

# **Religion and Environment in Europe**

*How are values, worldviews, and spiritualities interconnected with environmental practices and the images of nature of citizens in Europe?*

**Scientific report  
from the exploratory workshop of the European Science  
Foundation convened by Sigurd Bergmann**

## **Executive summary**

The workshop took place at the Institute for Church and Environment within the Theological Philosophical College of the Benediktbeuern Monastery, Germany, commencing on the afternoon the 3rd of June and ending at noon on the 5th of June 2005.

As a consequence of the natural, historical and architectural qualities of our venue, the surroundings themselves created an appropriate atmosphere for the meeting, symbolising the concepts and themes under discussion. The monastery, church and associated buildings, which represent one of the finest late baroque ensembles in Europe, is located in Germany's largest wetland nature reserve. Set against a magnificent Alpine backdrop and geographically situated on the borders between Germany, Austria and Italy, the environment is suggestive of both the plurality of cultural perspectives represented by the international academic collaboration, and the reality of the embeddedness of our cultures within the natural environment. Historically, the Benedictine mission and Scottish monks at this place took Christianity to central Europe in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. A guided walk through the buildings and a short excursion to the wetland reserve orientated and inspired the discussions of the workshop. Considered in a 'rear-view mirror', it is a noteworthy and striking fact, that the venue and its surroundings themselves two months later in August 2005 were heavily affected by the extreme overflows, which certainly are local and regional phenomena of the ongoing global climate change.

24 scholars from 10 countries attended and participated in the workshop. Apologies were received from six invited colleagues who were unable to attend for health, family or travel reasons. This necessitated some adjustments to the workshop programme.

Preparations for the workshop had been made by a group of seven scholars from Norway, England, Finland, Sweden, Greece and Switzerland during a two day meeting at *La Cenacle* in Geneva 24-26 September 2004. Subsequently, all attendees were involved in the (electronic mail) planning process. Scholars

undertook to contribute either as a keynote speaker, designated commentator or moderator, or by presenting a paper. Some scholars agreed to act in several capacities at different workshop sessions.

As a consequence of their involvement in a collaboration initiated by the undersigned's 2003 EU-application process, the scholars were very well informed about each other's activities and perspectives. The workshop provided a valuable opportunity to meet face-to-face for the first time.

In 2004, the preparatory committee announced three themes for keynote sessions and six themes for paper sessions. All participating scholars were invited to register paper presentations, while keynote speakers on the themes of *Globalization and Sustainability*, *Environmental Justice* and *Space and Aesthetics* were chosen by the preparatory committee. Themes for the paper sessions were *Religious Identities in Context*, *Politics and Ecological Citizenship*, *Earth and Technology*, *Revisiting Theology*, *Dynamics of Ethics*, and *Gender and Nature*. Due to late cancellation by some contributors – and in light of the academic interests of those scholars attending the workshop – some alterations were made to the programme, with the themes of *Religious Identities in Context* and *Worldview*, *Ethics and Theology* being presented and discussed in six paper workshops on Friday and Saturday, while the theme of *Gender and Nature* was moved to the keynote session on “Environmental Justice”.

Further sessions on Saturday afternoon and evening offered regionally oriented perspectives. Two sessions on Sunday discussed the findings of the foregoing workshops and the future of the academic cooperation. Information on the ESF and its activities was given by the undersigned.

All together, five keynote addresses were prepared and four of them were delivered in person. Eight of nine written papers, which had been distributed before the meeting, were discussed. Three regional overviews were given with specific reference to the East European/Hungarian and the North American context, while the undersigned presented an overview of African perspectives, specifically produced for our meeting by Prof. Ernst Conradie of the University of Capetown, and some comments from the North East Asian context.

The meeting commenced with Markus Vogt's short introduction to the history of the venue, including a short piece of Carl Orff's famous “*Carmina Burana*”, whose text has its origin in Benediktbeuern region and Monastery. Vogt also informed about the profile and activities of the Institute of Church and Environment at Benediktbeuern, which hosted the workshop. In an excitingly contextualised way, he used the experiences of this institute as a methodic frame to introduce the workshop's theme.

The undersigned presented a short description of the development of the collaborative project and its foregoing processes, including the organisation of a network on contextual theology in the Nordic countries (whose story was told by Tage Kurtén) and the flourishing of so-called “green theology” in Great Britain in the 90s.

