions.

Keywords: Education, University, Religion, Sexuality, Queer

Losing the Faith?: Protestant Boarding Schools in 21st Century Ireland

Author(s): David J. Butler* - Department of Geography, University College Cork (UCC)

Abstract: The paper aims to provide critical insights into the continuing importance of faith-based education geographies and its relationship to Protestant youth culture and relationships in rural Ireland over the last quarter century. Protestants have always placed a special emphasis on church schools, often sending their children considerable distances as weekly boarders to obtain a foundation with the peers of their own church, often significant communities which remain predominantly, though not exclusively, on the land. Against this background, Protestants practised of a form of self-exclusion for much of the twentieth century - forming a community within a community - with separate support networks and

services. Reluctance to abandon this system of inter-generational faith continuity is exhibited by Protestants managing a very high proportion of the remaining boarding schools of urban and rural Ireland. This system is now threatened by government funding cuts and the redistribution of educational allowances previously relied upon by these minority communities.

Little attention has been given the evolution of youth education in the various reformed Christian denominations in Ireland and, based on extensive interviewing in case-study schools, this paper seeks to highlight changing attitudes towards church community, education and religion - long seen as an invaluable means of holding the line against intrusion from without - using oral testimonies from the older generation of youth (with memories back to the 1980s) as well as from contemporary Protestant and Roman Catholic youth in Protestant managed boarding schools.

Keywords: Youth, Reformed Christian, generational change, Ireland

U.S. Christian Higher Education: The Limits of Individual Rights in an increasingly Pluralistic and Global Society

Author(s): Janel M. Curry, Ph.D.* - Gordon College

Abstract: Gordon College became the center of a national debate in 2014. This debate arose out of the decision of the College's president to sign a letter in support of a religious exemption in an Executive Order proposed by President Obama. The intent of the letter—to allow faith-based organizations who are federal contractors to hire for mission—was lost as the debate quickly focused on LGBTQ rights issues.

The ensuing debate exposed fracture lines among the public's understanding of religious faith. Religious belief could only be imagined at the individual level, the same level as rights language. The concept of a religious "community," central to the outworking of faith commitments was absent. Pluralism was equated with individual difference. Liberalism's individualistic conceptions of society also make it difficult to conceive of faith communities as contributing to the common good. In contrast faith-based institutions need to discriminate on the basis of their faith and life filters in order to live out their missions in a coherent and faithful way, including their desire to serve and engage in the public sphere.

Ultimately, the internationalization of higher education in the U.S., including Christian higher education, unmask yet another divide. Many international students come from cultures that are communal and rights language does not resonate with them. Many are evangelical Christians. The growth of evangelical churches across the U.S., populated by international immigrants, unmask what is going to become an increasing divide in the language between faith communities and the public sphere.

Keywords: Individual Rights, Christian, Higher Education

Talking Faith & Sexuality in K-12 School Spaces

Author(s): Tiffany K. Muller Myrdahl* - Simon Fraser University

Abstract: This paper discusses the development of curriculum that brings faith and sexuality into conversation in school spaces where conservative Christianity is dominant but implicit in public school classrooms and staff lounges. Based on research conducted in Lethbridge, Alberta, the curriculum uses queer oral histories to generate a pedagogical framework to discuss intersectional identity -including the development of non-normative gender and/or sexuality as it coexists with religious identity- and the need for an educational community that actively produces safe instructional and work spaces. Intended for both K-12 (primary and secondary) schools and student-teacher training, this curriculum responds to

experiences of bullying articulated in the oral histories; the violence described by narrators was common not only to the student experience, but occurred for seasoned practitioners and those training to be teachers as well. As such, the curriculum speaks to institutional spaces that include, but extend beyond, the K-12 classroom. Further, the curriculum is suggestive of the types of participatory data analysis and creative dissemination that can emerge from collaborative research.

Keywords: oral history, LGBTQ, queer, gender, intersectionality, participatory research

FRIDAY

Paper Session: Geographies of Islamophobia in the west: Friday, 4/24/2015 at 13:20 PM.

