


RELIGION AND THE GOOD OF THE CITY

REPORT 2: THE STATE OF RESEARCH AND INFLUENCE

AUGUST 2017

CARDUS

CARDUS
SOCIAL CITIES

ABOUT THE SOCIAL CITIES RESEARCH PROGRAM

What makes a great city and how do we get there?

Our Social Cities program explores this complex question through integrating work in a variety of social infrastructure project areas.

Cities that are enriching for all citizens require that all of the resources within and around them interact as effectively as possible. This includes social and institutional resources that range from the very local, where we spend most of our lives, to the regional, national, and global contexts we are part of.

The complex network of relationships between people, institutions, and culture represents what we at Cardus call social architecture. We explore the existing social architecture and propose ways in which it might change to better serve the common good.

It is important that we understand the networks of institutions that make up our society. Taking stock of the best ideas and practices in research and policy development thinking can lead to thriving cities.

Cities are complex, social, and essential. Within these three assertions there are key issues related to building better cities that we are pursuing through our active 2013 projects.

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ABOUT CARDUS

CARDUS IS A THINK TANK dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture. Headquartered in Hamilton, Ontario, Cardus has a track record of delivering original research, quality events, and thoughtful publications which explore the complex and complementary relationships between virtues, social structures, education, markets, and a strong society. Cardus is a registered charity.

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REPORT SERIES INTRODUCTION

If we imagined living in a time when it was not fashionable to treat religion as superstitious, socially irrelevant at best and malignant at worst, when ignorance of both the history and practice of faith were not worn as badges of honour, but were able instead to adopt an open and descriptive posture about how social goods are generated, then we would find our reports about reality characterized by accounts of how religion has contributed significantly to many of the common goods we enjoy. We could find ourselves collecting data about those goods, as Robert Woodberry ("The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 [2012]: 244–74) did using a two-hundred-year historical lens, and conclude that to the extent that liberal democracy, education, social equality, and improved physical health are good things, organized religion (yes, organized religion, not just an internal, personal, psychological state of communion and private conviction) has been a powerful generator of many of the things we wish to attain for ourselves and others around the world.

But we don't live in that world. Although it may be changing, popular communication and even academic research have tended to think it proper to overlook the contribution of religion to the social and cultural goods of the city even where evidence has suggested that it exists in substance and extent, both historically and at present. We live in a time when reporting on the failures of organized religion can seem to be the only legitimate form of coverage. Like the necessity of little-seen plankton in the oceanic food chain, it may well be that the continuous birth and rebirth of religion constitutes a basic stratum for civil life.

Without formal research or conscious investment in data, religious practice has emerged, grown, changed, and been part of us since as far back as human history can reach. We are only now beginning to understand what that means.

When W. E. Allen drafted his short paper "Life History of Marine Plankton Animals" while working as a scientist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (*Ecology* 8, no. 1 [1927]: 60–62), very little was understood about the role that these tiny and very diverse life forms have among all other ocean life. Allen, however, had an inkling based on the science he did know—that something important was at stake, even if not fully understood:

> It is true that the difficulties of field study in the sea are so great that we are unlikely to attain to exhaustive knowledge of any single species; but, in approaching any problem, a single established fact affords a better basis of attack than any number of suppositions, and, where the whole is unattainable, fragments of life history may rightly be used to indicate tentative conclusions of great value. (60)

Today we have become very aware of the role that phytoplankton play in food production, marine environmental change, and atmospheric quality—up to 50 percent of the world's oxygen is generated by phytoplankton (Abigail McQuatters-Gollop et al., "The Continuous Plankton Recorder Survey," *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science* 162 [2015]: 88–97). Allen was right and the survey that began in 1931 as a result of his efforts continues to collect data about phytoplankton.

The story of phytoplankton provides an illustration that is useful (rather than substantive—religion and phytoplankton are not at all the same thing) for our own deliberations. Without formal research or conscious investment in data, religious practice has emerged, grown, changed, and been part of us since as far back as human history can reach. We are only now beginning to understand what that means.

As far as we can know, cities will remain the primary context for human civilizations. As such, we can safeguard what we value, limit what is hazardous, and deepen the richness of human experience much more effectively if we know in what our social infrastructures consist.

In this series of three papers, three postures will be adopted, each one animated by a series of questions designed to provoke our thinking.

1 **Report 1: Contemporary Cultural Context of Socio-Cultural Goods of Religion**

How are we advancing the understanding of the socio-cultural good of religion—especially Christianity as the dominant faith in North America? How does religion contribute to the well-being of cities? What form do these religious public goods take? What are their shortcomings that would be valuable to address?

2 **Report 2: State of Research and Influence of Socio-Cultural Goods of Religion**

What insights does research provide that could inform people and help shape public relations and policy efforts on behalf of the socio-cultural good of religion? What are the stories that can be told? What do educators, journalists, and cultural influencers need to know? How could this work be undertaken?

3 **Report 3: Future Conditions of the Socio-Cultural Goods of Religion**

Future research, collaboration, and learning need intentional focus and investment. How will this investment become more difficult in the coming years? How will it get easier? What would it look like for religious faith to be seen as a vital contributor to the common good that we depend on? How might the history of religion and the common good inform our future?

I hope these themes and questions will serve to sustain existing research and examination while provoking new frameworks, new approaches, and new investments of resources. As far as we can know, cities will remain the primary context for human civilizations. As such, we can safeguard what we value, limit what is hazardous, and deepen the richness of human experience much more effectively if we know in what our social infrastructures consist. Even if that description is never complete, we may still reach "tentative conclusions of great value" regarding, in this case, the role of organized religion among us.

— **Milton J. Friesen**
Program Director, Social Cities
Senior Fellow

INTRODUCTION

SESSION 2: STATE OF RESEARCH AND INFLUENCE

What insights does research provide that could inform people and help shape public relations and policy efforts on behalf of the socio-cultural good of religion? What are the stories that can be told? What do educators, journalists, and cultural influencers need to know? How could this work be undertaken?

Context: Religion as a Socio-Cultural Good in the City
January 31 – February 1, 2017
Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel

A group of twelve carefully selected contributors met for an evening and a full day for the incubation of ideas and exploration of how religion contributes to the good of the city today. Their thoughts were presented as a pre-meeting submission which was then discussed face-to-face followed by an invitation to offer a two-thousand-word op-ed-style written response based on those interactions.

Our work is intended to advance understanding, explore possible collaborations, and stimulate ongoing, strategic, and thoughtful work around the role of religious communities in cities. The intention is to complement the significant academic work that has been and is being done on these themes from sociology, anthropology, religious studies, historical studies, and myriad other disciplinary spaces.

The justification for this particular injunction is that however much is being done formally by researchers and practically by women and men in religious communities of all kinds in modern society, there remains far more yet to be done in making connections practically, conceptually, and creatively.

Each contributor to this report has taken on the task of engaging with the opportunities and challenges represented in our time. Joshua Yates challenges us to consider that de-

spite declining cultural authority, local congregations may retain a valuable form of social authority that is vital to city functioning. Noah Toly and Kristin Ljungkvist remind us that religious life in global cities is dynamic, persistent, and significantly involved in issues of security and globalization. Milton Friesen reflects on the social complexity of cities and the role of religious communities in contributing to our civic infrastructure. Ram Cnaan concludes with a direct evaluation of the state of religion and the city, identifying significant shortfalls with suggestions for advancing our research and thus our understanding of the ways in which local congregations contribute to the common good.

Our work is intended to advance understanding, explore possible collaborations, and stimulate ongoing, strategic, and thoughtful work around the role of religious communities in cities.

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF RELIGION

***Joshua Yates** directs the Thriving Cities Project at the Institute for Advanced Studies of Culture at the University of Virginia. As a professor of sociology, he specializes in the study of culture and cultural change in the late modern world, with an emphasis on moral and ethical life. His recent research has explored a holistic understanding of thriving in twenty-first century cities, as well as the cultural significance of sustainability as a leading paradigm of social, political, and ethical action.*

As I begin my discussion about the current state of research on religion and the nature of religious influence today, I want to point out that I am a cultural sociologist. This means that I am not a formal sociologist of religion. My central interest is in how religious realities play out on the ground, in communities, cities, and cultures in our time. The complexities of our contemporary society form the context for the perspective I share below.