After the final lunch of the workshop, a meeting took place with Bron Taylor and publisher Janet Joyce, where remaining participants discussed the further development of the existing journal “Ecotheology – The Journal of Religion, Nature and the Environment” and the topics and structures of the international society that will be founded in November.

In the following, the contents of the workshop’s discussion will be presented; a final section will offer a summary of the discussions and decisions made at the closing session. Finally, an assessment of the event in general will be given, reflecting its significance for future activities.

### **Scientific content**

In his introduction to the workshop, Sigurd Bergmann depicted the prehistory of this workshop. Similar developments of normative and socially relevant academic research emerged in the Nordic countries and Great Britain in the 90s; while Tage Kurtén presented the Nordic story; Sigurd Bergmann gave a brief overview of the British story. In 1997 a network on Nature, Religion and Worldview was developed in the Nordic countries in alliance with scholars from North West Russia and with the support of the Nordic Council’s Research Academy (NorFa). An extensive application on “Environment, Citizenship and Religion” was worked out 2003, which built upon the Nordic process and constituted the European cooperation. 74 scholars from 24 universities in 11 countries in Europe and Russia were involved in the 250 page long application for a differentiated five year programme. Unfortunately, the EU commission for the 6th frame programme did not regard this project as being in full accordance with its own objectives. Despite the failure of this particular application, the scholarly cooperation had been established and discussions had been initiated on different levels amongst the scholars. This workshop made it possible for some of these committed scholars to meet in person for the first time. Furthermore, encouragement to deepen this process was found in the intensified processes in the USA – which will flow out into the organisation of an international society with continental branches – and the transformation of the ten year old academic journal “Ecotheology”, as well as the mobilising processes of the European Churches Environmental Network (ECEN) and the Earth Keeping Churches’ Network in Africa and its academic attendance.

Furthermore, based upon his own personal experiences in the outlined thematic field, Bergmann was able to formulate three distinct normative conclusions.

a) The study of religion, nature and culture is not a marginal but a central field for humanities and environmental science for several reasons such as

- the significance of the concept of “nature/physics” in the European cultural history and Western identity through the ages,
- the interreligious and ecumenical dimension of its potential in a pluralistic context,
- the challenge to integrate descriptive and normative research on problems of highly socially relevant topics in Europe and other continents,
- the need for a transformed inter- and transdisciplinary vision of science where problems concerning the interactions between human beings and our natural and built environments should be given higher priority both in the EU and the future European Research Council.

b) The field of the study of interactions of religion, nature and culture does not only allow Religious Studies and Theology to contribute to interdisciplinary and socially formulated investigations, but it changes the identity of the established discipline itself, and thereby it changes the self-understanding of humanities in a common field of academic reflection, which is not longer divided into empirical and hermeneutical cultures. The field of religion, nature and culture could be regarded as a microcosm of science in general, where different phenomena can be studied in physical, cultural historical and subjective dimensions.

c) A strong need for the cooperation of scholars on a European level can be diagnosed, which would promote the development of the urgent thematic field. Such a European cooperation would contribute to the international mobilisation process; it would deliver constructive insights to the decision making bodies in European and national areas as well as to religious denominations and social movements. Especially, the understanding of sustainability and environmental and intra- and intergenerational justice would contribute to a highly explosive discourse. Justice cannot any longer be simply dealt with as a pure process of distributing goods but needs to be reconsidered in a wider sense with regard to the complexity of problems of “our common future”.

Two questions were at the core of Nina Witoszek’s keynote on “Globalization and Sustainability: a Humanist Agenda”. a) Is the vision of sustainable development not just ethically justified and economically viable – but captivating enough to clean poisoned wells and restore the structures of the mind? b) Is the current religious revival in non-European countries a possible ally – or adversary – of positive globalization?

