

Abstracts in order of appearance REDO Conference Oslo 22-25 February 2017

Keynote addresses

Wednesday 22 February

Improvising Ritual

Ronald L. Grimes, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada

We usually associate improvisation with American jazz or Indian ragas, not with ritual. Ritual is supposed to be set and scored, with little or no deviation. But how accurate is this view? And if it were true, what would be the social and environmental cost of excluding improvisation from ritual? Charles Darwin is said to have remarked, "In the long history of humankind (and animal-kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed." If we exclude improvisation from ritual, of what value is it to the survival of the planet? (Public lecture with 15 min documentary film)

Thursday 23 February

Queueing in the Street for Shelter: How Western Democracies Rely on Homelessness

Siobhán Garrigan, Trinity College Dublin, University of Dublin, Ireland

It will start with a description of the twice-daily formation and management of a long queue on Merchants' Quay in Dublin, as people try to find a bed for the night. In this queue, quietness is the norm, but also people's health fails in full public view, drug deals are traded, occasional songs are sung, arguments break out, bags are held or carefully left down, many interactions with the non-queueing public occur, and the local neighbour protest vigorously. Using this description of the visibly homeless in Ireland, I will analyse "homelessness" using sociological and theological sources, and propose that there is something at the heart of western democracy that requires homelessness (negatively, as a by-product of the capitalist model; but more positively, as a set of dispositions which contain the practice of citizenship ... which, theoretically at least, require the burden of queueing on the street to be borne by all of us, and not, only by only the poorest people.) The paper will conclude with some comments on the distortions that happen when we are concerned with our individual homes (as a retreat, a safe-hold, a furnished, gated, cosy, private space) and not our common homelessness, giving particular attention to the question of nationalism -- primarily in terms of Irish-British sectarianism, but also with regard to the current rise of fascism across Europe.

Friday 24 February

Political Theology of the Earth

Catherine Keller, Drew University, USA (08:30-10:00)

In a moment of perilous political repatterning, our planetary entanglements emit signals of emergency. Immediate crises of immigration, race and Islamophobia compete for progressive attention with the slower temporalities of climate change. As an anti-democratic authoritarianism rises across the West—with its stunning success in the land of democratic exceptionalism--what can theological reflection contribute to a timely response? While "political theology" may only obliquely engage theology as such, let alone the earth, it exposes the secularized sovereignties of the *pater omnipotens* as ongoing history. Does a relationally pluralist theology, evolving its embodied practices between the secular and the postsecular, come too late? Or might it conspire in the now-time of hope, beyond any sovereign exception, for an earth-minded political inception?

Democracy on Trial? Erosion of Truth and Trust in the Fourth Estate

Martin G. Reynolds, Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, USA (14:30-16:00)

At its best, journalism is a tool for community understanding and assessment. But right now, in the USA, many people have lost faith in the institution. Why has this occurred? In his address to the REDO conference, prominent American Journalist Martin G. Reynolds argues that while President-elect Donald Trump's verbal assaults on journalists are unprecedented in modern American politics, the public's embrace of his tactics are a symptom of a deeper erosion of trust. The problem has been made more acute through a digitized incursion of falsehoods and fake news spread like a virus across social media platforms, making it harder for the public to discern fact from fiction. Reynolds will discuss the reasons behind the growing disconnect between mainstream journalism and segments of the American public that has worsened over the past 10 years and contributed to a lack of faith in media. The glaring lack of a shared societal narrative and an agreed upon set of facts creates conflict and suspicion and has contributed to a divided United States and a weakening of the democratic institutions. No longer seen by many as impartial and objective, does the press have the moral authority to hold power to account through investigative journalism? With faith in this vital institution hanging in the balance, what must the media (and scholars too) do to be seen as a trustworthy disseminator of fact-based news, information and knowledge in the 21st Century?

Saturday 25 February

Reassembling a Broken World: Toward Practices of Anthropocenic Mindfulness

Adrian J. Ivakhiv, University of Vermont, USA

If democracy is to be reassembled, with the aid of ritualized practices, how is it that it has been disassembled in the first place? Can and should its assembly be retained over the course of its journey from the civic principle organizing an ancient Mediterranean polis to the globalizing (and anti-globalizing) 'cacocracy' we find around us today? Is 'globalization' perhaps the sign of its demise, and a nascent something -- decolonization, ecologization, Gaia, the Chthulucene, or something as yet unclear -- the sign of its re-emergence in a new, post-globalist (or post-capitalist) guise?