Putting aside the many difficult conceptual questions about what we mean by "religion" I will proceed with a common-sense view of the term, referring to communities of belief and practice that are oriented to and ordered around some notion of the sacred, the transcendent, or some form of a higher spiritual reality. These beliefs and practices, so organized, can lead to formal institutions, what we commonly refer to as "organized religion." These institutions are, in general, officially recognized and sanctioned by governments and given special tax-exempt status owing to their common-good contributions.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, I argue that understood in this conventional way, religion is a relatively weak institution today. The formal expression of religion today does not enjoy a high level of societal authority or culture-forming power. While it does enjoy considerable legal autonomy, it is, for most people in North America at least, an elective institution on the margins of the day-to-day functioning of public life.

In part because of its location outside the main centres of cultural production, it is often difficult to see that religion remains a powerful social institution and thus public good, es-

pecially at a local level. It may seem contradictory, but I think a more accurate picture of the role of organized religion is to think about it as weak culturally but strong socially. Religion does have a certain status recognized by the polity, including legal status. But within the mix of deep cultural drivers, there are other powerful cultural drivers that are not religious.

A credible body of academic work has profiled the economic impact of religion, the value of religious-inspired social capital, the religious contribution to mutual and humanitarian service, and more. This contribution includes emerging trends such as a new movement coalescing around the broader theme of "vocation" or meaningful work. This expands our conception of religion beyond what can be a default assumption that the primary good of religion is its function as a generator of "service" or "services." I am convinced that in practice, there is a far larger mix of roles that religious-inspired actors play in society, even if we only understand that contribution partially.

There are several ways we observe how religion can be, and often is, a public good—including its economic impacts ("halo effect"), its philanthropic and humanitarian impacts both locally and globally, its distinctive ability to generate social capital and social solidarity, and so on. A great challenge we face in evaluating the contemporary contributions of religion is that each of the facets of those contributions are typically taken up in isolation from each other. As a result, we easily miss a comprehensive picture of religion's possible impact on a community and it may be far greater than we have thought.

One of the ways to overcome a segmented view of religious contribution is to understand the social goods that arise from it within a human ecology framework. The realities of religious communities are complex, multidimensional, and cut across simplified and isolated approaches to research. The collective impact of religion may, in time, be understood as far greater than we currently know. Adopting a business-language perspective, we can think of religion as having multiple bottom lines. Measuring any one by itself would be incomplete.

An ecological framework allows us to track, measure, and assess the impacts/externalities across the ecosystem of a particular community context quantitatively and qualitatively, at multiple geospatial scales, and longitudinally. We must understand how often the contributions of religion go overlooked. There is a lot to be excited about with the range of contributions and socio-cultural goods being generated, yet the complicated picture here must be named.

Sober evaluation and thinking are critical and we need more of those. This includes a mature posture that can accept that the impacts of organized faith communities are not automatically beneficial. Do we miss how religion can also undermine public goods, sometimes contributing to the maintenance of a status quo that is far from equitable for everyone? History and contemporary experience remind us that religion can be understood as having positive and negative results in communities. The key is to get beyond the stereotypes on either side and attend more fully to direct realities, something that research can help us achieve.

The dynamics of these impacts are of significant interest to formal researchers. We understand, at least in part, that deriving benefit from being part of religious communities is not just about being physically present in a congregation. What else is going on that leads us to give more money, more time, and to be healthier through active participation in a faith community? What is shaping us internally or socially that makes such a big difference?

Investments in these explorations will yield a more comprehensive understanding of human ecology. The aim is to shine daylight on the range of ways religious groups contribute and have negative impacts—to see it and to measure it in quantitative and qualitative terms. As we do, we can see the manifold ways that religious or faith-based organizations contribute to the status quo and to its change. In this way, religion can often be said to operate as an "ecological" anchor institution in communities, for better and worse.

Another dimension of human ecology is the idea of *formation*. While we can work on measuring inputs and outcomes, the process by which engagement in religious communities shapes people continues to be of great interest. How do groups develop the characteristics and practices that yield public benefits? For many, public benefit is not the deepest or most central feature. In fact, it is often a secondary effect, a byproduct of the central tenets of a given community of belief. I am interested in the inputs, the outcomes, and the processes that connect them. How are these communities forming people into valued neighbours, community leaders, active citizens, and in some cases, tireless advocates? The relationship of all of these dynamics has been significantly underexamined.

This may be, in part, because our cultural drivers orient us to the use of technologies, financial evaluation, and policy frameworks that are preoccupied with certain types of measurement that naturally exclude a more fulsome evaluation. It has been challenging and

enlightening to think about how so many current forms of evaluation presuppose healthy "social topsoil" but without considering a more basic question: Where do the social nutrients come from that generate the healthy topsoil on which our civic processes depend?

Powerful interests can use big data in predatory ways to target people when they are most vulnerable.

I think that religion is a significant contributor to the cultural inputs and functions in a way that enriches the civic topsoil. Organized religion is a repository, a caretaker often of civic skills and habits—frequently standing in as a significant source of moral commitments, forming personal and communal identities, and shaping vocations. Historically, religion has been responsible for the inclusion of a reform orientation, a commitment to social justice, a catalyst for innovations of all kinds, and as a source of solidarity underwriting protests on critical issues and providing a bridge across political and other divides.

If current trends continue toward increasingly sorting ourselves into intimates and strangers in virtual and real life, organized religion may become even more needed. As a thick middle layer of acquaintances, neighbourhood friends, and informal linkages thins, formative institutions that bridge and build those ties will become increasingly vital. By some accounts, the degree of trust that we have in each other and in our institutions is at an all-time low following a forty- to fifty-year slide. Has a decreased commitment to organized religious life led to this decline?

New data and research may help us answer that question but our use of data and information is itself in need of more attentive care. We need a greater understanding of how our technologies and data are changing our human ecology. It seems increasingly clear that we are headed into uncharted territory. Our cultural logic and computational powers informed by research in the cognitive sciences are nudging us commercially and governmentally in potentially dangerous directions that undermine shared democratic life—we are increasingly susceptible to being distantly managed en masse. Our optimizing practices, underwritten by powerful computation, may be useful for traffic management, but for human beings or communities the impact is much less uncertain. Powerful interests can use big data in predatory

ways to target people when they are most vulnerable. We should not be naive about the possibilities for exploitation and it may well be that religious capacity provides a buffer against some of those worrisome outcomes.

THE CULTURAL INPUTS OF RELIGION

The cultural inputs of religion warrant further attention and I will offer some possible angles on how we might advance that interest. Most of the attention around religion as a public good focuses on measurable outcomes. A key area where this focus on outcomes has occurred is in the public arena where we want answers to questions about whether a given investment generated a return and whether the investment was worth it somehow. This does have its place, especially when addressing policy makers and the general public regarding the wider importance of religion beyond the "private" goods that religious people enjoy from the practice of their faith.

However, this can lead to a superficial understanding of the public contribution religion makes. A deeper judgment requires us to grapple with a richer sense of what life and human beings consist in. As Edward Farley once asked, "What does it mean to be human in a world filled with tragedy?" Public engagement and political accountabilities are not well suited to ponder such questions. If someone suffers, someone else is responsible and we'll find out, affix the proper penalty, and solve the problem. But this deeper question does not submit to such simplistic solutions.

What if one of the most significant contributions that religion makes to our well-being is not as a cheaper social service agency but as an institution that can help us grapple with the possibility that the tragic is fundamental, a deep and persistent feature of our human experience? How can our governments foster a mysterious sense of our need to appreciate the fabric of our finitude? They can't. But religion can and does.

Our social systems have emerged to integrate multiple goods at once across large numbers of people. Such an arrangement allows us to do more together than we could possibly do on our own. A pernicious effect of this is that the continuity of such arrangements can build in structural inequality favouring the wealthy, the powerful, and the well-positioned. Our social structures can push off the negative consequences of our decisions onto others, such

as relocating pollution-generating industries to Third World countries while still enjoying the cheap goods arising from those processes. Historically, religion has often been a liberating presence that challenges, and in some cases, reverses those trends. Religious communities can integrate and absorb the costs into themselves and their communities. Religious communities in the city can offer a model of this integration of negative costs while at the same time generating the social goods we need. This kind of agency pushes up against our human limits and provides a context for our pain.

This moderation, a matrix of human solidarity, has time and again been a context for the solutions to social problems. Politicians, government bureaucrats, and philanthropists espousing religion-free help sometimes naively offer solutions to social ills through bundled packages of funding, policy prescription, and technology. Each of these packages presupposes a certain degree of healthy social and civic substructures. These include critical inputs like trust, collective efficacy, civic friendship, character, and the soft civic skills that make collaboration and association possible. This reality must be more fully acknowledged.