Her argument was that among the greatest obstacles to the endeavour of sustainable development is human attraction to stories of excess, profusion, and decadence,- a sense of ending or shock. People are compelled by the myths of transgression, irreverence, and the hedonist greatness and glory in the same way they are not drawn to the penitential story of renewable resources and equal distribution. Economic reason and democratic *Geist* have either devalued or suppressed human desire for transcendence or muddled values. Those who attempt to renew the environmental narrative through the romance with Eastern spirituality or via the alterglobalist protest are often either unwitting allies of neoliberal order or lack any coherent plan or vision of the future. The much-flaunted “postmodern” mindset is of little use, since it has celebrated the lack of assurance and conviction, and thus launched a quixotic project of founding the social and cultural values on the lack of foundations themselves. Witoszek’s suggestion is that the search for the solid ground should start, not just from reclaiming the commons but, first of all, from reclaiming the humanist project, which has been lost by Western civilization.

The discussion of this contribution mainly focused on the challenge how to transform humanist universalistic intentions beyond the gaps of totalitarianism, the challenge to constructively evaluate initiatives like the “Global Earth Charta” in the light of Witoszek’s cultural analysis, and to deeper mine the significance of the diversity and multitude of social, green and religious movements with regard to the demand of human rights and ecological justice.

Hans Diefenbacher’s keynote on *ecological justice* contributed from the standpoint of a scholarly economist, especially from the perspective of ecological economics. It departed from two central questions in the ongoing discussion of the future of economical theory: How to apply justice in a model of economy? How to connect economy and ecology?

Diefenbacher made evident the well-known lack of including human and social values in models of the classical neoliberal economy and its failure to reflect the natural dimension. A lot of examples and empirical evidence support such an analysis, such as Amarta Sen’s reflections about development, economy and values among the poor and rich, energy house holding, species extinction, or as global warming and its consequences, which become more visible at many places. “Since around 1975, economists know that time is running out, which makes it necessary to give priority to the discussion of how to achieve ecological justice”, Diefenbacher stated. While the contemporary neoliberal economy produces costs, which are not paid, increasing problems of injustice are produced constantly. If we do not want to let coming generations “pay”, we need to find “intelligent limits” to our economic system. According to Diefenbacher, three challenges are at the core of such a reorientation of economists. How could we household with

renewable energy resources? How could we re-distribute the costs of non-renewable technical developments to renewable ones? What could the concept of *environmental space* contribute to the transformation of economic theory? Summarising his excellently transdisciplinary contribution, Diefenbacher, proposed to develop the concept of ecological justice as a guiding principle for global governance, through which we could perceive and integrate the limits of economy in a constructive manner. In such a perspective, economy itself becomes fully dependant on other academic disciplines, due to its inability to produce a prognosis for more than 5 years and due to its inability to integrate human ethics and lifeviews as well as non-human surroundings. Self-critical insights about the limits of economy itself and its transdisciplinary cooperation, in this way, could become important tools for a life enhancing economy to come.

In a keynote, which could not be given in absence, but was shared in a handout summary, Celia Deane-Drummond, argued that there are theological reasons for being concerned about the economy and justice and resisting the dominance of the global market economy, based on its idolisation by Western cultures, and on the preference for the poor and excluded embedded in the teaching of Jesus. The central Christian belief in the incarnation of Christ demonstrates God's affirmation of material existence. Deane-Drummond also considers helpful the different aspects of justice in the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, for environmental discourse tends to focus narrowly on distributive justice. It is also worth noting that while agents of justice can be restricted to the present human community, this does not apply to recipients of justice. She challenged the idea that cost benefit analyses provide a valid means of assessing environmental decision-making. Deane-Drummond concluded that whilst prudence or practical wisdom includes careful deliberation, it also requires due critical consideration of the values embedded in both the market economy and attitudes to the environment. In addition she raised the issue of how new models of the economy might be developed, although she suggested that communitarian approaches need to be supplemented by national and international considerations of the global market. She then considered the environmental justice movement as a case study in offering a more intermediate practical strategy towards more idealistic ecologically sustainable economies. While the most promising writer in the liberal tradition is John Rawls, his approach throws up a number of difficulties that need to be addressed, not least its failure to address global economics. Interim reformist measures are only likely to be satisfying in the short term for emergency purposes, for they leave the basic model of the economy intact. Deane-Drummond finally argued that the movement towards concern for future generations and non-human species is more likely to be politically achieved in a democratic society through constitutional changes.

