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Title of Session: Religion in a Post-secular Age

Name of Session Convener(s): Roberto Cipriani

University/Organization incl. City: Università Roma Tre

Chair: Roberto Cipriani

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I) Title of Selected Paper: In Search of Religious Places in Italy

Name/s of Author/s: Roberto Lavarini

University/Organization incl. City: Università IULM Milan

Abstract: This study presents the results of a research carried out throughout Italy aimed at studying both the supply and demand of religious destinations.

Our analysis of the demand let us look for the motivation, wishes and aspirations of visitors who for a wide variety of reasons feel the need to choose a destination which is in some manner connected with religion.

In this way, using a benefit segmentation method, we were able to draw up a complex description of a specific type of travellers and analyze the reasons for their need, their objectives and the benefits they expect to gain.

As for supply, our analysis took into consideration not only what already exists, but also what might be possible, i.e. what could be set up with relative ease, in order to reach a definition of the type of target each destination analyzed might reasonably aspire towards, and which tools they would require.

II) Title of Selected Paper: The Spread of Protestant 'Megachurches' in the United States and Korea

Name/s of Author/s: Thomas Kern

University/Organization incl. City: Heidelberg University

Abstract: Over the last decades, Protestant megachurches have become a widespread phenomenon not only in the United States, but also in many other countries particularly in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and East Asia. In general, the concept of megachurch refers to congregations with an average weekly attendance of more than

10,000 adults in the worship services. Although very large congregations have existed throughout the history of Christianity, it appears that the number of megachurches has considerably increased since the 1970s. Many observers regard the diffusion of large protestant congregations as a response to deep changes in the cultural patterns of modern societies.

This paper considers the spread of megachurches in the cases of the United States and South Korea. While megachurches appear to be most prevalent in the United States, they are also widespread in South Korea including the largest congregation of the world with an estimated number of 230,000 service attendants. In the first step, the presentation gives a short overview of the historical developments in the United States and South Korea. In the second step, the basic ideas behind the concept of megachurch will be analyzed: a strong vision of growth, emphasis on efficient organization, extensive use of multimedia technologies, and a tendency toward expressive forms of spirituality. In the third step, the attention moves to the cultural and institutional factors that facilitated the spread of megachurches in the United States and South Korea.

III) Title of Selected Paper: In Country X Soccer is a Religion! What do You Mean?

Name/s of Author/s: Ruud Stokvis

University/Organization incl. City: Amsterdam School for Social Science Research and WJH Mulier Institute. Centre for Research on Sports in Society

Abstract: The paper offers an empirical analysis of the ways sport and religion are related to each other in the press. It is part of a larger project in which I research the question if the popular enthusiasm for sport can be interpreted as a successful alternative for the fading interest in traditional religious practices.

In a formal way it is easy to argue that sport has essential traits in common with religion. The sacred, in the sense of special times, places, persons and objects which one approaches in a special mood is common to both fields. Sport-like activities for a long time were central in many religious ceremonies and had religious meanings.

In spite of these common characteristics there are many differences too. Sport belongs to what may be called popular culture, while religion belongs to the high as well as the popular culture.

In order to clarify the relation between both fields I will present the results of an empirical analysis of articles in Dutch newspapers of the last 10 years in which sport (soccer) and religion (divine worship) are related to each other.

IV) Title of Selected Paper: Religion Impact on Social Life. Empowering Women

Awareness against Violence

Name/s of Author/s: Marcella Pompili Pagliari

University/Organization incl. City: Sapienza Università di Roma

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to analyse the new forms of violence at workplace against women and the best practices for promoting *the development of new policies about hidden violence*, at local level. This aim can contribute to promote also a new social awareness about *hidden violence against women*.

This overall aim contributes to the prevention and the fight against new forms of violence occurring in public and private domain against women. The physical, sexual, psychological violence and also its new forms, as hidden violence, damage the right to security of the persons, representing a serious threat to physical and mental health. Although *domestic violence* is one of the commonest forms of violence against women, some other forms of violence remain less visible, representing general violation of women rights as human beings - the right to life, safety, dignity and physical and psychological well-being.