No matter what data we look at, the immediate future will be turbulent, painful, and disruptive. We are facing social isolation, poverty, racism, an opioid crisis, and fear of immigrants; our governing institutions are spent. We need to build stronger, more resilient mediating institutions. We have been living off borrowed capital. Transcendence is fundamental to the moral sources and traditions that power our commitments to the social goods discussed. We need spaces to cultivate and be formed in this but we can't even speak about it in the academy.

It may seem that I am sounding a pessimistic note. Certainly, there are worrisome habits and tendencies. At the end of the geopolitical order as we have known it, with a legitimate crisis at home, and global capital institutions teetering, we can wake up and sense we are in a really precarious moment. It is a moment for the religious communities to step forward, not withdraw. All of our religious traditions have developed ways to do this.

In the spirit of specificity and at the risk of sounding formulaic, here are at least four ways that religion can provide these vital cultural inputs: (1) The cultivation of civic skills and habits such as dialogical and empathetic bridging. We live in a time when such capabilities are of profound importance. We must steward what we have and support those social contexts where they are generated. (2) The formation of individual and collective identity and life purpose. Vocation, bonding, and place attachment are central to longer-term stability and resilience in the face of change. It is difficult to imagine how we can do without such formative resources. (3) The sourcing of moral commitments such as the ethics of neighbourly care and self-sacrifice. Those aspects of our common lives that move us beyond ourselves and our immediate communities and toward others are going to be indispensable in what lies ahead. (4) The inculcation of a reform orientation—a sense of civic duty, social justice, and social innovation. Our ability to generate socially oriented adaptations must at least keep pace with our challenges if we want to maintain what we have and it will need to exceed current challenges if we want to improve things. Again, religious communities have offered such solutions in the past and can do so in the future.

The cultivation of these capabilities by religious institutions is especially critical in the face of demographic change, geographical sorting, and intensifying pluralism. Religious communities will need to remember their longer history. Yes, religion and religious institutions are taking it on the chin in the news, popular culture, politics, in the academy, and nearly everywhere else. However, the bigger picture is that all institutions and authorities are being subjected to the acid of skepticism today and renewal can be found amid these challenging conditions.

FINDING A WAY

Countless stories provide excellent examples of religion's social impact and cultural inputs. One great example of this is found in *A Journey Through NYC Religions*. Tony Carnes and his team recognize that elites drive the officially dominant culture of cities, which drives the economic construction of our built environment. But cities are multitudinous realities. There are lots of other things going on simultaneously. We researchers would do well not to conflate the dominant, secular liberal, neo-liberal global order with a full picture of reality.

We must continue to get down on the street level where there is much more going on.

There is a dangerous "civic de-skilling" underway. Our mandate is to create societies where it will be easier to do good.

The story of the monks of Tibhirine told in the movie *Of Gods and Men* provides inspiration for our imagination. These Christian monks lived out a type of solidarity with local Muslims in Algeria. They knew they had big differences with the destabilizing influence of radical Islam on local communities. This is a model for turbulent times of Christians and Muslims working together serving God and love in the face of great threats. It is clear, direct, pragmatic but substantive.

In my work with the Thriving Cities Project we have many examples of religious communities making deep contributions to thriving cities: The story of Life Remodeled, SALLT and Oklahoma City, LIFT Orlando, Crosstown Concourse, American Underground, and many more. These are stories worth telling. Our "Know Thy City" curriculum can deepen local citizen leaders' appreciation of what might be done right where they are. Local connection is a forte of religious communities.

It may well be that coming decades will be greyer, browner, more unequal, more fragmented, more religiously plural, and even less religious. There is a dangerous "civic de-skilling" underway. Our mandate is to create societies where it will be easier to do good. That's Dorothy Day. If religious organizations don't do it, we are lost. Religious communities have to model their liberative instincts without shifting the costs onto others. They can absorb those costs into themselves. That will be transformative.

Finally, for long-term development of future leaders in the academy and culture, I would create a reborn Civitas program. A remarkable program and gathering supported by the Pew Charitable Trust shaped my own formation. It involved a summer institute, doctoral study support for emerging Christian scholars, and internships at leading research institutions and think tanks to help launch the academic and professional careers of new scholars. Many of my peers today benefited from participating over the years. It was a long-term investment that, years later, continues to make a profound impact at the intersection of religion, culture, and higher education.

GLOBAL CITIES, RELIGION, AND SECURITY

***Noah Toly** is a senior fellow on global cities at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. The Council, along with the* Financial Times*, co-hosts the annual Chicago Forum on Global Cities. Toly also is a professor of urban studies and politics and international relations at Wheaton College, where he directs the Center for Urban Engagement, and he teaches about global cities at the Free University of Berlin's Center for Global Politics.*

***Kristin Ljungkvist**[1] is a non-resident fellow on global cities at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. She is a researcher in the Department of Government at Uppsala University, Sweden, where she currently holds a post-doctoral fellowship. She is also a research associate at the Institute for Housing and Urban Research, Uppsala University. Her research focuses on global cities, urban security, and on urban dimensions of global challenges such as climate change and terrorism.*

Over the past two years, jihadist terrorism in Berlin, Brussels, Jakarta, Nice, and Paris have put cities at the centre of discussions about security and resilience. Around the world, municipal leaders are being forced to take the initiative in responding to immediate threats, rebounding from devastating attacks, and cultivating a resilient community psyche.

But cities are not just targets of terrorist attacks—they are sites of radicalization and recruitment by terrorist organizations. Many recent attacks have not been carried out by foreign nationals from the other side of the world, but by homegrown extremists from the other side of the tracks. The fact that so many recent attacks have been perpetrated by disaffected locals puts cities at the centre of a parallel discussion about the relationship between security on the one hand, and pluralism and social inclusion on the other.

1 Kristin Ljungkvist did not attend the Chicago Roundtable.

Recent expressions of nationalist sentiment in the United States and Europe, not to mention efforts to curtail religious liberty in the name of security, have shown how easy it is to pit security and resilience against inclusion and how often we assume that pluralism produces vulnerability. In reality, resilience, security, and inclusion are each part of the multiphase work of countering violent extremism (CVE). An effective global response to terror must put cities at the centre of CVE efforts that move from the immediate and local to the long-term and global. These efforts must include policing the streets, planning for social and economic integration, and policy advocacy that leverages the influence of cities and city networks to collaborate toward national and global responses.

WHY WE OVERLOOK CITIES

While cities are at the geographic centre of CVE efforts, they are often at the political margins, overlooked by those who instinctively turn to the nation-state for policy solutions and invisible to many who are confused about the relationship between urbanization and religion.

For centuries many social scientists saw the growth of cities as an existential threat to religion. Urbanization was assumed to disrupt relatively stable social institutions and practices that marked rural life, including religious institutions and practices. Even the proliferation and differentiation of religious institutions in cities was assumed to point toward religion's decline in the face of advancing secularization. The voluntarism of religious practice in secular states, coupled with the diversity of institutions in the city, was understood to be just one more step toward religion being a strictly private and individual matter. Moreover, the dichotomy between secular and religious mapped neatly onto related dichotomies between urban and rural, between progress and backwardness. Progress toward a secular urban age was assumed to eclipse the backward, rural, and religious. Many assumed that these hand-in-hand trends of urbanization and secularization would lead away from conflict toward an enduring peace—not an entirely unreasonable assumption in the wake of the so-called wars of religion that ravaged Europe between the early sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries.

The late eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century provided ample, if not incontrovertible, evidence that urbanization and secularization were indeed correlated, especially in Europe. Urbanization came along with national political regimes of state-sanctioned secularism that limited and quarantined religious practice. Scientific knowledge challenged religion as a source of authority. Industrialization introduced new rhythms and practices of social life. Through the 1950s, the growth of cities seemed to deliver on its disruptive promises. As French sociologist and legal historian Gabriel Le Bras wrote in 1956, "I myself am convinced that of 100 rural people that come to live in Paris around 90 stop practicing their religion when they get out of Gare Montparnasse."[2]

But the thesis that urbanization and religion were competing forces proved difficult to maintain in the face of historical inquiry into pre-industrial urbanism, mounting evidence against religious decline in the mid- to late twentieth century, and the role of religion in early twenty-first century global affairs. Pre-industrial cities were hubs of religious activity. In the twentieth century at the global scale, patterns of religious activity did not appear to decline as consistently in correlation with urbanization as many at first expected. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, right around the time that global population crossed the 50 percent-urban threshold, it became increasingly clear that religion was playing a key and often salutary role in political and social life around the world. Indeed, religion can and does thrive in an increasingly urban world. As Peter van der Veer writes, "The idea that religion can be urban, modern, innovative, and creative instead of rural, traditional, conservative, and repressive… has won ground in the past two decades."[3] Indeed, many cities are home to an especially diverse and impressively vibrant array of religious institutions and practices.