This talk will take the notion of 'reassembly' to be a literal description of what might be done with a broken world, where 'world' refers to the relations between a human 'demos' and a non, post, or ex-human (as in ex-urban) 'oikos,' a 'demoicracy' that has fallen into dis- or mis-rule. (Except that 'oikos,' the household, dwelling-place, or familial property, is altogether too tame a term for conjuring the partners to be invited toward the reassembly of a new, earthly demos; Stengers's and Latour's 'Gaia' and Haraway's 'Chthulu' come closer to the mark.)

I begin with a few places at which this brokenness is most evident: 'zones of alienation,' to use the term enshrined in the example of Chernobyl, that mark the ironies of technological catastrophe and of what happens when the human is (mostly) removed from the scene of the crime. In light of such zones and the geographies of sacrifice and violence they mark out, I creatively revisit Buddhism's Four Noble Truths by replacing *dukkha* (suffering) with the 'excess suffering' attributable to anthropocenic trends including atmospheric carbon forcing, plasticization, nuclear militarization, and globalization of a growth-obsessed, colonial-capitalist world system.

I argue that at the heart of this struggle is an effort to create 'adequate images' (in Werner Herzog's terms) for our time, but that, when seen through a process-relational, material-semiotic ontology of the image, this means adequate *practices* of image making, relational attending, and experimental 'assemblage.' A key component in this is the development of forms of 'engaged anthropocenic mindfulness,' whereby the affective propensities necessary for a reassembly of such a new demos, and ultimately a new kind of democracy, can be cultivated.

THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY, MORNING SESSION

Parallel thematic session 1

Indigenous festivals and the increase of sovereignty

Graham Harvey, Open University, UK

Indigenous performers have entertained as well as inspired their communities as key contributors to cultures and/or traditions that are justifiably labelled “Indigenous”. They have also entertained and inspired larger communities, including those which might be labelled “imperial”, “colonial”, “settler” or merely “touristic”. Academic studies of Indigenous performance cultures have considered the fluid lines between ritual and drama, including seeking to understand the ways in which the intended impact of performances might be achieved. In this presentation, arising from my contribution to the REDO project, I reflect on some ways in which performers at Riddu Riddu (a Sámi organised annual festival) and at the Origins Festival (a biennial event in London) provoke reflection on the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. Examples will include the presentation of Indigenous knowledges (e.g. those insistence on the kinship of humans and other-than-humans), of Indigenous land-rights, and of Indigenous ownership of cultural heritage (including of artefacts held in metropolitan museums).

Hybrid Rituals of Resistance and Community in Recent Indigenous Films

Ken Derry, University of Toronto

Indigenous rituals that push for community and against colonialism very often have a hybrid quality to them, with aspects of colonial cultures integrated into more traditional practices.¹ The Māori campaign in the 1990s for official recognition of the Tino Rangatiratanga flag, for example, included the creation story of Rangi and Papa as well as bungee jumping. Recent movements, like Idle No More and #NoDAPL, make intense use of social media to deepen the impact of their on-the-ground rites.

This paper will examine the ways in which three recent Indigenous films explore and promote similar mixtures of traditional and settler practices to help Indigenous communities recover from the effects of (ongoing) colonial violence. A striking feature of each film is that such effects also include inter-Indigenous conflict. In Lee Tamahori’s *Mahana*, a Māori family torn apart by the settler-induced tyranny of their patriarch begins to recreate systems of communal power and meaning through participation in ancestral *whare whakairo* practices as well as in the ritual of watching Hollywood films. *Maliglutit*, Zacharias Kunuk’s Inuk remake of John Ford’s *The Searchers*, focuses on Kuanana’s campaign against the (Inuk) men who have abandoned traditional ways and are violently disrupting local communities. He is aided in his efforts by his rifle *and* by his father’s spirit helper, the loon Kallulik. Finally Jay Swan, the Australian Aboriginal detective of Ivan Sen’s *Goldstone*, discovers that to succeed in his struggle against the specifically anti-democratic corruption in both the oil company and the local Aboriginal Land Council, he must follow police procedures while participating in traditional acts that link him to the sacredness of the place in which he finds himself.