The ordinariness of Australian Muslims: attitudes and experiences of Muslims

Author(s): Rosalie Atie* - University of Western Sydney

Abstract: Over the last decade there has been a rapid expansion of scholarship on the difficulties of Muslims living within western countries. On one hand Muslims are seen as not "fitting in" and, on the other they are being prevented from belonging through mechanisms of social exclusion. Most research samples at the deeper-end of disaffection and reproduces a discourse of non-integration. There is no compelling empirical evidence in Australia to support the case for widespread radicalisation (or vulnerability to it) among Muslims, nor is there evidence to suggest widespread alienation. The University of Western Sydney conducted a survey together with the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy to collect evidence as to whether incompatibility and disaffection is as widespread as the research and inquiries to date infer. The project is anchored within the emerging scholarship on 'everyday multiculturalism' and 'ordinary cosmopolitanism' which emphasise the everyday unproblematic nature of most cross-cultural encounters in culturally diverse societies. Three hundred and forty five surveys were completed by ISRA volunteers at Sydney Mosques, Islamic centres, and Eid festivals in September 2011. The results show a very strong sense of belonging amongst the Australian Muslim community. There was a relatively high incidence of experiences of racism. Australian Muslims have ordinary desires and needs, ranking education and employment as the most prominent of their concerns. They feel comfortable identifying as both Australian and Muslim. The findings highlight the non-problematic and everyday nature of the lives of Australian Muslims, with the exception of their high rates of experienced racism.

Keywords: Islam; Muslims; Sydney; everyday multiculturalism

Geography of Mosques in Sydney

Author(s): Husnia Underabi, Phd Candidate* - University of Western Sydney

Abstract: Mosques are important infrastructures for the Muslim community wherever they reside in large numbers, as is the case in the Australian state of New South Wales, which is home to the largest number of Muslims in the country. The Mosques of Sydney and NSW Report, was a collaborative research effort between the University of Western Sydney, Charles Sturt University and the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy in Australia. It involved over 50 mosques and mosque leaders and revealed NSW's mosques as young religious institutions that are undergoing transition. While the earlier phases of mosques in NSW can be characterised as ethnically divided and rooted in the traditions of the early

Muslim community, NSW's mosques are adapting to the Australian context as indicated by the use of English as the main language in the delivery of the sermon.

While the Australian media's treatment of mosques as a breeding ground for extremist ideologies and activities continues, the majority of mosque leaders surveyed for this study describe their regular participants as moderately religious. The study found that, while a small of Muslim leaders share the Australian government's and media concern about religious extremism, the number of religious extremists is said to be very small and generally seen to exist outside the mosque environment. The spread of extremist ideologies is actively discouraged by a close monitoring of activities happening inside the mosque by mosque leaders and committee members. It can therefore be argued that NSW's mosques play a vital role in discouraging extremism.

Keywords: Mosque, Muslims, Geography, Australia

Islamophobia and the mobility of young Muslims in Sydney

Author(s): Rhonda Itaoui, Miss* - University of Western Sydney

Abstract: This sheds light on how Islamophobia affects the mobility of young Muslims in Sydney. Informed by contemporary debates in human geography on the socio-spatial effects of 'new racism', this paper uses a social constructivist theoretical approach, along with a 'new mobilities' paradigmatic concern in the 'politics of mobility'. It further adopts a mixed-method approach, analysing 74 web-based questionnaire surveys and 10 follow-up interviews with young Muslims (aged 18-30 years) living in Sydney. Previous experiences of racism have proven to 'regulate' the way young Muslims perceive and access the spaces in which these incivilities once occurred. The personal experiences of Islamophobia result in a (sub)conscious spatial disengagement from spaces—a result of 'normalised racism' that continues to be denied and thus unchallenged by the 'immobile Muslim'. Such spatial effects operate on a collective level, where experiences of racism transfer vicariously to the victims wider social networks. By drawing on these empirical accounts of 'experienced Islamophobia', the study reveals the deeper reflexive implications of 'new racism', whereby 'outgroup' constructions not only produce racist attitudes, but also result in the spatial exclusion, and motility of subjected minority groups.

Keywords: Islamophobia, mobility

Paper Session: Political and Regional Disparities in Central Europe II: Friday, 4/24/2015 at 17:20 PM.

