

Call for Papers
“Religious and Spiritual Environmental Activism”

Panel at the Bi-Annual Conference of the ESA Research Network 34

Sociology of Religion

“Religion and the urban, natural and virtual environments”

Groningen (Netherlands), 26-28 August 2020

Panel organizers

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Panel abstract

Religious and spiritual actors are increasingly taking an active stance in the public debates about environmental issues such as climate change and the degradation of the biosphere. In doing so, they assume different positions. On the one hand, religious and spiritual actors support pro-environmental discourses and seek to facilitate transitions towards more carbon-neutral societies. On the other hand, they spread climate change scepticism and block aforementioned transitions by spreading worldviews that attribute environmental degradation to transcendent other-than-human forces. Different positions even arise within the same faith traditions and denominations and lead to tensions within religious communities, as illustrated by evangelicals in the US. These tensions may involve rivalry among theological schools, power games within religious institutions, and struggles over political influence. However, at the same time, environmentalism has generated new pathways for inter- and intrareligious dialogue and religious-secular collaborations, bringing together actors from different faith communities and NGOs. In total, religious environmentalism appears to generate transformations in the religious field and in its relationship to other fields (e.g. politics, environmental NGOs, international development collaboration).

This panel will examine the dynamics surrounding religious and spiritual environmental activism. What activities do different religious traditions undertake to address climate change and other environmental threats? In what way do they facilitate or block environmental sustainability and what limitations do their activities face? What types of collaborations emerge from the increasing religious and spiritual activism? What consequences arise from this rising environmental engagement for the religious field and its relationship to other fields? To address these questions in the panel, we invite contributions that study the relationship between religion and ecology.

Please submit your paper proposal (200-250 words) to Fabian Huber (fabian.huber@unibas.ch) by **10th January 2020**.