

International Conference: Churches and Religion in the Cold War: International - Local

Date: September 26-27, 2024

Place: Salzburg

The interactions between politics and religion during the Cold War have profound historical, social and theological implications. This era, dynamic on many levels, not only influenced geopolitical relations, but also shaped the development of churches and other religiously determined entities on a global, but above all on a local level.

Protagonists, entities and networks in the field of religious actors in the second half of the last century in the context of the Cold War are considered in particular as those who found their fields of activity in the social, cultural and ethical issues of the time.

They were initially characterized by an analytical approach to the relevant social contexts and thus their own perspective on the signs of the times, from which they attempted to develop solutions to overcome ideological boundaries, a possible improvement in the living conditions of believers and, in any case, the protection of human existence. In this context, for example, the "preservation of creation" was recognizable as a theological perspective and task and was repeatedly a mainstay in the field of action of religious actors. In church or non-hierarchical religious spaces, both in the international diplomatic arena and in the local sphere of activity, everyday life on the ground, it was evident that in the "half-century Cold War" religious entities and networks were ostensibly prepared to take on a more neutral, politically independent and moderating role. They were ostensibly able to act more independently than state, politically integrated actors of the time and were thus, for example, important partners in the development and course of the CSCE process.

ReCoNet ("Religion and Cold War Network"), a network of various international universities (Bielefeld, Fribourg, Helsinki, Lund, Cagliari, Salzburg, Villanova), is dedicated to this broad field of research topics. We invite researchers to the third follow-up conference in Salzburg to submit their contributions to this international conference on "Religion in the Cold War" in order to evoke and deepen a comprehensive understanding of this topic, with its interactions between churches/religions and society, politics and diplomacy.

The conference aims to encompass all the denominations and to highlight the different actors at international and local levels. Contributions are invited on, but not limited to, the following topics and questions:

International Perspectives: examining the role of religious actors in global-political, social and cultural contexts during the Cold War.

- How did religious actors respond to political dynamics of the time, and how did religious entities contribute to shaping international relations?
- Which diplomatic, church-political and theological problem-solving strategies were developed and implemented in order to minimize the threats of systemic conflicts?
- Which strategies and concepts of action, but also which gaps were recognizable in the Cold War era?

Multidenominational dimensions: Analyzing cooperation, conflict, and avoidance between different Christian denominations as well as in interfaith relations during the Cold War.

- Which ecumenical/interfaith initiatives shaped the political landscape?
- Did ecumenical/interfaith initiatives contribute to the (church) political goals of the actors?
- Which problems, conflicts and avoidance strategies in dealing with partners of other religions were recognizably relevant?

Cold War “from below”: Examination of the effects of the Cold War on local churches and local religious entities.

- Which actors were recognizable locally?
- Which reception options, strategies and concepts were chosen to gain access to the everyday relevance of the Cold War locally?
- What initiatives emerged from the reception of the Cold War in local environments?

Women as actors: Looking at their role in a gender perspective.

- How did women contribute to influencing political events from the religious space?
- Did they do so in a different way to male co-religionists?

We encourage proposals with an interdisciplinary approach. The conference aims to provide a platform for the presentation of research findings, the exchange of ideas and the creation of new knowledge.

In addition, students in Master's programs are invited to apply with possible research topics / Master's thesis topics. If enough submissions are received, interested students will present their projects with senior researchers on a dedicated panel.

The intention is to publish the contributions as well as to provide travel grants.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: May 17, 2024

Notification of acceptance: May 30, 2024

Please send your abstracts (max. 1800 characters) to:

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