New trends in religious landscape of secular state as Czechia

Author(s): Tomas Havlicek*

Abstract: In contrast to the United States or North America, in Europe and Czechia there is a significant lack of religious geographic research, as if the idea that the topic of religion is not compatible with the enlightenment, modern spirit and science prevails in the European, geographic sciences. Studies integrating evolution in the post-modern, or "post-religious" and post-secular society are also generally applicable. Fundamental research is carried out mainly on a micro-regional scale with significant sociological aspects. These principal research trends are framed by the great interdisciplinary nature of research (sociology, political science, science on religion) with more or less spatial aspects, such as, for example, studying the development of religious landscape, which is, with the example of secular state as

Czechia.

New trends are visible especially in the public sphere through:

a) "new" church properties; b) role of religion in the regional identity; c) new sacral objects in the landscape; d) ecumenical development in the Christianity.

The paper analyze the relations between State and Church as an example the process of restoration of church property in Czechia and its subsequent impact on regional development especially of the rural communities. We see analysis of the role of religion in the creation of regional identity, in a secular state like Czechia, as another significant sub-objective of this research.

We recognise the insufficiently theoretically/methodologically viewed importance of new objects of sacred significance, e.g. roadway memorials, occult objects (objects of alternative religiosity) and new sacral objects of Christianity in the context of suburbanisation.

Keywords: geography of religion, secular state, Czechia, religious landscape

SATURDAY

Paper Session: Geographical Encounters with "Odd Objects" 1: Thresholds: Saturday, 4/25/2015 at 8:00 AM

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image", but yet there is so much stuff in Methodist chapels (England, 1851-1932)

Author(s): Ruth Mason* - University College London

Abstract: In 1886, Mr Shuffleddtham presented a flagon to the Tunstall Primitive Methodist Chapel. This object embodied many 'oddities' of Methodist material culture. Although plain and simple to look at, it was surrounded by controversy. Used during Communion, it was theology unnecessary within Primitive Methodism. And although a 'sacramental object', it was adopted to express personal position and status. Therefore, Methodism's material 'oddities' can provide historical insights into congregational experiences.

By the nineteenth century, Methodism was a distinct denomination, separate from the Church of England and one of many non-conformist protestant groups. Traditionally, the material culture of protestant non-conformists has been overlooked. Theologically, it has been assumed that they had little or no material tradition and the perceived plain and simple character of that they did use has been disregarded in preference for the more exuberant heritage of the Catholic and High Anglican churches. However, all non-conformist groups had a material life and this paper will illustrate how this is well worth studying. Objects were used in religious services, evangelical activities and social gatherings. Although potentially plain and simple, these objects reveal a lot about the everyday activities of religious groups and how they were experienced. Furthermore, they often testify to the translation of denominational theology; demonstrating how ideal religious theology and practice was often implemented in 'odd' ways by the grassroots.

Keywords: Non-conformity; Religion; Experience; Everyday; Materiality

Paper Session: Ethnic and Immigrant Geography: Saturday, 4/25/2015 at 16:00 PM.

The Historical and Geographical Context of the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico

Author(s): Jose M. Longo* - University of Puerto Rico

Abstract: The Disciples of Christ denomination arrived in Puerto Rico in the XIX century. Since that time they have left their footsteps in the Puerto Rican culture, mostly in the north central region of the island. In the 1930's the Disciples of Christ suffered a slight changes when they separated from their central church in the United States. This movement marked a gospel and cultural revival. During the XX century, Disciples of Christ dispersed to other municipalities of Puerto Rico. The dispersion was not an easy task; it created an atmosphere of territory invasion within other protestant churches that were established before. Thanks to the Disciples of Christ community outreach vision, the denomination gained an advantage and also has changed the way the communities perceived historical denominations, as they call them. Its community outreach program has helped their surrounding community to deal with their social problems and at the same time working together with other churches. Now more than before the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico proclaim as Stone and Campbell said: "In essential, Unity; in non-essential, Liberty; and in all things, Charity".

Keywords: Historical geography, Geography of Religions, Geography of Puerto Rico

Final Issue of GORABS Online Journal – Volume 4, Number 1 (December 2014)

From the Editor:

A little more than 10 years ago, the Geography of Religions and Belief Systems specialty group of the Association of American Geographers embarked on a new project as part of renewed activity following several quiet years. An online journal, offering wider access and greater scope for illustrations than a print publication, would form a venue to showcase research in the field as well as a common project for the specialty group. Our first issue appeared in 2006; subsequent issues followed in 2007 and 2009. Because of lack of submissions, this issue (Volume 4) will be our last. Nevertheless, the group's leadership wants very much to continue to highlight members' work, especially as religions and belief systems play a vital role in human experience and in world affairs today. We urge scholars who pursue topics related to religions and belief systems to submit to other appropriate journals. At the Association of American Geographers annual meeting in Chicago in April 2015, the specialty group will be considering what kinds of publications will best meet these goals and further the work of the group and its members. This topic will form an important part of our business meeting. Please watch for schedule information for the time and place of that meeting. We invite ideas from all interested persons, either at the meeting or otherwise. Contact information for board members is on the group's web site (www.gorabs.org).