COOPERATION OR CONFLICT?

While those who assumed a straightforward relationship between urbanization and religion— more and bigger cities, less religion—were wrong, many cities became places of con-

2 Gabriel Le Bras, *Etudes de sociologie religieuse, vol. 2* (Paris: PUF, Bibliothèque de sociologie contemporaine, 1956), 480.

3 Peter van der Veer, "Introduction: Urban Theory, Asia, and Religion," in *Handbook of Religion and the Asian City: Aspiration and Urbanization in the Twenty-First Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 7.

siderable religious diversity, bringing together adherents of various religions and none at all, shifting the question from "religion *or* cities?" to "cooperation *or* conflict?" To which of these outcomes does religious diversity in an increasingly urban world lead? This is clearly a question that is close to the heart of countering violent extremism in cities.

Some suggest that urbanization is likely to promote cooperation by bringing adherents of different religious traditions—or none at all—into close proximity. See, for instance, the case of Hong Kong's Chungking Mansions—a single building at the heart of one of the world's most densely settled, productive, and influential cities, in which more than one hundred languages are spoken and a diversity of religious groups is represented. Gordon Mathews's research on Chungking Mansions suggests that diverse religious practices may flourish together and that their adherents may be collaborators in a thriving community, especially in the context of independent forces of inclusion and integration, such as cosmopolitanism, liberal economic policies, and the rule of law.[4] Such examples suggest that religion can be, as van der Veer writes, urban, modern, innovative, and creative, and that cooperation in the midst of difference is possible.

However, close proximity among those who do not share religious beliefs may also create an environment that stimulates boundary policing and emphasizes difference, rather than commonality. Some believe this promotes fundamentalism and radicalization that lead to conflict and violence. For those who advance this hypothesis, pluralism plus proximity produces pandemonium. Nothing about the religious diversity guarantees a salutary outcome; nothing about the urban ensures the urbane. Religious institutions and practices can defy even van der Veer's dichotomies—they can be urban *and* repressive or even violent.

The tendency toward conflict may be especially strong when religious intolerance, political disenfranchisement, social exclusion, or lack of economic opportunity are layered on top of religious diversity. Indeed, disentangling the religious and social roots of radicalization has been notoriously difficult. Recent terror attacks potentially illustrate this point. Most of the terrorists who attacked Paris on the night of November 13, 2015 and then Brussels in March of 2016 were homegrown in Europe's global cities. While they had ties to the Islamic State, they were not deployed from Syria or Iraq, but from Paris and Brussels—the same cities in

4 Gordon Mathews, *Ghetto at the Center of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

which they had been radicalized. For some, these were the same cities in which they had been born. The attackers evaded detection and eluded authorities with the support of local networks of disaffected residents who had varying degrees of experience with, loyalty to, or interest in the Islamic State, but considerable experience on the social and economic margins of prosperous global cities.

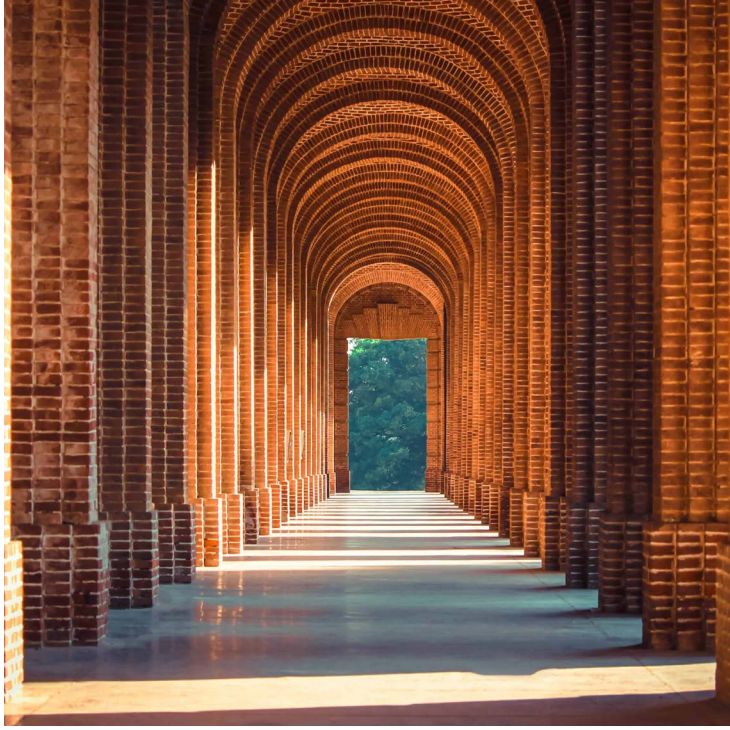
GLOBAL CITY GREY ZONES: ISIS'S PARADOXICAL STRATEGY

Global cities are not only the kinds of places that may, under the right circumstances, breed terror, but they are exactly the kinds of places where terrorists will focus their fight. Many have suggested that global cities make obvious targets for terror because they occupy an especially conspicuous role on the world stage. Unlike rural areas ravaged by terror—parts of Nigeria under constant threat from Boko Haram, for example—global cities concentrate institutions with worldwide influence, including the media. A successful attack in a global city is a guaranteed spectacle.

It is true that global cities include important targets, symbolic and otherwise, and that even a foiled attack on a global city brings significant media coverage, but among terrorist organizations ISIS is driven by a more treacherous logic to target global cities. An article in the seventh issue of ISIS's propaganda magazine, *Dabiq*, suggests that the terror group intends to target and wants to eliminate "the grayzones," areas where Muslim—especially moderate Muslim—and non-Muslim populations live in close proximity.[5]

Global cities are the world's quintessential grey zones. While diversity is not the defining feature of global cities, they do concentrate diverse populations in close proximity—the incredibly wealthy and the profoundly distressed, the elite and the marginalized. This diversity is not limited to socio-economic status. Global cities bring together adherents of diverse religions, or no religion at all, in ever closer proximity. If we needed further evidence that global cities are the grey zones ISIS has in mind, photos from the *Dabiq* article, "The Extinction of the Grayzones," should suffice. The article was featured on the cover along with a photo of two elderly Muslim Parisians holding signs that read, "Je suis Charlie" in the wake of the January 2015 attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* offices. The article itself featured photos

5 "The Extinction of the Grayzone," *Dabiq* VII, February 2015.



of Parisian Muslims praying near another sign that read "Je suis Charlie" along with photos of the aftermath of bombings in London and Madrid. By declaring war on grey zones in order to simplify loyalties and limit empathy between Muslim and non-Muslim populations, ISIS has implied jihad against global cities.

This ISIS strategy is paradoxical and maybe completely incoherent. The fact that Paris and Brussels attackers were homegrown suggests that global city grey zones may be a source of radicalization necessary for sustaining a long-term terrorist campaign in Europe. If radicalization is in some cases partially dependent upon densely populated and religiously diverse communities, a strategy of eliminating grey zones in favour of a stark black-and-white divide between Muslim and non-Muslim populations might undermine the ability of ISIS to radicalize new members. In other words, ISIS's target list and its recruiting areas may be the same. To a certain extent, they may be at odds with themselves.

BEYOND SECURITY: GLOBAL CITIES' THREE HORIZONS FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

While the two prongs of ISIS's approach to global cities may be internally incoherent, both are potentially disastrous. Whether they are targets or recruiting grounds—or, paradoxically, both— global cities stand to suffer. Jihadism is an existential threat to cities. At the same time, global cities represent an increasingly logical entry point for policy interventions that prevent radicalization and violent extremism. While cities in general and global cities in particular might be especially vulnerable, they also feature unique characteristics that have the potential to make them resilient.

An effective response to jihadism must make global cities the focus of a task nearly as paradoxical as ISIS's own strategy. They must develop policy regimes simultaneously focused on security and inclusion. Security today is as much about monitoring and directing flows of capital, people, and information as it is about defending borders with conventional military

forces. It has become increasingly clear that global cities can play a key role in providing security and mitigating violent conflict, while inclusive and responsive global city governance at the same time plays a role in promoting social cohesion and preventing radicalization.

