

Holy Alliances and sacred conflicts. Religion at the United Nations
Project description (short)

Holy Alliances and sacred conflicts. Religion at the United Nations explores the role of religion in international politics, analysing religion at the UN as case in point. Approaching the UN as a veritable laboratory for comparative studies of religion, *Holy Alliances* will analyse the *modus operandi* of religious actors, mapping cross-religious networks and identify the major fault-lines of religio-political relations as they materialise in UN fora. Without positing either a clash of civilizations or a claim of religious resurgence, we note an increased religious presence at the UN over the last decades and will explore how and why this matters.

Holy Alliances will examine the hypothesis that religion adapts to a secular political context by creating religious NGOs (institutional differentiation) and that these religious actors become politically effective by collaborating across religious divides, forming alliances with other religious groups and with UN member states. Furthermore, we hypothesize that such cross-religious collaboration in the UN context fosters a new kind of religious self-awareness, which taps into the (secular) idea of religion as a universal category construed in opposition to presumed Western, i.e. secular, liberal and democratic values. *Holy Alliances* will identify the values and interests that inform value conflicts and critically analyse the dynamics of the religious/secular dichotomy as it unfolds in the UN context. Designed as a broad empirical study focusing on religious actors participating in UN debates (2006-2016) and three topics where religious actors are heavily engaged: religious freedom; family policy and climate change.

The project is organised in corresponding work packages involving the entire research team. At the final stage of the project, a systematic comparative analysis will be conducted with a view to contribute to the theoretical development of the field of religion and politics, and create a typology of religio-political action instructive to stakeholders.