Rachel Muers argued that there is a connection between the gendering of thought about nature and the gendering of ethical discourse in relation to

future generations. Ecofeminist thinkers have successfully identified and challenged the “anthropocentric” tendency to define nature as inert, passive, voiceless, an object of exploitation, and so forth, and have shown that this is linked with gender binaries. It has also been shown that thinking about nature in maternal terms need not reinforce all these binaries. Talk about “mother nature”, especially when supported by important recent feminist philosophical work on maternal subjectivity, can enable the reciprocal but asymmetrical relation and the permeable boundaries between humanity and the non-human, and between “nature” and “culture”, to be thought. Muers suggests that this set of philosophical moves can also be valuable in thinking about the relationship of a present society to future generations, such that future generations are not imagined as over against “us” or as objects for “our” manipulation, any more than they are imagined as over against the natural environment within which they exist. To this end, she suggests that theology could usefully reappropriate and rethink some traditional images of the social body as “maternal”.

Sigurd Bergmann in the final keynote address, mapped out a new agenda for the study of the spatial dimension of interactions between religion, nature and culture. In spite of many constructive developments, the distinctions between bodies, surrounding, place and space, and the integration of the four still falls short of a satisfying exploration. In an ecological key, the challenge is to reflect the human bodily-being and his/her being-in-between-environment-and-space as an indissoluble process. Different concepts of space and place were presented in order to inspire a deeper trialectic mining of space, place, surroundings and environments in Religious Studies, Theology and Environmental Science. Within the framework of his programmatic concept of “Aesth/Ethics”, Bergmann discussed the approaches of philosophers Gernot Böhme, Otto Bollnow and Theodor W. Adorno and anthropologist Tim Ingold and their theories about atmosphere, aesthetic justice of the heterogeneous and building, dwelling and housing in order to create fruitful arenas for the study the spatial embeddedness of religion. ‘Aesthetic justice’ means in such a sense that the *perception* of my human and non-human neighbor’s suffering is at the core sooner than the consistency of a moral theory with its applied practice. In a normative ecotheology, Bergmann emphasised especially the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a systematic tool to interpret Christian believer’s experiences in and with creation. Finally, three central questions of the workshop's theme were reformulated in the light of his reflection: What is religion? What is environment? What is Europe?

The paper workshops covered a broad range of problem formulations, materials, methodical approaches and conclusions. In overview, they offered strong evidence for the multiplicity, divergence and interrelatedness of scholarly approaches to the theme of the workshop. The distributed papers were introduced by authors, commented upon by designated commentators and discussed by the participants.

On Friday evening, Anne-Christine Hornborg offered a critical and constructive discussion of Deep Ecology's biocentric concept, which is more influential in the USA than in Europe, in spite of its creator, Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss. The discussion deepened the normative ambiguity of the cultural practices of Deep Ecology, which at present is distributed throughout the world through intellectual rituals. Another interesting investigation for the future would be the ongoing interaction of applied philosophy with practices and ideologies of bioregionalism, life style in agriculture movements and healing restoration practices. The starting point of Kristina Tiedje's paper was her extended field study of Mexican Catholicism in Indigenous and national contexts. Obviously we can follow the emergence of a "Political ecology of the sacred" in this field, which produces exciting challenges to environmentalism as well as to indigenous mobilisation. The concepts of "spiritual ecology" and "the sacred" were further deepened in the discussion as well as the need for a deeper understanding of the dimension of space and place for the understanding of indigenous political ecology and spirituality.

In a parallel session on Friday, Heinrich Bedford Stroh discussed the significance of environmentalism in public theology. With the experiences of religious denominations as his point of departure, for example the Christian churches in Europe, he entered the environmental discourse with normative proposals. This session discussed the profiles and validity of different ethical approaches to human interaction with the environment. Leif Stenberg offered a reflection on "the Islamization of knowledge" and modern science. The discourse on Islam, knowledge and modern science, and the accompanying idea of specific Islamic universities, pose important questions. Is it part of a more comprehensive project aiming towards an Islamization of private and public spheres? Can self-proclaimed experts on Islam, lacking formal religious education, uphold religious authority? Will contemporary Muslims listen and give legitimacy to their interpretations, for example, the demand to prohibit certain forms of science? Obviously, the discourse has both social and theological implications. For example, the appearance of new educational institutions in Muslim societies and the claim to represent the correct interpretation of Islam are part of changing social as well as religious patterns. It seems obvious that a study of European Islam and a mining of the concepts of nature and environment in the context of science and religion are crucial for a deeper understanding of intra- and interreligious processes at present.