A comprehensive policy regime for global cities that simultaneously focuses on security and inclusion can be subdivided into three policy horizons.

THE FIRST HORIZON

The first horizon represents an immediate scale and is focused on policing as well as on various efforts to thwart imminent threats at the local level. Local authorities in global cities play an increasingly important role when it comes to dealing with the more hardcore security issues of counterterrorism, surveillance, intelligence, and protection of critical infrastructure. After al Qaeda's attacks on New York City, Madrid, and London between 2001 and 2005, we saw a first wave of counterterrorism policy developments in global cities with new security institutions and infrastructure developing on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, this immediate scale quickly became the main focus for many global cities where policies and strategies deal directly with the threat emanating from those actors already radicalized. Greater collaboration between local police and regional and national security forces received considerable attention, but developments have also included augmented surveillance and intelligence capabilities for local police and changes to the built environment.

For example, in the United States, local governments have played an increasingly critical role in homeland security politics.[6] Local police forces around the United States have built their own independent information and intelligence networks and intelligence operations through, for example, developing exchange programs, sending their officers to work with other police forces overseas, and creating liaisons with foreign agents.[7] In Europe, local authorities are similarly not simply implementing national policies but are also pursuing new types of security policies autonomously. We see a trend in which urban authorities in

6 Erica Chenoweth and Susan Clarke, "All Terrorism is Local: Constructing Urban Coalitions for Homeland Security in the American Federal System," Political Research Quarterly 63(3) [2010]: 495–507.
7 Robert Block, "Miffed at Washington, Police Develop Own Antiterror Plans," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 10, 2005.

collaboration with police and the private security industry are focusing on building "defensive urban landscapes" and are "designing out terrorism" or "designing in counterterrorism."[8] For example, London redesigned cityscapes, setting bollards, low-level walls, and planters around buildings so as to inhibit vehicle access and absorb the energy of potential bomb blasts.

More cities must now leverage those developments to assume a leading role in global security and counterterrorism. The strengthening of local institutions and the built environment of cities is key to enhanced security and resilience. Unless global cities are to become militarized zones policed by national armed forces, they must build an internal apparatus with the capabilities to anticipate and deter attacks, to bring criminals to justice, to dismantle the local support networks of potential terrorists, and to rebound in the wake of possible attacks. Governing the global risk of terror must include global cities' infrastructure and institutions.

THE SECOND HORIZON

Global cities must also leverage local policy, planning, and design efforts to strike a balance between security on the one hand, and openness on the other. To remain globally attractive and competitive, the global city must not only be secure but also stay open, inclusive, and democratic. This second horizon represents a medium policy scale and includes social/economic integration and anti-radicalization efforts that are still local but speak to more systemic and upstream concerns. This horizon is thus more focused on preventive strategies in countering violent extremism and involves urban planning and policy targeting the root causes of radicalization.

With their potential influence on their citizens' daily lives, local governments can be more efficient than their national counterparts since hyper-local factors are highly important components in both radicalization and counter-radicalization. Local community and neighbourhood leaders are often the ones best placed to build trust within communities and to warn and convince young people against wrongdoing. This policy approach therefore requires the involvement of many types of local agents, such as youth workers, po-

8 Jon Coaffee, Terrorism, *Risk and the Global City: Towards Urban Resilience* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009).

lice, teachers, community networks, and civil society. Local welfare systems and street-level bureaucrats in global cities are increasingly representing a new type of front line in security politics.

Global cities must systematically seek to integrate and not marginalize diverse religious populations.

Global cities must systematically seek to integrate and not marginalize diverse religious populations. Françoise Schepmans is the mayor of Molenbeek, a suburb of Brussels that has been home to multiple terrorists. She has said that next to ordinary life in Molenbeek, "there are people living in the shadow. And we have left them living in the shadow."[9] However, in recent years, North America, Europe, and countries in the Middle East have started to develop counter-radicalization policies. This represents a second wave of developments in global city efforts to counter terrorism in the twenty-first century. For example, in the United States, a Department of Justice pilot program called Building Community Resilience reflects efforts to partner with cities that are both potential terrorist targets and potential terrorist recruiting grounds. With initial grants to community groups in Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis, the program focuses on local efforts to address community isolation, lack of economic opportunity, the place of disaffected youth, and other root causes of religious terrorism.

Similar policy initiatives can also be found across Europe.[10] In recent years Sweden has become one of the largest per capita suppliers of foreign fighters going from Europe to Iraq and Syria.[11] In 2014 the Swedish government launched a national strategy for countering violent extremism and radicalization. High priority is now given both to efforts against recruitment to extremist environments and support to those working to help people leave these environments. A special national coordinator handles the efforts targeting radicalization and violent extremism, but municipalities and organizations at the local level do the most important work. This strategy highlights the importance of a strong collaboration between local authorities and civil society, including sport clubs and other voluntary organizations.[12]

9 David A. Graham, "What's the Matter with Belgium?" *The Atlantic,* November 2015.
10 European Forum for Urban Security, "The Role of Local Authorities in European National Strategies Against Radicalization." Available at https://efus.eu/files/2016/08/The-role-of-local-authorities-in-national-strategies_Efus_EN.pdf
11 Radio Free Europe, "Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria: Where do They Come From?" Available at https://www.rferl.org/a/foreign-fighters-syria-iraq-is-isis-isil-infographic/26584940.html
12 Government of Sweden, "Den Nationella Samordnarens Arbete Mot Våldsbejakande Extremism."

Jordan's Ministry of the Interior has developed a counter-radicalization strategy through a Community Peace Centre and the Directorate for Combating Extremism and Violence.[13] The priority is to coordinate with local communities and civil society to counter extremist ideology by providing training and facilitating dialogue. The strategy sets out to promote and foster ownership for non-governmental actors including civil society and the private sector and it has also gained support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).[14]

Since drivers of radicalization will differ depending on the local context, counter-radicalization strategies should be designed and implemented locally. There is no one-size-fits-all. To build trust for this type of policy and its implementers, community members must always have the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns. On the local level, communities need space to discuss grievances, real or perceived, that make them vulnerable to the manipulative tactics of violent extremist group recruitment efforts.[15]

A robust global city response must also go beyond anti-radicalization initiatives. Policies meant to support religious liberty, political enfranchisement, social inclusion, and economic progress for all residents will be essential to mitigating the risks of terrorism.[16] By emphasizing inclusive planning, global cities not only have the potential to counter religious extremism, but also to counter some of the driving forces behind the rise of right-wing populism and nationalism that stoke the clash-of-civilizations narrative and arguably fuel actual violence and radicalization efforts.

Available at http://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/sveriges-strategi-mot-terrorism-och-arbete-mot-valdsbejakande-extremism/den-nationella-samordnarens-arbete-mot-valdsbejakande-extremism/

13 Ghimar Deeb, Jeffrey Woodham, Mia Chin, and Sawsan Gharaibeh, "A National Strategic Framework for Countering Violent Extremism in Jordan," *Journal of International Affairs,* June 6, 2016.

14 United Nations Development Programme, "National Strategy on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Jordan (P/CVE)," May 17, 2016. Available at http://www.jo.undp.org/content/jordan/en/home/press-center/pressreleases/2016/05/17/national-strategy-on-preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-in-jordan-p-cve-.html

15 Deeb, Woodham, et al., "A National Strategic Framework."

16 Eric Rosand and Ian Klaus, "It Happens on the Pavement: Putting Cities at the Center of Countering Violent Extremism," Brookings Institution, June 1, 2016. Available at https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/06/01/it-happens-on-the-pavement-putting-cities-at-the-center-of-countering-violent-extremism/

THE THIRD HORIZON

The final horizon builds on the realization of global cities' potential as policy advocates—the further development of their role as actors and not just sites in global governance. Global city policy makers are capable of meaningful participation in processes of global governance, influencing international and transnational regulations. They are empowered as autonomous bearers and pursuers of international norms and rights in a wide range of issues such as human and civil rights, environmental issues, and nuclear disarmament. This becomes especially vibrant as global cities engage in transnational municipal networks (TMNs). TMNs have an increasing impact on global interest and norm formation, and they are also especially well suited for tackling "wicked problems" since they are dynamic, have quick reaction potential, are self-regulating, and can provide broad-based and concrete knowledge about local realities.

