
Call for Papers
**Pluralism in Emergenc(i)es:
Movement, Space, and Religious Difference**

December 6 & 7 2017

--- Amman, Jordan ---

DEADLINES

Call for Paper Abstracts: **July 16, 2017**

Paper Submission: **October 25, 2017**

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life (IRCPL) at Columbia University is requesting paper proposals to present for its conference series "Pluralism in Emergenc(i)es: Movement, Space, and Religious Difference," which will convene first in Amman and then in Tunis. "Pluralism in Emergenc(i)es" explores pluralism as it emerges in response to contemporary global crises. "Pluralism" is commonly understood as the recognition and affirmation of diversity within a governing body or set of institutional arrangements. Drawing on the resources of Columbia's Global Centers in Amman and Istanbul, this conference seeks to examine the historical, social, and religious underpinnings of the so-called migrant and refugee crisis in order to position this moment as a state of emergence, rather than a state of emergency. Thinking of pluralism as a technology of power that helps to organize people and their interactions, and often articulated with special attention to religious difference, this conference will address how pluralism becomes activated in emergency situations and is utilized in different ways and towards different ends. This conference series is a joint effort by the Columbia Global Centers in Amman, Istanbul, and Tunis and the IRCPL in New York.

The two-day conference in Amman intends to bring together local experts, students and activists with regional specialists and practitioners from academia, the art world, and the business community, as well as experts from civil society and the NGO sector, to present and discuss the impact of the global migration situation on housing and urban development, collective memory and identity, and religious pluralism in the face of rapidly changing and increasingly precarious lived realities. Following the conference, select

participants will be invited to contribute a revised and extended version of their papers to an edited book volume and other online writing fora.

The conference will take place in Amman on **Wednesday, December 6 and Thursday, December 7, 2017**. A full conference program and papers will be provided in advance of the conference. The organizers will cover the cost of airfare and hotel accommodation for all invited participants. The working language of the conference is English.

TOPICS OF INTEREST

The “Pluralism in Emergenc(i)es: Movement, Space, and Religious Difference” conference in Amman will look at the rich history of pluralist social contexts *and* sectarian strife that inform the contemporary landscape of the region, from Turkey to Iraq, Iran to Syria, to Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine/Israel. The conference will address the following questions: What are the variations in how “pluralism” is understood and how does it function in a time of crisis? Moreover, what are the material and immaterial modes through which pluralism takes shape? How does it change through the circulation of people - as migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and capital – whether under the auspices of international development funds, religious aid, or new labor markets? Lastly, how have ideals of pluralism and multiculturalism so often touted by many of these refugee-receiving countries been awakened, shattered, or reinforced in response to the intense survival situations these refugees, migrants, and residents face?

Movement and urban transformation have been at the center of multiple histories of displacement (the Palestinian, Syrian and Iraqi refugee crises) that have produced the present situations in the contemporary Middle East. Alongside these histories are realities of religious difference, intersecting religious identity with national tendencies (e.g., Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Syria), wherein Sunni/Shi’a relations, Christian and other minority religious groups, and waves of secularizing tendencies all come together to inform contemporary crisis situations and the responses of state and international institutions. Looking at the region, the conference will deal with issues that inform the contemporary Middle East as a space of pluralism in emergence *and* in crisis.

Discussion at this conference will center on the following four leitmotifs:

1. Emerging Housing and Emergency Settlement
2. Collective Memory and Identity
3. On Religion and Refugees: Conversations from the Field
4. Conceptualizing and Comparing Pluralism in Emergencies

Contributors are invited to submit abstracts for the aforementioned thematic panels which are elaborated below.

Panel 1) Emerging Housing and Emergency Settlement

The current situation in the region provides an eminently timely context to speak about emerging housing, urban development, and governmental policies. New forms of migration and movement in the recent past

due to violence and economic insecurity have led to the construction of semi-temporary housing that, as has been the trend in the region, has become quite permanent. Government policies that discipline the ways that these new populations can integrate into the local economy lead to the creation of new economic spaces and economies. In this panel, we aim to interrogate the triangulation between movement, new forms of housing, and government policies that create the context within which pluralism emerges by exploring:

- Shifts in migratory landscapes and populations
- Creation of new sites of intersection, community, and exchange
- Housing needs and settlement
- Urban vs. camp housing policies
- International humanitarianism and NGO management of camps
- Intersection of displacement, refugees, and the policies of refugee camp architecture
- Ongoing “temporary” status of refugees despite “permanent” dwellings
- Property-owning rights for Syrians, Armenians, Palestinians, and Lebanese after displacement
- Emergence of new economies

Panel 2) Collective Memory and Identity

New forms of movement, and impetuses for these movements, create new spaces of encounter amongst peoples with diverse collective histories. Reflecting upon these emerging spaces of collectivity, this panel seeks to critically explore:

- Memories of porous borders and experiences of hardened borders
- Memories of colonialism
- Socialization of historical identities into the broader social context, or living together amongst emergent crises
- Concept of “Refugee-ness” in the Lebanese and Jordanian contexts
- “Culture wars” and conflicts between religious/secular groups that obscure and enable social alliances
- Transformation of neighborhoods with arrival and settlement of minority populations and internal migrants

Panel 3) On Religion and Refugees: Conversations from the Field

The largely neglected question of religion and its intersection with displacement and migration in Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq will be discussed in this panel. Academics, NGOs, and civil society members will offer their insights on the different modes of interaction and reception of the migration crisis in these aforementioned locales, along with the following topics:

- Contemporary religious traditions and perspectives on hospitality
- Gender, religion, and migration
- Secular organizations, international agencies, and faith-based organizations responses to gender mainstreaming efforts

- Facilitation and role of faith leaders to support displaced persons and aid refugees' access to services
- Diverse responses of aid organizations tending to different religious communities
- Incorporation of religious practice into design and refugee housing to accommodate a multitude of faith practices

Panel 4) Conceptualizing and Comparing Pluralism in Emergencies

In this panel, we enter into a fundamental discussion about how “pluralism” is variously conceived across the different locations. This panel provides the opportunity for explicit comparative work on the emerging contexts wherein pluralism becomes a politically exigent discourse. The fact that pluralism has become conceptually important across these different times and spaces makes clear that we must better understand where and when the lens of pluralism presents itself as useful to those in power, and to those in states of precarity. Thus comparison allows for reflection on difference, to better understand the various types of pluralism that emerge, and the various contexts in which pluralism becomes emergent. This panel seeks to engage with:

- Grassroots organization and providing space for the promotion of political rights
- Emergence of new communities through migration
- Production of democratic practices and institutions that come into formation
- Merging of various forms of identity politics – nationalist, religious, ethno-linguistic – into religious nationalistic politics
- Evolving relations of refugees and potential refugees and networks formed during the migration process
- Emergence of refugee/migrant hubs and their determining factors
- Making space accessible, useful, and meaningful given the diversification and informalities in migrant hubs

GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

Abstracts should be written in English and no longer than 250 words. They should be titled and have all requisite bibliographic citations. Along with the abstract, please include a detailed, recent Curriculum Vitae/resume (no longer than 3 pages).

Abstracts will be evaluated according to the following categories: originality of theme, clear data and methodology, clarity and relevance of the proposal to the conference theme, and contribution to the conference theme.

To submit your abstract, please send them to ircpl.pluralisms@gmail.com with the **subject line of the email titled “Religion and Pluralisms Amman,”** by **July 16, 2017**.

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