The groups I studied are *migrant women workers*. Women already make up more of the work in some professions; care workers face a wide range of hazards on the job, including injuries, violence, and stress. Migrant women workers most frequently stress the presence of physical - including sexual - psychological and verbal abuse.

Observed groups are: *Intercultural mediators*, *care workers* and *entrepreneurs*.

Security in urban contexts demands also a specific approach to gender issues. New activated policies are not only focused to specific problems such as care, assistance and home to women victims of violence, but also to mainstreaming and empowering actions. They will progressively offer a more favourable context in multi-cultural and multi-religious urban districts for individualization, trust building and cultural interchange, so to allow more freedom especially to women in peripheral urban spaces, overcoming deep-seated fears and communication blocks. Stimulating the pleasure of everyday life and creating confidence in themselves and in their capabilities, challenging the risk society.

The methodology includes research on statistical data and qualitative research (in-depth interviews) to set up a comparison among cultures, religions and violence policies in Rome. The choice of the case study was dictated mainly by the logic of the topic object of the research, but also by the goal of being able to generalise the findings to Western as well as to Eastern countries religions. The research will help to define a communication strategy: creating communication tools to spread community policies related to women hidden violence and to improve women awareness about hidden violence, encouraging attitudes and behaviours contrasting violence in all its forms.

V) Title of Selected Paper: Laicism in a "Post-secular" Society. Italian Recent Debates on Life & Death

Name/s of Author/s: Gabriele De Angelis

University/Organization incl. City: Universidade Nova - Lisbon

Abstract: Philosophers and social theorists have identified in the process of secularisation one of the characteristic features of Western modernity. Over the last decades, international debate on secularism and secularisation has focused on the "post-secularisation thesis": confronted with the reality of the persisting role of faith in individual lives and with the undiminished importance of churches in public life, several philosophers and sociologists have raised the question as to whether the process of secularisation came to a halt. Some contested that the secularisation thesis was altogether wrong and a phantasm of social theory.

Recent theoretical attempts to tackle the matter revolve around the relevance of religious authority in public and individual life. This suggestion, on which both sociologists (Chavez 1994) and philosophers (Habermas 2001) converge, underscores the

involvement and the weight of churches in public issues. Matters of life & death are a case in point.

In several countries the debate on possible human interventions on birth and death (as in the case of Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis, expression of the “living will”, etc.) is dominated by the clash of religious and laicist claims. The Italian public sphere has recently witnessed some highly controversial debates concerning procedures of Medical Assisted Procreation as well as euthanasia and “living will”. All the cases in question involve political and legislative intervention and raised concerns on the relations between church and the state as well as between religious and laicist claims in the public sphere. The most recent case is related to the enforcement of the living will of a now irretrievably unconscious patient, mobilised the attention of the government and motivated a bill urgently passed by Parliament to impede the stop to artificial nutrition. Presenting the (provisional) results of a research being conducted on the most recent Italian debates on the matters above, the paper aims to reconstruct how the relations between faith and public life are conceived both by supporters of the “laicist camp” and by supporters of religiously motivated claims. To do so, an analysis of relevant documents produced by The Pontifical Academy for Life will be presented, as well as on the communicative strategies displayed by the Church and its supporters in public debates. This will be compounded by a similar analysis of the arguments and communicative strategies brought forward by the supporters of the living will.

VI) Title of Selected Paper: Reenchantment of the e-world. Online religious practices

Name/s of Author/s: Natàlia Cantó-Milà & Swen Seebach

University/Organization incl. City: Open University of Catalonia (UOC)

Abstract: Already in the mid-nineties scholars of religion acknowledged a massive online presence of religions and religious movements. More than ten years have gone by since, and the internet has deeply changed. It does not only offer a platform in order to share and distribute information, but it also generates a (virtual) social space in which the weaving of social relationships becomes possible. People can actually meet online, communicate and experience things that would otherwise not be possible. Furthermore, e-presence and interactivity has evolved from being a possibility towards becoming a must.

Regarding these issues, this paper seeks to focus on the issue of the religious experience: To what an extent does the internet offer and enable religious experiences and practices that could not be possible offline? Can only new religious movements cope with the exigency of being visible, reachable, performable and experienceable online? Do traditional religions have to restructure themselves in order to be able to become ‘connectable’?