An imperative part of this final policy horizon for countering violent extremism is for cities and TMNs to collaborate in sharing best practices, making the difficult effort to combine inclusion and security normative, and leveraging their influence to gain the support of national and global governance regimes. Such networks also have the potential to "flatten the civic policy space" between cities and national governments.[17] An important initiative in this respect is the Strong Cities Network.[18] Through TNCs such as this, opportunities can be created to share best practices and ideas about how to identify early signs of extremism, engage vulnerable youth, and cultivate partnerships among governments, law enforcement agencies, and religious leaders. The Strong Cities Network should therefore grow and make available resources that can be used to tailor local programs to the specific characteristics of local contexts and communities. Cities around the world would do well to pivot toward the local scale in an effort to prevent and contain terror.

17 Ibid.

18 "Fighting Radicalization and Violent Extremism Through Strong Cities Networks," *Dipnote:* US Department of State Official Blog; "First Ever Global Summit of Cities Reinforces Powerful Message for Countering Extremism at the Local Level," Strong Cities Network. Available at http://strongcitiesnetwork.org/first-ever-global-summit-cities-reinforces-powerful-message-countering-extremism-local-level/

RESEARCH FRONTIERS: BIG DATA, RELIGIOUS STORIES, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Milton Friesen *directs the Social Cities program at Cardus in Hamilton, Ontario. His research focuses on developing innovative ways to measure and strengthen the social fabric of neighbourhoods and the work of the Canadian charitable sector. His recent publications include: "The Unexamined City: Evaluation that Serves the Common Good" (*Municipal World*) and* Charity and Social Capacity: A Roundtable Report.

Cities are a significant context for the demise or generation of civil society. The nature of human relationships, ranging from the individual to the largest social structures of contemporary culture, constitutes the life of our communities and cities. This vast and intricate social network is deeply connected to and interdependent with the physical design of the city including the ecology of the natural world on which these human functions depend. Religious congregations and communities are part of this complexity. Although it is increasingly questioned, the public good of religion continues to play out in significant ways in our cities. Research on this phenomenon and public perceptions of the good of religion in our communities currently face a number of key challenges related to the nature of inquiry and the role that research insights may play in shaping the thinking and actions of key decision-makers.

What insights does research provide that could inform people and help shape public relations and policy efforts on behalf of the socio-cultural good of religion?

There are significant aspects of city social dynamics that we cannot fully control or understand owing to the extent and complexity of the interactions within and around our cities. However, there are important ways in which we do shape and direct the life of our communities at all scales, even if that control is limited or qualified. Given this tension between directed and emerging order, planning and leadership need design processes that allow for discovery, exploration, and adaptability to sustain and improve the quality of life in cities.

Many of our inherited systems and processes still operate on the assumption that total control is possible and desirable. Within this mix, religious communities also live with the challenge of how to exercise their agency in ways that are consistent with what they espouse, while also experiencing the limitations that the structures of cities impose through regulation, spatial planning, legal, and cultural pressures. One of the particular tensions that religious congregations face is the matter of how best to measure the public good they provide in order to justify ongoing privileges such as issuing tax credits or being given tax exemptions. Will the assumptions that measurement brings lead to greater freedom or new constraints? Will the historic patterns of religious freedom and organizational exemption hold under the pressure of contemporary efforts to see these privileges reversed?

Telling stories and describing reality through data is a growing form of cultural authority.

There is little doubt that we need better ways to describe what the case is in terms of the public good of religious congregations. One key aspect of this description is active engagement with data proliferation, including open data, the networked economy, platforms for public engagement, new forms of community-based research, and institutional evaluation. It may be that new forms of analysis and data collection will more fully reveal the vital generative role that religious congregations play in supporting the communities of which they are a part. Data collection can generate greater awareness about entities such as religious congregations. Though unaccustomed to data collection and analysis, religious congregations may need to engage collectively in more advanced forms of telling their stories (as individual congregations and as groups of congregations). Data could be a means of revealing the powerful invisibilities that religious faith contributes at individual and institutional levels. Data about religious congregations in the context of our cities can fuel our self-understanding and signal the value that such groups bring to the common good.

Telling stories and describing reality through data is a growing form of cultural authority. Along with the positive aspects of that growth are troubling injustices. Data scientists are shaping our future through the use of new tools applied to new flows of data. Consider, for example, Cathy O'Neil's book *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. O'Neil explores the shifting power structures being enabled

by algorithms and data analysis, structures that are creating a new context marked by disruption, inequality, and the growth of new tendrils of hidden power.

Data will be important for religious communities as a description of what they do but it will also be important as an arena in which new forms of human misery, exploitation, and injustice are being perpetrated. The mission of many religious congregations is to stop such injustices and attend to those suffering from its effects. This is an important trend for religious communities to pay close attention to.

It is imperative that we consider how religious communities will fare in this new context. It would seem that they are already far behind emerging trends in data collection and use, trends that are moving faster than the regulatory controls needed to limit their effects on privacy, equity, and civic process. For most faith-based communities, technologies related to data use are instrumental—they make use of what is available in service of their mission but seldom engage seriously with the implications of the technologies themselves.

Recovery of a more critical posture would enable religious communities to provide a counterpoint to unexamined endorsements of new technological intrusions into our civic lives. For example, it may well be that the most effective security for people in a high-surveillance algorithm-oriented power structure will be found in our collectivities such as local congregations rather than in the vulnerability of our individual isolation. Groups can make a huge difference in offering protection as is well attested to in the history of labour organizing and other collective functions. However, it is likely that this critical and valuable posture would be lost if religious communities have low data literacy and are primarily end users of new technologies. The long-term effect could be that they end up in a position of increased marginalization. Religious communities will need to contend more robustly with these new power dynamics.

What are the stories that can be told?

Without people, cities become decaying artifacts. Relationships between people, within families, in our workplaces, institutions, governments, corporations, and cultural projects animate our cities and these are the sources of our stories. These networks of relationships are not always easy to understand or see. They are always changing and have many features that are hard to fully describe, but our connections to each other are like a social rainforest that

holds everything together. If we could actually see all of the contributions made by primary, secondary, and tertiary groups of people for whom life and work are religiously rooted, it would be surprising.

Social capital refers to the social networks and corresponding trust that range across social scales.

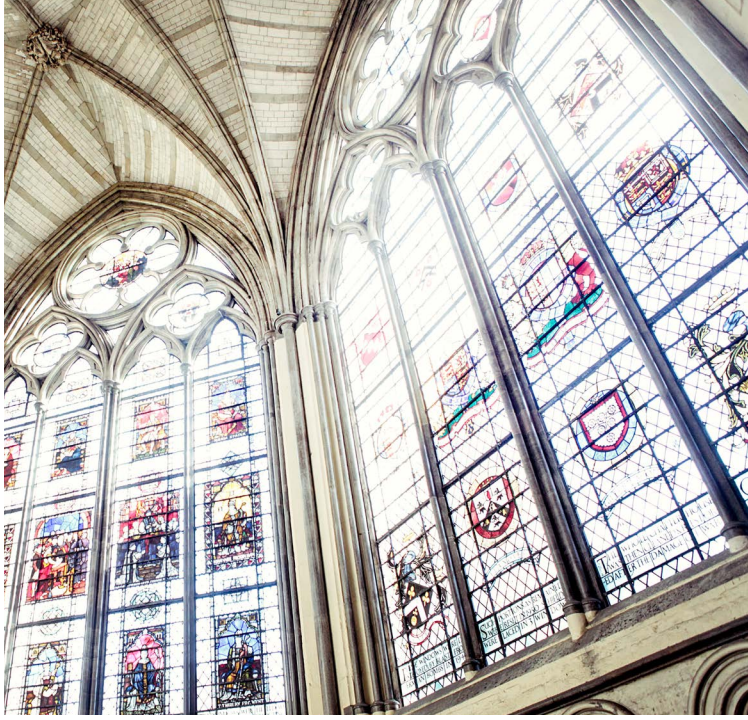
Most of these stories are not told in context-originated ways. They are often synthesized and summarized, even stereotyped. There is a significant need for more robust, informed, and pervasive storytelling that describes what is happening at a very local granular level. The sweeping assumptions of suspicion concerning religious communities can be at least partially mitigated by telling more fully and robustly the stories of service, care, long-term impact, and public-good growth that arise from active and healthy local congregations. How are stories effectively told in our current cultural context? Religious communities will need to understand these narrative pathways and learn to make better use of them.

What do educators, journalists, and cultural influencers need to know?

