

Research with cultural groups

Interfaith Dialogue Group- CREA

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- One of the characteristics is the diversity of its members (age, gender, culture, life choices and religious practices).
- There are included people who are non-believers and people from at least 5 different religious traditions (polytheist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, agnostic, atheist)
- And we must add internal diversity in each tradition.

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How makes possible an Interfaith Group on a Scientific Research Center?

- In Europe Science and Religion are a "strange couple". But more rarely is an **interfaith analysis at the university**.
 - Science and religion is not incompatible
 - The group was created in 2004 thanks to the opportunity raised at the seminar "with the book on hand"
 - We need diversity on the research groups to reduce the risk of racism or wrong scientific interpretation. But also we need ethical commitment against inequalities.



Issues

- To study and **identify successful action** of interreligious groups that are already making social transformations and strengthening social cohesion.
- To make visible transformative and exclusionary factors that are present in different religious communities.
- To research the **role of women** in different religions.
- To establish bridges between theory and practice based on the **equality of differences. Multicultural Laicity** (management of the diversity)
- To work on the theme of **dialogue between faith and science** as compatible concepts.
- To promote theories and practices based on a **social commitment** to social transformation, which are fruit of interreligious dialogue. From this point of view, the aim is to make visible and promote practices in which the people leading this dialogue are the more invisible (such as non-academic).

Why research on religious debate?

There are an increased presence of religions at public space

Modernity are not oposite to secularisation

« *the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false* »

(Berger, 1999: 2)

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Change of social paradigme

Radicalization of modernity has not implied a disappearance of religion in the public space (Berger)

In the current risk society to face uncertainty, people is reflecting actively on their own identity

Modernity is not brought about by secularisation. Many countries have proven to have modernisation with religion. Europe is the exception were these two processes have come linked to one another.



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MAIN TOPIC MULTICULTURAL LAICITY

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Necessity to manage diversity on the public space

Diversity of identities suggests a challenge:

How we can respect different life options, including religion?

We can achieve this goal conciliating individual freedom of believe and equality of rights.

A secular framework to guarantee plurality

« *There is no reason to think the world of the twenty-first century will be any less religious than the world is today* »
(Berger, 1999: 12)

How can we accommodate religious identities and public space?

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Multicultural laicity

Religion in itself is not the aspect to be included in the public space, but liberty of expression and capacity of election are.

The public space should be neutral, without being identified with any religion, but linking religious expression at personal and communitarian level.

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Multicultural laicity

Multicultural laicity does not refuse diversity on behalf of homogeneous equality, although it is based on the principle of equality of differences.

*Equality of differences links difference to **equality** as the expression of the right of everybody to live differently in equality of opportunities.*

***Different** practices and religious beliefs are considered equally, regardless of the social position or the power that people have (Flecha, 2004)*

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Ilham Moussaid, candidate of the New Anti-Capitalist party (NPA).



"Try as I might to explain that I am not oppressed and that it shows, there's still a lack of understanding,"

*I'm feminist, that is, I'm against any type of **violence** and oppression of the women. (...) But there is not only one way to be feminist or to defend women. I'm not oppressed because I wear veil. EL PAIS*

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To Found laicity on successful scientific actions

- The management based on scientific evidences contributes to radicalize democracy (linked to reason)
- Democratic process of societies not necessarily means secularization: The best universities show that it is possible to conciliate **religious identity with scientific production**

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Religious diversity

- Not prevent scientific progress, but the contrary
 - If diversity does not exist, science is poorer.
 - The more diversity exists in a group and the more dialogue is established, more progress is achieved (and more knowledge is created)



From the University

We need to collect and analyze existing successful actions in interreligious dialogue that non-academic people are already implementing in social movements.

L'Associació UNESCO per al Diàleg Interreligiós, AEDIR, és una entitat catalana no confessional (i, en tot cas, pluriconfessional). Ajudina i mobilitza persones de diferents tradicions religioses que treballen en consens amb les principals organitzacions internacionals de diàleg interreligiós, per afavorir al coneixement, el diàleg interreligiós i la cooperació entre les diferents confessions religioses presents a Catalunya, des de la perspectiva de la cultura del diàleg i de la pau.



Member of the Catalan network of Interreligious Dialogue. Unesco Association

Search for the Truth

- Commitment of science against inequalities
- Social utility: the objective that we are involved in science

Research for and with the subjects

- Claims of validity
- Intersubjective and interreligious dialogue



In conclusion

From a scientific point of view, we need to identify the successful actions on the interreligious dialogue, in order to contribute to society elements that can be transferable to promote social cohesion and scientific progress.



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