In two parallel paper sessions on Saturday, issues of theology, ethics and worldview/ideology interpretation were discussed. Marios P. Begzos and Konstantinos Delikostantis presented a survey of theological approaches to the environmental discourse in the contemporary Eastern orthodox sphere, which without doubt represents one of the most dynamic and unfortunately often neglected phenomena of religion and politics in Europe. The discussion

of this paper substantiated the need for deeper reflection on understandings of “religion” in Christian theology, of tradition and historical vital heritage, and of values and their origin and interaction with Christian lifeviews and practices. Furthermore, the significance of eucharistic theology and ascetic practices and belief systems were discussed as well as the dynamic interaction of environmental movements and religious communities. Obviously, the highlighting of orthodox events offers a rich potential for the communication about an ecumenical exchange on the environmental ethos amongst the churches of different confessions, but it also highlights the challenge of communicating traditional wisdom in a pluralist society in a partially modern, partially antimodern and partially postmodern Europe, especially when institutions are struggling with internal systemic dysfunctions both in Eastern and Western Christian churches.

Anders Melin discussed the influence and reception of environmentalist philosophy in Japanese Buddhist and European Christian contexts. Despite the obvious differences between Buddhism and Christianity, a fruitful dialogue between them has been developed during recent decades. The session discussed how the Buddhist-Christian dialogue could contribute to the elaboration of environmental ethics within the two religions. Two areas were the subject of specific focus: the understanding of the human-nature relationship and the relationship between religion, environmental ethics and environmental politics. In the ensuing discussion, the need of an integration of the analysis of ideologies and cognitive faith and moral systems with the investigation of its practices was noted, indicating the need for a wider understanding of Christianity, which in itself combines elements from East and West. Obviously, the mobilisation of ethics in general and of environmental applied ethics in particular represents an explosive field for further studies of religion in a global key.

In a parallel session, Maria Jansdotter and Yvonne Terlinden discussed images of nature and their significance for life views/worldviews, and moralities. Jansdotter based her contribution upon her extended empirical study of a Scandinavian border region of Norway and Sweden, while Terlinden analysed the discourse of environmental ethics with special reference to North American and Finnish philosophers. Terlinden delineated the concept of external moral reasoning and demonstrated how environmental ethicists express the concept. Thereafter, she investigated how questions within the field of environmental ethics can be understood via alternative moral reasoning. Jansdotter presented selected results from the Swedish-Norwegian multiperspective study *Development and change in Inner Scandinavia*, which was funded as a project within the frames of EU’s Interreg IIIA. Worldviews, values and understandings of nature, in general and in context, were analysed and discussed on the basis of empirical material comprising interviews with local inhabitants. The study clearly shows how religious worldviews are integrated in broader worldviews and practices and

how they both affect and are affected by sociocultural contexts, which also can be identified and analysed in a local and regional perspective.

One further paper was distributed on the urgent theme of Climate change and ethics, but due to the author's cancellation it could only be circulated in a written version. One of Michael Northcott's driving forces in this reflection, highly relevant for the theme of the workshop globally as well as locally, is the insight that *how* the story of climate change is narrated crucially determines the kinds of moral responses that are made to it. In the end this ultimate risk to planet earth poses the question of what kind of people we aspire to be, and what the vision of the good society is to which our lives and practices commit us.

It is important to mention in this context, that a rapidly increasing number of religious institutions, mainly in Christianity in Europe and also in other regions has publicly offered clear, analytic and constructive documents in the last years about the implications of global climate change processes. Several participants of the workshop have contributed with important elements to the reflection behind these statements and their social contexts, which represent an extensive and highly interesting text material for an academic analysis.

András Máté-Tóth presented an empirical overview of the state of environmental values and religious incl. new religious beliefs in Hungary. He interpreted his findings from the perspectives of theology and a committed sociology of religion, formulating several hypotheses to account for Eastern European approaches to late modern pluralism of the West. An analysis of the problems faced by Christian churches in these contexts completed his enlightening picture. An intense discussion followed, where especially the need for a long-term cooperation of sociologists on issues of religion, nature, church and politics was unfolded.