The power of relationships and social structures can be undertaken from many vantage points. One active pathway into these dynamics can be approached through the "social capital" research lens. Social capital refers to the social networks and corresponding trust that range across social scales. Religious communities are, of course, an integral part of the social-capital landscape.

In order to understand just what that role is we might entertain a series of questions related to religious faith and the common good: How do social connections, in this case in a congregational setting, affect quality of life in cities? Under what conditions do ties form? How do they change? How do interpersonal relationships interact with larger social structures like kinship networks, community organizations, commercial organizations, governments, and so on? How can we improve our ability to see and understand these social resources? How can we improve our descriptive power to enable more intelligent stewardship of those resources?

Building a stronger network of scholars, policy architects, and community leaders who are investing in these questions—people who are open to consider the value of religious congregations regardless of their own particular viewpoint—is vital if we are to meet the grow-



ing demand for social ingenuity. Historically, faith communities have been instrumental in addressing a wide range of social, economic, and justice disparities. In many cases the basic descriptive aspects of their function are missing or assumed. The need for their contributions will likely increase in the future.

At least one part of this question, if asked from a faith perspective, is how to design and build new forms of social infrastructure to bridge the gaps. What role can local neighbourhood religious networks play in this innovation?

Our Social Cities program is exploring these questions in practical ways through our City Soul project. We have been considering the ways in which faith institutions are vital to the development and preservation of common-pool resources, culture, and human flourishing at community levels. Through community organizing, meeting with city planners, developers, and elected officials, we have identified the significant working gap that exists between these arenas of city life. There is potential to increase the vitality of communities through consistent collaboration between these important leaders.

Organizing for increasing quality of life includes understanding how the full range of institutions in our cities could work together more effectively. As an existing category of social structure with distinct functions, legal descriptions, and cultural/social roles, religious communities in the form of charities are a vital aspect of our common good, even for those who do not consider themselves religious.

We might get at descriptions of religious communities by asking how we would know if charitable capacity is declining, improving, or changing. What can we learn from tax, census, and survey data (e.g., T3010 data in Canada, IRS Form 990 in the United States, national household and health surveys, the General Social Survey)? What new partnerships and cross-institutional network development could be undertaken to strengthen this sector? It seems evident that we will require new social infrastructure and new organizations to bridge these gaps. Developing new infrastructure will require intelligence, understanding, money, and persistence.

Our ability to adjust to unexpected change reflects our degree of resilience. Natural disasters, resource disruptions, or social unrest are a few of the many disruptions that cities face. If we are interested in social resilience, we will need to pay more attention to the role religious communities could play in designing for resilience. New forms of social organizing that go beyond the political labels of right, centre, and left are needed to reanimate civic discussion.

Improving dialogue and learning about the relationship between freedom and responsibility is vital and religious communities could play an important role in such discussions. Social philosophies such as subsidiarity, applied in secular states such as the European Union and in northern Italy's Lombardy region, offer lessons in bringing all aspects of a community into more meaningful deliberation.

How could this work be undertaken?

Religious communities are not homogeneous even though our categorical terms suggest that they are. The pursuit of deep insight and substantial gains will require cross-collaboration in thinking, organizational interaction, and even research methods that allow for the finer distinctions essential for understanding. We will need to get much better at integrating insight about what the case is with action regarding what we want or need.

We will need far more engagement with religious communities than currently exists—not just reactive, cause-oriented engagement, but long and steady structural investment. There are too few examples today of deep investments in learning, research, direct experiments, and collaboration that goes beyond token partnerships.

The fragmented religious landscape may lend a certain tenacity to faith communities—there is no hub or centre that can be disabled. But that also means that certain investments in larger structural projects are not made. Faith communities in most cases persist in small and incremental investments. Without threatening that very granular work, new structural forms that lead to aggregation of resources among religious communities will be essential to city-building efforts that highly affect the public good of our communities.

THREE CONTENTIONS ABOUT THE STATE OF RESEARCH ON RELIGION

Ram Cnaan *directs the program for Religion and Social Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Social Policy & Practice. Professor Cnaan is an international expert in the areas of volunteering and community organizations, faith-based social care, ex-offender reentry, and social policy. He is also the founder and faculty director of the Goldring Reentry Initiative that works to reduce recidivism.*

The question of religion and the common good is not abstract and isn't only of interest to religious people. My own experience is an important indicator of that. In my academic study of religious congregations, work I have been engaged in for more than twenty years, I have learned to appreciate things I never thought I would. I will begin with a confession. I wish I had faith in me and that I could be part of a community of faith.

I have five best friends, but they live across the globe, not in Philadelphia. Having a nearby community is a great privilege I do not possess. I envy what people of faith who are part of religious congregations have and I don't. In a real community you know these people will be there for you—at whatever stage of life you are in. And I can't join a congregation just for those benefits because faith is an essential part of it. Looking from the outside in, as a researcher, I watch and say: "This is beautiful."

With this personal perspective noted, and in response to the questions posed in this session about the socio-cultural goods of religion, I would like to offer three contentions about the context these questions represent. I will follow this with three descriptions of the state of religious research today. I will conclude with four ideas about what can be done to advance our understanding about religion and the common good.

CONTENTION ONE

Is it possible for news about the public good of religion to make the front page or to start trending on social media?

It seems to be the case today that places of worship and the faith community make the news only when there is something negative to report. Sex scandals, financial fraud, attempts to influence voting, support of unpopular politicians, unpopular pronouncements from religious leaders, and other dire situations are likely to be front-page news about religion. Good deeds, instilling values, helping the needy, and sustaining communities are not worthy news. Media coverage, including social media, focuses on the negative—to hear about religion today is to hear about something bad.

I was once interviewed at length about some of my research and when I read the result I thought, "That's not what I was saying." The interviewer selected one sentence that posed a doubt about what congregations are doing, took it out of context, and made the readers believe that this is all they should know about congregations. I wondered if I should write a rebuttal. I didn't in that case. Later, I realized that the role research plays in media settings is very different than it is for people like me. Academic work has its own bias toward publication numbers whether or not what is written gets careful consideration from a wider audience or even from people in policy positions. It is important to realize that these significant cultural and institutional incentives skew what gets talked about and how it is discussed.

Seven or eight years ago, I was involved in a study on Mormons and charitable giving. The study found that Mormons gave the most money and time compared to other groups. I was on a panel regarding this study at the National Press Club along with David Campbell, a political scientist from Notre Dame. Every reporter was looking for the "juicy negative." David made only one brief comment in which he pointed out a shortcoming of the LDS Church. The result was that twenty newspapers led with that on the front page while the study's findings, the much more extended work that David presented, did not get picked up at all. In such cases the bias toward the negative is very clear indeed.

Is it possible for news about the public good of religion to make the front page or to start trending on social media? Maybe that will change but it isn't the case today. The findings on the social good of religion are very important, but it seems we have no time to give to this kind of insight. Times have changed, so our approach has to change. Whatever you read in the media, remember that there is so much that is positive going on in religious communities but it does not make the news, so the discourse on public religion in America is skewed.

CONTENTION TWO

Significant public promotion of the good of congregations often goes against the grain of the values and beliefs that congregations seek to live out. For example, when clergy, congregants, or even religious leaders wish to highlight the positive side of congregations and the faith community, they often resort to anecdotes, telling stories of how their work has changed people's lives. While it is lovely to read or hear how a person on the margins of society who contemplated suicide was assisted by religious people, saw the light and became a happy and productive citizen, these testimonies are not enough to change the dominant public view of religion.

In many cases, congregations by their very nature are not self-promoting. Data collection is an important part of my work as a researcher interested in the social manifestations of congregations. This built-in modesty can often make data collection challenging. It is not unusual for our research team to ask, "Do you have social programs in your congregation?" The answer may very well be: "No." But then as we continue to ask our questions, the reality of their social work will come to light: "Well, we do food distribution. We have programs for kids in the neighbourhood. And there's also the women's auxiliary that helps people, but we don't really have any social programs." It is a real challenge to try to capture this missing part of the story with data and then extend it to the wider public.

The modesty of most clergy and the language used prevent us from being able to appreciate the full public good that congregations produce. There is no community where congregations are not important social services providers. They may provide small care for a small number of people, most of whom are not members of the congregation, but our counting is partial and based on underreporting.