What shamanic rituals may conjure up. Spirits, nationhood and the invisible in Mongolia

Gregory Delaplace, Université Paris Nanterre

Since the official religious revival in Mongolia in the late 1990s, after the fall of the one-party socialist regime and its Soviet-inspired repressive policies, shamanic callings have been on the rise. Newly (re)instituted shamans have started or resumed performing all sorts of therapeutic rituals and propitiatory ceremonies throughout the country – but especially in the capital city Ulaanbaatar – to connect the Mongolian population to a supposedly neglected and estranged spirit world. These Mongolian shamanic rituals have a common goal which is to make that which is invisible appear. However, different shamanic techniques and forms of mediumship allow different kinds of things to be shown: ghosts, spirits, but other things as well. I draw on this situation of ritual proliferation to

examine what it is exactly that these rituals manage to conjure up. By creating cohorts of young initiates, by having spirits talk about wealth, its lack, its distribution and its possible sources, by claiming to “fix” (*zasa-*) the cosmological trouble initiated by Buddhist monks and/or Chinese presence in Mongolian land, by predicting a possible future for Mongolia that depends on a connection with ancestral spirits, shamans, in the course of their rituals, make things such as politics, the nation state and democracy appear. We will examine to what extent, in the course of this process, spirits themselves may be mobilized by shamans as political agents, and made to act as such, in the face of post-socialist national uncertainties.

The Antakya Choir of Civilizations and the Contested Nature of Democracy in Turkey: Representations of Religious Pluralism, Public Unrest, and the Politics of Ritual Identity

Jens Kreinath, Wichita State University

The interreligious Choir of Civilizations was founded in 2007 under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It was established with the attempt to publicly display the religious diversity in the city of Antakya (formerly Antioch) through musical means. Represented through members of the six denominations from three religious communities in Antakya, namely Jews, Muslims (Sunni and Alawite), and Christians (Rum Orthodox, Armenian, and Catholic), this choir gives concerts in Turkey and abroad by singing unison and in alike liturgical robes songs from the rich repertoire of the different religious communities. With the explicit aim to send the message of interreligious peace and coexistence to the world, the members of the choir subscribe to participate in concerts that resemble in some of their design features the forms of ritual worship. The ritual design of the concerts and the interreligious composition of the choir raises important questions about the nature of ritual efficacy and the nature of democratic participation and representation in the context of a non-governmental organization. In light of these questions this paper argues that aside from the ritual, religious, and cultural implications of this choir’s concerts, the institutional framework and logistical infrastructure, supported financially and otherwise by the Turkish government and the Gülen movement, undermined the choir’s intended ritual efficacy in times of rising political and ethnic tensions. This became most apparent with the outbreak of the civil war in 2011 in neighboring Syria and the eruption and spread of the Gezi protests in 2013, as the Choir of Civilization remained loyal to the Turkish government, and thus lost the momentum to make a difference in the public sphere in Turkey and to cross the religious and political divide. Though the question of the role of ritual in the contestation of democracy may prevail.

Parallel thematic session 2

Mourning Nature: Environmental Protests as Rites of Grief

Sarah M. Pike, California State University, Chico

Radical environmental and animal rights activists mourn nonhuman others in a variety of ways that express their kinship with these others and strengthen their commitments to radical causes. Grief is a central motivating factor in conversion and commitment to activism. It is both an expression of deeply felt kinship bonds with other species *and* a significant factor in creating those bonds. Nearly all environmental and animal rights protests reference some kind of loss, including mass extinction. Activists’ very participation in protests is part of an ongoing process of remembering the dead and disappearing, including those who were intimately known as well as the more abstract dead of mass extinction and deforestation. For these reasons, radical environmental and animal rights protests *themselves* can be understood as rites of mourning, as they are so frequently motivated by loss and grief.