Sigurd Bergmann presented a hand out summarising a study by Ernst Conradie of the University of Capetown, in which he had worked out a typology of approaches, characterising the activities and connected ideologies of religion-environment processes in Africa. Bergmann also presented his impressions from a recent international conference on North East Asia security affairs in Korea, where environmental movements are flourishing, making explosive ecological demands to the political and economical development in Asia. Even where religious movements remain as yet not fully interconnected these seem to be gaining a growing quantitative role in the discourse on development and environment. From China in particular we would expect exciting contributions to emerge.

An extensive survey of the history and present state of the theme of religion and environment in social movements in society and in the academy in the USA was given by Bron Taylor, editor of the recently published

“Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature” (2 volumes, New York 2005). Taylor’s presentation of the history of environmental consciousness and its manifold interactions with religious worldviews, institutions and practices contributed substantially to a deepening understanding of religious and political processes in North America. His differentiated and informative offering issued in a committed discussion of a common agenda of research for the future where some challenges were explicated, such as the integration of sociological and cultural analysis and theology, the formulation of a common research problem agenda and the mining of the interdisciplinary potential of the study of religion, nature and culture. A consequence of Taylor’s contribution and participation is the involvement of several scholars from this workshop in the construction of an international network, in the form of a Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture. Two of the European participants will attend the first planning meeting in Florida in September and several others will join the founding meeting in Philadelphia in November. The question of how scholars in Europe will respond structurally to this process was discussed on the final day.

### **Assessment of the results and the future of the field**

The final plenary sessions on Sunday evaluated the discussions of the workshop and devoted energy to the construction of a deeper cooperation for the future. Decisions were made, and in the following some points from the protocol of this discussion are summarised.

- The participants of the workshop agreed on to establish a long-term cooperation on the study of religion and environment.
- The following areas of research were regarded as important for the future:
  - Ecological spiritualities and their roots and contexts,
  - ecospirituality in Islam,
  - sociological quantitative studies on attitudes, values etc, incl. empirical research on the environmental behaviour of religious believers,
  - the relationship between ecological theology and political processes, politics and green religion,
  - contextual, descriptive and normative environmental ethics,
  - concepts of nature and creation in different Christian traditions and Ecumenism,
  - the relevance of cultural studies for systematic theology,
  - images and practices of nature in interreligious and intercultural encounters,
  - ecotheology and theology of creation,
  - indigenous cosmologies and traditions and indigenous environmentalism,
  - religious environmental movements,
  - ‘paganism’,
  - Spaces of nature such as habitats, places, urbanisation, settlements etc.,

- environmental aesthetics,
- environment and religion in Literature, myths, narratives and stories,
- ecological anthropology,
- contributions to interdisciplinary environmental research and its interaction with Religious Studies/Theology,
- 'nature' in European connections to Africa, Asia and Latin America,
- the integrated study of sociocultural practices *and* ideologies.

- The network should cooperate with existing and emerging academic and ecumenical networks in other parts of the world, such as the Harvard group in the USA, the ERN-continuation in the USA, the Earth Keeping Churches' Network in Africa, the ECEN network in Europe.

- The participants agreed that it is reasonable to have a conference in Europe every second year.

- An international Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture will be established at a meeting (18-19 November) before the annual conference of the American Academy of Religion in November 2005. The European network could become a part of that.

- It was proposed to arrange one conference in Europe and one in the US every second year.

- The participants agreed that the 1st European conference will take place in Volos, Greece, in September (or November) 2006. This conference, to which colleagues from the international research community will be invited, is to be conducted in collaboration with the universities in Athens and Thessaloniki. A suggested theme for this conference was "Sacred Space".

- It was decided that an executive committee should be established and that those who met in Geneva 2004 to initiate the planning process behind this workshop should be included. Sigurd Bergmann (chair), Celia Deane-Drummond, Maria Jansdotter, Marina Kolovopoulou, David Kronlid, Yvonne Terlinden, Kristina Tiedje and Markus Vogt were elected as members of the group. The committee was given specific assignments: to construct a newsletter and a website, to prepare the conference in Volos in 2006, to decide whether a book shall be published with articles from the workshop, to discuss the conditions for the establishment of a European Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, to discuss whether membership in the Society should include a subscription of the Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture, to propose representatives from other parts of the world, to decide how the management of members should be arranged, and to establish an administrative unit in Europe (probably in Trondheim in the initial phase). Sigurd Bergmann also indicated that a volume of Ecotheology (No 3, 2006), of

which he is to be guest editor, would publish papers presented at the conference.

