Call for Papers:

Religious identity and the media
Methods, concepts, theories, and new research avenues

March 25-27, 2021, Warsaw, Poland

Media have always been an important means of constructing religious identity, community, and authority, but the development of digital media has opened up new possibilities of such construction (Helland 2005; Lövheim 2011; Campbell 2012; Hoover 2018). According to theorists of mediatisation, media nowadays play a crucial role in the construction of social reality (Couldry & Hepp 2017: 5), and are an inherent element of the communication matrix. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent restriction have shown how important digital media use has become and to what extent religious institutions and groups rely on mediatised communication. Furthermore, media use has a profound influence on the forms, means, and content of communication - this pertains to religion and religious communication as well. Reading a sacred text may be a wholly different experience when done with a group, in a temple, than reading the very same text through an app during morning commute. Religious institutions, organisations, and communities utilise media (and digital media in particular) to communicate about religion, but also to connect with the followers and attract prospective ones. On the other hand, references to religion in the media contribute to the dynamic process of defining, transforming and challenging the most important subject positions in the socio-political context of specific countries and regions. By being part of the media landscape, various religious and non-religious actors convey a certain image of religion and belief, and engage in debates with other religious and secular worldviews. For individuals, the media may be a tool to connect with the beliefs, the institutions, and a wider religious community, but also become a space of religious expression, negotiation of religious identity. Using the media may be a way to assert and affirm already existing religious identities, as well as an opportunity to challenge and construct them more independently but still in connection with discursive developments that define lines of similarities and conflict between various subject positions involved. In this process, the meaning of religion changes as well.

The conference, seeking to address the change in question, stems from the organisers' own interrogation of the topic of mediatised identity construction, which was conducted in a DFG/NCN funded project "Minorities and the Media". Based on the theoretical framework of mediatisation and communicative constructivism, as well as relational concepts of identity, we would like the conference to be an opportunity to discuss the results with a wider academic community, and investigate the dynamics of the changes which religious identity construction undergoes through media use.

The conference focuses on the manifold relationships between creating, negotiating, maintaining and challenging religious and religion-related identities, and various types of media and forms of media use. The list of topics of particular interest includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- the use of media by religious institutions and organisations to construct and negotiate their religious identity,

- the construction, maintenance, and negotiation of individual religious identity through media and media use (incl. social media, gaming, apps)

- the construction of alternative, unorthodox, resistant religious/spiritual identities, as well as non-religious and secular identities in contemporary media and through media use

- tensions inscribed in the process of religious identities' display and construction in the media

- the use of religious identity in media broadcast (incl. advertising, secular content, apps, social media, etc.)

- comparative analyses between identity construction in different types of media, various cultural and religious environments, media ensembles, and/or institutional settings,

- discussion of methodological approaches, challenges to established methods and tools, suggestions of new methodological approaches (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods).

We invite papers investigating methodological and theoretical approaches to the topic, and presenting the results of empirical research. Investigations of all types of media are warmly welcome. We would be particularly interested in works that give justice to specific geopolitical contexts and respective media environments in Europe and beyond. We also invite papers exploring innovative approaches to analysing the topic, showcasing novel methodological and theoretical frameworks. We encourage both established scholars, and early career researchers to apply.

We will continue to monitor the situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and we will comply with any relevant administrative regulations. We also consider hosting a partially or fully online conference if that is the best solution. We will contact the participants as new information becomes available that is pertinent to the conference.

Keynote speakers

Mia Lövheim, Uppsala University

Christoph Günther, Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz

Key dates

Submission of paper proposals: **1 November 2020**

Notification of acceptance and opening of the electronic registration: **1 December 2020**

Final date for registration for the conference: **15 January 2021**

Final program: **15 February 2021**

Submit the paper proposal (abstract of 150-250 words) via the conference website: www.media.religion2021.uni-bremen.de

The conference fee is **35 €**. Please note the conference fee will be payable via bank transfer once paper proposals are accepted and the registration is open.

For more information, please visit: www.media.religion2021.uni-bremen.de

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The organisers can financially support TWO PhD students, each with the amount of up to **300€** to be spent on travel and/or accommodation. The students will also be exempt from the conference fee.

In order to be considered for the bursary, please:

- fill in the application form on: www.media.religion2021.uni-bremen.de

- in the form, you will be asked for inserting a short version of your conference paper, ca 1000 words, along with a short statement clarifying why you should be considered for the bursary.

Final date for applications is **1 November 2020**.

The organising committee will select the two bursary recipients on the basis of the overall quality of their paper's short version and its correspondence with the topic of the conference. The decision will be announced to applicants via email before **1 December 2020**.

We are looking forward to seeing you in Warsaw!

Organising committee:

Prof. Dr. Kerstin Radde-Antweiler, University of Bremen

dr hab. Dorota Hall, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences

dr Marta Kołodziejska, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences

dr Łukasz Fajfer, University of Bremen