

Youth, Religion, and Globalization

An international workshop

October 8-9, 2021, Paris Area (France)

Today, more than ever, religious networks are global in scope.

Although for some experts, religions contribute to the blurring of borders in the name of a universalist ethic and imagination (Strenski 2004; Banchoff and Casanova 2016), for others, religions use the tools of globalization while combating aspects of this process that might threaten their worldviews (Robertson 2003; Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2003, Gauthier 2020).

As far as young people are concerned, public opinion is also divided. On the one hand, religious youth seem to embody global spread. They are viewed as ‘digital natives’ who may fully realize the ambition of creating a class of ‘global citizens.’ On the other hand, religious young people are associated with forms of traditionalism that European and North American audiences often view as hostile. Notably, many of the recent terrorist attacks were perpetrated by young people, who violently oppose (liberal) globalization in the name of their faith.

The present workshop will shed light on the multiple relations between young people (defined here as 35 years and under), religion, and processes of globalization in the last 20 years. The early 2000s is an important starting point; this period saw the rise of wide Internet access, social media, Web 2.0, and the spread of mobile phones—all of which facilitated the establishment of transnational networks we see today.

The level and form of participation in a ‘globalized religion’ depends on many factors, including class, gender, race, and place of residence. For instance, young people in low-income areas of the Global South are significantly less likely to have access to costly technology, sophisticated infrastructure, or long-distance transportation. This workshop therefore offers an opportunity to clarify and compare perspectives from different parts of the world. What does being ‘religiously global’ mean for people living in Africa, America, Europe, Asia, Oceania and, more specifically, in particular countries or regions? In this sense, the present workshop is as much interested in accessibility as in inaccessibility to global religious connections.

Contributors should respond to one or more of the following issues, which will shape our collective discussion:

- How is globalization transforming young people’s faith? Does it bring different traditions together within the same space, leading to a relativization or heterogeneity of convictions or, on the contrary, to a desire for greater uniformity or orthodoxy? Does it foster hybridization, cross-fertilization, as well as changes in affiliation?
- How does globalization affect religious institutions with respect to the way they engage youth? How do "religious entrepreneurs" use the tools of economic globalization to attract young people? Can we identify a "globalization" of religious education systems? Do transnational religious events (e.g. pilgrimages, music tours, or festivals) encourage a spiritual opening to international networks? How are these global meetings formed, sustained, and ritualized?

- To what extent are religiously committed young people agents of globalization? Does affiliation to a religion that transcends national borders encourage engagement in "religious internationals," (Green and Viaene, 2012) and/or produce an imaginary that leads to a consideration of issues on a global scale? (Kaell, 2020).
- How do levels of technological and media access create, for young people, differing patterns of religious networking and adherence at a global level? Have new technological networks affected young people's relationship to religion? Can we document the emergence of virtual spiritual spaces and digital diasporas?

This workshop asks, from a transnational perspective, what kind of globalization(s) young believers construct, inhabit, and imagine.

Participants based in the Global South are especially welcome. Transport is the responsibility of the participants, but we will endeavour to subsidize those who are not supported by their universities, within the limits of the funds available. Food and accommodation on site will be provided by the organizers.

Submission modalities and schedule

February 15, 2021: Proposals should be sent by e-mail to charles.mercier@u-bordeaux.fr and jean-philippe.warren@concordia.ca . They will include a title, a detailed abstract of the paper (200 words), and a short bio-bibliographic presentation (100 words).

April 15, 2021: Notification of acceptance. The selection will be made according to the following criteria:

- Adequacy of the proposal to the workshop's issues
- Clarity of the proposal
- Balance between geographical and religious areas

October 8 and 9, 2021: International workshop in the Paris area. Participants will stay in the same place from Thursday October 8 evening to Saturday October 9 evening. They will discuss their papers and work together to produce a collective publication on the theme of youth, religion and globalization.

December 20, 2021: submission of the papers selected for publication. Proposals that could not be selected due to lack of space could be published in one of the editorial projects related to the workshop.

Organizers: Charles Mercier (University of Bordeaux) and Jean-Philippe Warren (Concordia University)

Scientific advisors: Jayeel Cornelio (Ateneo de Manila University) and Hillary Kaell (McGill University).

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