- The ESF has a crucial role in coordinating research, but it seems to have limited means for doing so. Typically the ESF can only finance workshops, preferably in cooperation with universities. It can also give limited resources to research projects. Sigurd Bergmann suggested setting up a consortium of some universities who could share parts of a long-term financing of the network in cooperation with other national or transnational funding bodies.
- The European Research Council will be established in 2007, and it will be administratively located in the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme of the EU. However, it is still unclear how it will promote the humanities and social sciences. The funding of genuinely transdisciplinary projects in particular seems to be diffuse at present. The workshop scholars agreed on the need to present their experiences and visions for the evolution of better-integrated funding of socially relevant research programmes where scholars from humanities and social sciences can contribute on a more just and equal level than hitherto. Since the network's first EU-application in 2003, 'religion' has become one of the topics in the call for proposals from EU, for example in the 'Citizens Governance' area. However, the opportunity to apply for projects or programmes in the explosive new research field of this workshop seems to be limited to the ideology of citizenship and governance studies in the EU. The strict and categorical separation of environmental science funding on the one side and projects open for humanities on the other side seems to be a destructive barrier for the future of an environmental science, where sustainability is regarded as a human and social problem as well as a problem for technology and science. In the sense of this workshop environmental problems caused by science and technology can scarcely be solved by even more science and technology. Human and socially constructed problems demand human and sociocultural solutions. Might it be more appropriate to apply to both the ESF and the new Research Council in the future? Other possible and open private and national sources for research funding were discussed.

Finally the assessment of the workshop event can be concluded to be in harmony with the undersigned's application as well as its evaluation through the ESF, which highlighted the vitality and significance of this new research field, its significance for the understanding of Europe's "unity in diversity" and the field's importance for "the future of Europe (and the world)". The workshop mined a multiplicity of local and regional field contexts in Europe, the complexity of problem formulations founded upon the notions of nature and environment, the constructive plurality of methods and theories and the sociocultural and political relevance of the contributions. All these combined to offer strong evidence for the need of a long-term and deepening collaboration, requiring the development of a network of scholars as well as

stable research groups. The broad range of approaches clearly substantiated that problems in the interaction of religion and environment are at stake in religious institutions and processes and traditions as well as in so called secularised, institutionally and traditionally unbound social and cultural processes. The emergence of green and ecojustice social movements, environmental politics, the ongoing evolution of economic modes of production and consumption and the ambiguity within discourses on sustainability ethics show that environmentalism is comparable to a child that only recently learned to walk. Ecospiritualities of different kinds seem to be the invisible backbone of the growth of this child. The complexity and powerful energy to inspire and transform social practices represented by these emerging spiritualities are expounded in the two volumes of the *Encyclopedia on Religion and Nature*, to which several of the workshop's scholars contributed. The on-going challenge for our collaboration is to create a secure framework for academic cooperation to channel this powerful energy, to promote unity within the diversity of European contexts and to explore the local and global implications of a new emerging earth religion. The commitment of the participating scholars to such a vision and their academic willingness to manifest it, in fact, surprised even the convenor.

## Final programme

### ESF SCH EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP

# Religion and Environment in Europe: How are values, worldviews, and spiritualities interconnected with environmental practices and the images of nature of citizens in Europe?

Institute for Church and Environment, Theological Philosophical College  
Benediktbeuern, Germany, 3-5 June 2005

Convened by:

**Sigurd Bergmann**

Department of Archaeology and Religious Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

### Friday 3 June 2005

14.00 Welcome

(Markus Vogt)

14.30 **Introduction**

Presentation (Sigurd Bergmann)

*The Process*

- The story of the workshop (Sigurd Bergmann)
- Experiences from Britain
- Experiences from Scandinavia (Tage Kurtén)

