



Contending Religions, Identities and Space

Living together in contemporary Africa and Europe

The University of Macerata, November 12 - 13, 2015

Convenors Benedetta Barbisan, Maria Elena Paniconi, Uoldelul Chelati Dirar

After decades in which secular views of politics and social relations have dominated the public sphere in Europe as well as in many polities in Africa and the Middle East, we are currently witnessing a growing pervasiveness of religious discourse. This increasing phenomenon triggers an attitude toward religious branding which, through the radicalisation of practices, reduces opportunities of coexistence and inclusiveness. Religion seems to play an increasingly prominent role in defining identities, binding communities, filling inter-social gaps, healing experiences of marginality, shaping notions of citizenship, and in negotiating rights. To a certain extent, the fast expansion of Pentecostal churches, the political and judicial debate on the acceptability of the Islamic veil and other symbols of religious affiliation, the gruesome episodes of violence perpetrated under religious banners, are all developments that seem to confirm this trend in both Africa and Europe.

Moving from this complex and often conflicting landscape, this conference aims to discuss the multifaceted dimension that religious discourses are assuming in both contemporary Africa and Europe. In this perspective, the conference will question the effectiveness of conventional understanding of religions in the political debate and in the media, trying to deconstruct what seems an essentialised understanding of religions and thus to shed light on the many theological, social and existential nuances that underpin contemporary religious narratives.

The ultimate aim of this conference is to investigate if and to what extent challenges posed by religious discourses in Europe occurred also in African societies and polities, defying dominant representations of Europe's uniqueness. In a comparative and multidisciplinary perspective, the conference will address the relevance of these issues in reshaping notions of coexistence and social cohesion and identifying elements of similarity as well as difference in Africa and Europe.

In a truly multidisciplinary approach, the convenors will particularly welcome papers dealing with the following:

- Social and Political Conflict
- Building and Imaging Communities
- Constitutional and Legal Challenges
- Social Marginality
- Diasporas and Radical Politics
- Secularism, Secularity and Religions
- Communicating Religions
- The language of religions

Proposals can be filled using the form available on the following [link](#) and should include a short abstract with a clear description of sources and methodology that will be used in the paper and a short bio.

Proposals no longer than **700** words should be sent to cir.africa@unimc.it. Deadline for the submission of proposals has been extended to **August 28th 2015**.

The convenors have already been negotiating with international publishing houses the publication of a selection of papers among those presented at the conference.