Elizabeth J. Leppman Editor Lexington, Kentucky

See further online at <http://gorabs.org/journal/past.html>

THE DAVID E. SOPHER NEW SCHOLAR AWARD 2015

Description: The purpose of the David E. Sopher New Scholar Award is to promote intellectual enquiry from new scholars into geographies of religions and belief systems through the presentation of papers at the AAG meeting. Papers will be judged on potential contribution to the field of Geography of Religions and Belief Systems, organization, and written composition.

Eligibility: Both graduate students and untenured faculty, who are not currently serving on the GORABS board, can apply for the award.

Award: The amount for the 2015 award is a travel grant of \$250. The recipient will also be given an official certificate at the AAG awards luncheon.

Disbursement: A check will be disbursed to the winner at the 2015 Geography of Religions and Belief Systems annual business meeting at the AAG event.

Requirements: The paper and application form must be emailed to the GORABS chair in rich text or Microsoft Word format by April 6, 2015. The paper must subsequently be presented at the national AAG meeting, though it does not have to be in a GORABS sponsored session. A panel drawn from the GORABS board will judge the papers and determine a recipient. The winner will be announced in time to attend the awards luncheon with a GORABS representative. GORABS reserves the right to not make an award in a given year.

David J. Butler, Past Chair and Secretary coordinates this award on behalf of the Board of Geography of Religion and Belief Systems (GORABS) - Email: d.butler@ucc.ie

******* Don't miss the 7th Annual GORABS Annual Lecture ... *******

The GORABS Annual Lecture 2015 - 'The post-secular problematic' is scheduled on Tuesday 21 April from 4.40 PM to 6.20 PM in Stetson E, Hyatt, West Tower, Purple Level, with panelists, Banu Gokariksel (UNC, Chapel Hill) and Anna Sekol (Univ. Kentucky).

Plus, the GORABS AGM ...

3816 Geography of Religions and Belief Systems Specialty Group Business Meeting

scheduled on Thursday, 4/23/2015, from 8:15 PM - 9:15 PM in Columbus G, Hyatt, East Tower, Gold Level

Sacred Places in Chicago - GORABS Sponsored Field Trip.

"Sacred Places in Chicago" will be an interesting and unusual field trip on Thursday, April 23 leaving from the Hyatt conference site at 9:00 AM and returning to the same place by 2:30 PM. The trip is one of only two ever undertaken in recent memory by the Geography of Religions and Belief Systems (GORABS) Specialty Group. We will visit four sites:

- 1) **Seventeenth Church of Christ Scientist**, a church Downtown with a unique design that was the setting for scenes in the recent movie, *Divergent*.
- 2) **Chicago Temple**, the only known skyscraper church, once the tallest building in the city.
- 3) **Unity Church** in Oak Park, a Frank Lloyd Wright masterpiece, sometimes called the first building in a modern style.
- 4) Another architectural marvel, the **Baha'i House of Worship** in Wilmette, a symbol of religious unity.

Geographers of culture, religion, sacred spaces, the urban landscape, and urban planning should all find much food for thought, new avenues of inquiry, and more than a little enjoyment!

Cost is \$57.00, water and snacks are provided. Wear shoes good for walking short distances, and rain gear.

Please see below or copy and mail the attached form to sign up.

You can log into their account and register online:https://www2.aag.org/aag_prod_imis/aag_mbr/iCore/Events/Event_Display.aspx?EventKey=AM2015

Or you can register with the attached paper form.

If you have any registration questions, you can contact the registration department at atmeeting@aag.org or +1 202-234-1450 or Richard Dodge at 520-805-0086.

THE GORABS BOARD WOULD LIKE TO THANK RICHARD DODGE MOST SINCERELY FOR ALL THE EFFORT HE HAS PUT INTO ORGANISING THIS FIELD TRIP!