15.45 Coffee/Tea Break

16.15 **Plenary 1 – Globalization and sustainability**

Chairperson: Markus Vogt

Keynote: Nina Witoszek-Fitzpatrick

*Globalization and Sustainability: A Humanist Agenda*

*Discussion*

18.00 Dinner

19.00 Guided excursion to the Church and Monastery

20.00 - 21.30 **Two Parallel Workshop (1)**

**Religious Identities in Contexts**

Chairperson: Tage Kurtén

Presentation: Anne-Christine Hornborg,

*Deep ecology and new practices – radical solutions for the environment?*

Commentator: Bron Taylor

Chairperson: Maria Jansdotter

Presentation: Kristina Tiedje,

*Mexican Catholicism, Indian Theology, and the Political Ecology of the Sacred*

Commentator: Arnd Heling

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Chairperson: Anders Melin

Presentation: Heinrich Bedford-Strohm

*Public Theology and Ecology*

Commentator: Peter Scott

Chairperson: Heinrich Bedford-Strohm

Presentation: Leif Stenberg

*The Islamization of knowledge and modern science*

Commentator: Hans Diefenbacher

## Saturday 4 June 2005

### 09.00 **Plenary 2 – Environmental Justice**

Chairperson: [Nina Witoszek-Fitzpatrick](#)

Keynote 1: [Hans Diefenbacher](#),

*'Environmental Justice –*

*Some Starting Points for Discussion From a Perspective of Ecological Economics'*

Keynote 2: [Rachel Muers](#),

*Gendering nature and future generations: “maternal thinking”?*

### 10.30 **Two Parallel Workshops (2)**

(incl. coffee/tea break)

#### **Worldview, Ethics & Theology**

Chairperson: [Tage Kurtén](#)

Presentation: [Marios P. Begzos](#)/

[Konstantinos Delikostantis](#),

*Theology and Ecology in Orthodox Christianity*

Commentator: [Markus Vogt](#)

Chairperson: [Bron Taylor](#)

Presentation: [Anders Melin](#),

*Environmental Philosophy in*

*Christianity and Buddhism*

Commentator: [Marios P. Begzos](#)

Chairperson: [Leif Stenberg](#)

Presentation: [Maria Jansdotter](#),

*Images of nature in common worldviews*

*and values from Inner Scandinavia*

Commentator: [András Máté-Tóth](#)

Chairperson: [Leif Stenberg](#)

Presentation: [Yvonne Terlinden](#)

*External or Internal Moral Perceptions*

*and Environmental Ethics*

Commentator: [Peter Scott](#)

13.00 Lunch

### 15.00 **Plenary 3 – Space and Aesthetics**

Chairperson: [Marios P. Begzos](#)

Keynote: [Sigurd Bergmann](#),

*Symphony and Symponia – Towards an Eco-Theological Aesth/Ethics of Space*

*Discussion*

### 16.45 **Plenary 4a – Perspectives from Hungary, [András Máté-Tóth](#)**

18.00 Dinner

### 19.00 **Plenary 4b – Perspectives from North America, (Africa and Asia)**

[Bron Taylor](#)

(and [Ernst Conradie](#), [Capetown](#), through [S.Bergmann](#) )

20.00 Excursion walk to the swamp

## Sunday 5 June 2005

### 09.00 **Plenary 5 – Reports from the parallel workshops and summarizing discussion**

Chairperson: [Markus Vogt](#)

Secretary: [Anders Melin](#)

10.00 **Informations from the European Science Foundation, [Sigurd Bergmann](#)**

Coffee/Tea break

### 10.30 **Plenary 6 – Evaluation and Future Strategy**

Chairperson: [Carl Reinhold Bräkenhielm](#)

Secretary: **Anders Melin**

12.00 Lunch  
*Departure*

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## **Statistical information**

The 24 scholars, who attended the workshop, represented ten different countries (eight in Europe); one participant came from the USA, and one of the Nordic PhD scholars is an exchange scholar from Ghana. Geographically, ten scholars came from Nordic countries, two from the UK, five from Germany, one from France, two from Hungary, and three from Greece. A guest, publisher Janet Joyce, London, joined the workshop for a meeting on Sunday.

Seventeen of the scholars were male, and seven female.

The age brackets of the participants were divided in three ranges: one scholar 35-40, fourteen scholars 40-50, and nine scholars 50-60.

*Sigurd Bergmann, Trondheim the 30th of August 2005*