

EASR 2019: Religion – Continuations and Disruptions

Open Session: Methodological Challenges in Studying Digital Religion

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Title

Discourse Analysis as a method for analyzing webpages of religious organizations. A Case Study of the Polish Orthodox Church.

Abstract

The paper concerns the online self-representation of minority religions and it is concentrated on the official webpage of the Polish Orthodox Church. This Church is the second biggest religious community in Poland, however, it only makes up around 1% of total population. The Church applies different media for its purposes, which include, official journal, local radio station and TV programs streamed on a local TV channel. To the media ensemble of the Church belongs an official webpage as well. In this paper I would like to consider the possible ways of analyzing this page as an example for websites of other religious organizations.

The starting point for the discussion is the premise that the Church self-representing itself on the webpage uses it to construct/reimagine its identity. I acknowledge that identity is a social construct or, in other words, it should be understood “as constructive discursive achievement” (McKinlay/ McVittie 2011, 70). The aim of this paper is to investigate what are the methodological ways of unpacking the identity and its construction/ reimagining processes. In order to do it I will follow Reinhold Keller’s approach to discourse (Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse) and I will thus analyse (a) interpretative schemes/ frames (“Deutungsmuster”), (b) phenomenal structure and (c) narrative structure (plots) (Keller 2005; 2011, 101–112). It means that I will look for (a) symbols, signs and sentences that are recurrent in the Churches’ media; (b) a net of particular elements (topics) which create the structure of discourse and (c) the storylines in the Church’s webpage. With the help of this approach I hope to bypass the limits of a traditional methods of visual and textual analysis in connection with webpages.

References

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