Another interesting and more hopeful aspect of congregational dynamics today is an exploratory sense that some reflect. They know things are changing and they are trying to understand what is happening and then devise ways to respond. I regularly get phone calls that go something like this: “Can I talk to you for five or ten minutes? We’ve decided to do social ministry, to find new ways to serve our neighbourhood. What should we do? Who should we work with?” My typical response is to say: “Look at your strengths. What can be sustained and last the longest?” They are on a quest to do more, but they often don’t know how or where to start. The degree of this exploration seems to be new.

CONTENTION THREE

It seems increasingly clear that congregations are in a state of flux. Denominations that traditionally guided local congregations and provided support to them are weaker than they used to be and in need of resources. Young people look for new methods of expressing their religiosity which can interrupt the strength of continuity that congregations need. These younger congregants may be actively engaged in a wide variety of social settings and social media, transitioning between places of worship, and looking for entertainment in services. They may not persist with a specific congregation over the long haul. Many congregations are realizing reduced membership and consequently reduced income. There is a sense of alarm in many places of worship where these trends are occurring.

Communication, transportation, and work are all changing dramatically. We have cars without drivers, taxi customers turning to Uber, new forms of automation in workplaces, and increasing global cyber-risks. What happens as these changes take root? Thousands will be unemployed. Amid these changes, people will also be looking for new ways to experience spirituality and to belong. Congregations are (or can be) a critical part of these changes, mitigating the negative effects and perhaps supporting and guiding them in a more healthy direction.

Throughout history, congregations were adaptive and managed to change and meet their members’ spiritual needs. I suspect we are in the midst of a serious transformative era. Some congregations will fail while others will thrive. Modes of worship will be altered, new places to worship will be tried out, congregational membership may be less local than now, and other changes may take place. Congregations will undergo several adaptations to survive and we need to observe, understand, and support them.

STATE OF RESEARCH: WHAT IS GOING ON?

I am a university researcher. I spend my days trying to make sense of the very complex dynamics of our cities and communities with a particular focus on congregations, health, and well-being. Research helps us understand what is going on and may provide clues about what we might do in response to change. Following are three ways that research can contribute to the questions about religious congregations and the common good.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION ONE

Attempts are being made to use methods of valuation to assess the economic contribution of congregations. This means that the methods and approaches used to understand business enterprises are being applied in a pioneering way to the economic value of congregations in their communities. Valuation is not in the minds of most congregations. It is certainly not the reason for their existence. But when we turn our attention to the common contributions they make, the results are surprising and significant. The anecdotes or simple metrics that congregations use (annual budgets or attendance figures) are only a fraction of the benefits being realized by the communities of which congregations are a part. Examples of this research are the academic results my team and I have published (some in conjunction with Partners for Sacred Places), the work of Michael Wood Daly and Cardus (Canada), Brian Grim (US national GDP contribution), and an Australian study (through Deloitte). There are many ways to conduct valuation studies and this baseline research is essential in changing the direction of current discourse.

We have taken to calling these ripple-effect benefits the “halo effect.” Formal studies have been done in Philadelphia and Toronto with new work coming out more regularly. Great benefits are realized when congregations serve their communities. Congregations may have relationships with key political figures in their community and a large congregation can be an important and sought-after arena of influence for local leaders—for good or ill. These relationships may be very valuable during crises. For example, the mayor’s office in Baltimore invited clergy to march after race-based killings in that city led to significant

unrest. The scope of congregational involvement can extend widely, including disaster response, conflict zone humanitarian work, after-school programs, and much more.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION TWO

We need to study the positive impact of congregations, faith-based organizations, faith, and other religious expression but this receives much less attention than it should—we need more research on congregational life and communities. In the first decade of the twenty-first century (as a direct influence of George W. Bush's presidency), understanding religious communities was a high priority in the social research community. Since 2008, however, the number of scholars interested in faith community social care and the impact of congregations on individuals' quality of life has dwindled. The absence of funding and the political elite's lack of interest are important and practical aspects of this change in research patterns. Unfortunately, these studies are now rare and hard to publish.

The intersection of policy interest and research funding was critical for earlier growth and we need to find ways to enrich this interaction again. During the Bush administration, you could go to a conference on social or community research and find twenty sessions on congregational and community interactions. Today there might be two.

What we do know about religion and society strongly indicates that congregations are vital to the health of communities and the mental and physical health of individuals.

The academic posture toward religion can also be challenging. For example, I was part of designing an invitational seminar focused on religious freedom. But at the organizing stage, a debate led committee members to conclude that there is no such thing as religious freedom, that there can only be "states of freedom." This led to us settling on a theme: "States of Freedom of Religion." When our shared understanding of religion and society is this conflicted, it is difficult to see how we can move the discourse on religion and the common good forward.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION THREE

We need more popular translators of these important academic findings about religion as a social good.

What we do know about religion and society strongly indicates that congregations are vital to the health of communities and the mental and physical health of individuals. Harold Koenig's two volumes (*Handbook of Religion and Health*) are a seminal work that reviews the positive impact of all aspects of religion on people's physical and mental health. While many studies show similar results that suggest world religions support healthy living and that being religious (in its many forms) is associated with better health outcomes, these significant results have a very difficult time getting into the public discourse in a meaningful way. The answer is not to stop doing the research. However, we need to find ways to increase publicity around these results. Koenig should be a household name but he isn't. Our common knowledge of scandals far exceeds our knowledge of Koenig's work. We need more popular translators of these important academic findings about religion as a social good.

Religious communities are often criticized for being segregated and good only for those who are in them. I don't see it that way. I don't necessarily think that a group with strong bonds and strong identity is automatically a negative thing. Strong, ethnically diverse congregations should not be seen as bad. Sociology tells us that like attracts like, that we prefer to be with people with whom we have things in common. People have a tendency to feel comfortable and relaxed with others like themselves. They look for a place to belong and to feel at home. You cannot typically do this in a group of strangers. Relationships are built by helping and supporting others, including outsiders. These bonds may make it more challenging for strangers to feel like they belong right away but that can change.

SKETCHING OUT SOME IDEAS ON WHAT COULD BE DONE

There are many ways in which the current reality can be understood and even changed. Below are four ideas about how to advance our understanding of religion and the common good.

IDEA ONE

Apply creative partnerships, collaborations, and experiments that can identify, allocate, and encourage more research on the impact of religion (in all its forms) on the quality of life of individuals and communities. This will require identifying new funding opportunities and encouraging foundations and philanthropists to allocate resources for this line of research. We also need to find ways to increase government funding for this work as has happened in the past. Some people believe we already know more than is useful. They will ask, "How much more do we need to know?" The answer is: "A lot." There is no longer any incentive to do research on religion and social impact and very little funding means very little new research. Amid so much change, we need more investment in research or younger scholars will not see careers in this area as sustainable. They will think twice before pursuing this route. That has to change.

IDEA TWO

We need to study new and alternative methods of expressing religiosity. The role of social media, geographically distributed worshipping communities, and other forms of modern-day religious expression should be better studied so as to guide religious leaders in their attempts to connect with the younger generation. Negotiating continuity and change is difficult, but it is something with which all religious congregations must contend. They need creative ongoing research in its many forms. We will miss important clues and insights if we fail to undertake this work.

Religious communities have a serious public relations problem.

IDEA THREE

Religious communities have a serious public relations problem. There is a significant gap between what people hear through the mass media, in the news, see in movies, or watch in sitcoms, and the reality of religious communities. To become part of social and political discourse, we need to undertake a coordinated dissemination of existing findings, perhaps through public relations experts who understand congregations. We need to make sure that current findings are shared, broadcast, discussed, and understood so that both the public and policy makers are aware of them.

IDEA FOUR

It is imperative to ensure that clergy and religious leaders receive study results and research findings so they can share them with their constituencies. This is not the same as idea three, though they are clearly related. Clergy, local congregational leaders, and their boards can help with this. They can lay out an understanding of the research in more accessible terms. It can be as simple as being more diligent in counting and quantifying the impact of congregations in ways that can be more widely communicated. No other social institutions are comparable with congregations in the degree and extent of the common-good impact they are making. I don't think congregational members and leaders understand this any better than the general public.

Our communities will benefit from such investments and we will all suffer if we fail to act on this.

Breaking through this perplexing ignorance starts with the communities themselves. We need to better equip clergy for these challenges. Seminary education must better prepare clergy for the range of tasks they are taking on today. They are expected to bring people together, build communities, care for congregations, fix boilers and roofs, and lead interfaith coalitions. They need guidance on how to build small communities, how to provide pastoral care, and how to help those grieving, or dealing with drug or alcohol addiction. Our communities will benefit from such investments and we will all suffer if we fail to act on this.

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