Facing the Earth Ethically, Decolonizing the Landscape: On Contemporary Arts, Ecoreligious Imagination, and Sacred Mobility

Yohana Junker, Graduate Theological Union (GTU), Berkeley

This paper locates eco-religious imagination and environmental activism in what has been coined as the “ecological turn” in the visual arts, 1960s to present. While ecology—particularly in its political implications—has received limited attention in advanced studies of the visual arts, an ontological reconfiguration of the field has been underway as theories in new materialism, futurity, and queer ecological imagination enter into the discourses of art history. The contemporary environmental, sociopolitical, and economic crises have forced art historians to rethink the anthropocentric modes of engaging and representing the natural environment. The visual arts, as a locus for such investigations, have provided a fecund ground for appraising the ways in which we have encountered the earth. Recent ontologies in new materialism, queer ecological theory, and ritual studies are crucial in the attempt to unearth the ways in which works of art facilitate an ethical environmental imagination in the Anthropocene. Works such as Mendieta’s *Silouetas*, Turrell’s *Skyspaces*, Eliasson’s installations, Ichi Ikeda *Future Compasses*, and Basia Ireland’s receptive surfaces not only require spectators to mobilize and reflect on human entanglement with the environment, they also play a fundamental role in the fashioning of a praxis that is environmentally sound and that reconfigures the limits in human perception and action. Tracing how these artworks invite bodies to ground themselves within the earth and to collectively assemble in public landscapes, I argue that they facilitate an aesthetic encounter that raises eco-religious and environmental awareness, which, in turn, acts towards the decolonization of nature, re-imagining what it means to face the earth ethically. As Heidegger writes, the first step to vigilance is a step back from merely representing and a step towards the thinking that recalls and responds to something—in our case, the environmental crises before us.

The Ruins of the Future: Cultural Memory in the Anthropocene

Devin Zuber, Graduate Theological Union (GTU), Berkeley

The ontological upset presented by the Anthropocene fundamentally challenges a number of assumptions held by historians concerned with cultural production, aesthetics, and their relation to politics. The specter of a future without humans (wiped out by climate change) has so severed historicity’s sense of itself that many, perhaps most notably Dipesh Chakrabarty, have argued we need a new way of writing and talking about the human that more resolutely links the global history of capital to the “deep time” of our species as but one of many, “other-than-human” beings. If Chakrabarty is right—that we are facing “a future beyond historical sensibility”—the problem of collective memory is sharply exacerbated, particularly when it comes to envisioning a future radically sutured from the contingency of our (anthropocenic) present.

Perhaps no surprise, then, that some of the more strident recent critics of modernity and the secular, including Bruno Latour, have returned to the well-known moment in Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940), where Benjamin’s famous “angel of history” is mercilessly propelled into a future while gazing back on a catastrophic past, “wreckage upon wreckage,” a pile of debris growing skyward, with a storm blowing in from Paradise “we call progress.” What in Benjamin’s ruins, the debris of Modernity, adumbrates the storm of the future that his angel of history cannot see?

Keeping an eye on this “wreckage upon wreckage,” this paper explores a body of contemporary, public art work that explicitly engages the problem of the Anthropocene understood as one of temporal disjunction: the immanence of an unseeable, posthuman future. How can art—especially as an engaged practice of collective memory—answer the “deep time” pressures caused by this unfolding geological stratification? While much “eco-art” has been characterized by its sheer temporal ephemerality (the earthworks of Andy Goldsworthy, Richard Long), I am interested in new kinds of memorials that foreground the intersection between human and natural histories—the “immiscible,” in Chakrabarty’s words, of species history and the histories of capital.

This paper turns to two tutelary moments of such memorialization in the Anthropocene: Tobias Hauser’s *Walden* project (2001), that saw the artist reconstruct a replica of Henry David

Thoreau's iconic cabin on the quickly transforming voids of Berlin's Potsdamer Platz, and more recently, Erik Jensen and Rebecca Sunter's *Climate Chronograph* (2016), an award-winning proposal for a National Park design competition in Washington, D.C. for "Memorials for the Future." Both *Walden* and *Climate Change* deploy aesthetics of monumental ruin, intimating a future that uncannily disrupts the present--perhaps the liberatory suggestion of a "negative universal history" (Adorno, Benjamin) that the geologic force of climate change now foists upon us.

