

Research Field IV Workshop***Migration and Religious Convergence***

In his influential book “Religions in global society” Peter Beyer has proposed the idea of a global religious field or system emerging in the course of general processes of globalization. According to Beyer, the emergence of a global religious field can best be understood as the result of intra- as well as interreligious convergence. In this workshop we explore how processes of migration may become a condition or mechanism of religious convergence. To this aim, we will discuss four case studies which cover Asia and Europe, the Age of Colonialism and recent developments.

Time	Topic
14:15-14:30	Introduction: Migration & Religious Convergence
14:30-15:00	Stefan Reichmuth: The Southern Arab diaspora in the Indian Ocean
15:00-15:30	Marion Eggert: Jehol in Summer 1780: Religious plurality in a setting of controlled migration
15:30-16:00	Alexander Nagel: Transnational religious self-assurance in the diaspora: The European Council for Fatwa and Research
16:15-17:00	Brigitte Luchesi: The annual 'Tamil Pilgrimage' to Kevelaer
17:00-17:45	Concluding discussion

As a conceptual starting point, we have identified the following patterns of how migrations flows may trigger religious convergence:

- Classical narrations of “Diaspora” have often been designed as “tale of woe”, i.e. a religious minority is held captive far from its homeland and feels unable to follow its religious customs. In this case, a process of forced migration leads to a folklorization or folkloristic invention of the ‘original’ religious tradition as a resource of collective identity. It may be asked whether such folklorization follows common trans-cultural patterns and thus contributes to religious convergence in spite of its function of ethnic/cultural differentiation.
- In contrast, migration may also trigger situation of religious encounter and exchange. Hence, both migrant groups and members of the country of arrival may adapt their religious world views in the sense of universalization (e.g. the Abrahamic Union).
- Moreover, migration and religious pluralization may contribute to the formation of hybrid religious identities, not only on the side of the religious minority (Vertovec: diaspora as a mode consciousness; Tamil Hindus ‘Catholic’ pilgrimage to Kevelaer), but also in the country of arrival (modern youth culture using Muslim phrases)
- Fourth, diaspora is not restricted to asymmetrical communication between the deprived diaspora community and the authoritative homeland. Instead migrants may strive for trans- and even supranational forms of organization to cope with intrareligious diversity. E.g. the European Council for Fatwa and Research aims at systematizing (and streamlining) diaspora Islam and to develop a “fikh of minorities” (Qaradawi)
- Finally, processes of migration may contribute to the commodification of religion in a broader sense, e.g. in the realm of social ethics. In the US we find Hindu communities virtually inventing an ethics of solidarity in order to apply for public social service grants.