Distanced intimacy in collective dances of self-discovery

Michael Houseman, Ecole pratique des hautes études (Paris)

In most large Western cities, hundreds of people attend weekly sessions of collective dancing – 5 Rhythms, Biodanza, Movement Medicine, etc. – explicitly aimed at “self-discovery” and “personal transformation”. During these sessions, participants’ openness to others, their ability to bodily and emotionally engage with them in a spontaneous, creative and sensitive manner, is elicited and displayed. Thus, the short-lived, danced interactions they undertake are often felt to be of exceptional eloquence and intensity. It is noteworthy, however, that those who participate in these interactions remain distant acquaintances at best, rarely socializing outside of dance sessions (and other related activities); indeed, practitioners often admit that a close personal relationship tends to hamper their ability to “let go” in the way they aspire to. Participants are thus engaged in a particular type of distanced intimacy in which heart-felt encounters with each other are less negotiated connections between individual persons than mutually responsive demonstrations of what an authentic interpersonal relationship is supposed to be. This paper explores the workings and the implications of this distinctive sociability by envisaging it as a ritual experience, analogous to expressions of unflinching solidarity between co-initiates, the concerned, giddy enchantment exhibited by marriage guests, or the solemn, reverberating grief characteristic of funeral ceremonies. It does not provide a clear model of behavior participants can realistically apply in their daily lives, but difficult to pin down yet memorable episodes in the light of which they are able to reevaluate their everyday relations and ways of being in the world.

Farmers and Pilgrims: Ritualizing New Relationships, Negotiating Cultural and Natural Pluralism

Donna Seamone, Acadia University

(Abstract TBA)

THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY, AFTERNOON SESSION

Parallel thematic session 3

Homeland Ritualized: An Analysis of Written Messages Placed at Temporal Memorials after the Terrorist Attacks on 22 July 2011 in Norway

Cora Alexa Døving, Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities (HL-senteret), Oslo

During the first weeks after the terrorist attacks, a surprising number of citizens acted and spoke on behalf of the nation, doing so through ritual performances of grief and politics. Specific places were turned into temporary memorials consisting of flowers, candles, card and letters. This study has analyzed these memorials, focusing on the written messages. I argue that the memorial messages signify a ritualistic attempt not only to influence how society should understand the terrorist attacks and the response to them (a response to change), but also to influence society itself (make a change). Performative in nature, the memorials themselves became a discourse of change – not only about changing the streets after the terror but steering a course for the community to come. Most of the messages are filled with promises of the dead gaining eternal life, a notion often mixed with formulas stating that society now has changed. Many of the messages contain what J.L. Austin (1962) calls

‘performative utterances’, referring to statements that accomplish change, such as “I now pronounce you husband and wife” used in the rite of marriage. The utterances of change in the memorial messages are remarkably often formulated as statements declaring that change already has occurred, such as “This has made us a better nation”.

The memorial messages are examples of how citizens who spoke on behalf of society saw themselves as ‘representatives of the nation’ at the same time as they expressed a political message that reveals the ambivalence in such patriotism. Spontaneous memorials are “democracy in action” (Senie, 2006: 51), and studying the construction of them, has offered insight into the connection between social mobilization, and ritual performative events.

Songs of Democracy? Responses to 22 July

Birte Nordahl, University of Oslo

People sing in times of crisis, and in this respect the people's ritual responses to the terrorist attacks on 22 July 2011 are no exception. Several songs, like *My Little Country*, *For The Youth*, *My Rainbow Race*, *Some Die Young*, became of such importance that they are considered among our most important collective memorial objects, along with roses, candles and words like "love", "democracy" and "openness". They all have other origins and contexts than July 22, but were used in ways that have deeply connected them with this event too.

My presentation will focus particularly on how *For The Youth* was performed within the first month following the terrorist attacks. The first time this song is documented sung was whilst the massacre on Utøya was still ongoing. Some of the teenagers desperately swimming away from the island in attempt to save their own and each other's lives, sang *For The Youth* to keep their strength and spirits up, and to drown the sound of bullets. Two days later the whole nation joined when *For The Youth* was sung at the televised “Mass for mourning and hope” at Oslo Cathedral as hymn before the Eucharist. The next day, when more than 200,000 people assembled at City Hall Square for The Rose March, the assembly also performed the song. In the following days and weeks, the song was sung repeatedly in the streets, in churches and at other religious sites, at concerts and funerals. And during the televised national memorial ceremony in Oslo Spektrum, one month after the terrorist attacks, the audience transformed *For The Youth* from a scheduled solo performance by an artist to a hybrid between hymnal and communal singing when spontaneously joining in.

I will be analyzing the intersections between ritual singing and democracy by looking specifically at how two different singing traditions, the political and the liturgical, came into play with the various usage of *For The Youth* within the first month after July 22, as consolation, as invoking power, as unifying and as democratic manifest.

Flowers at funerals. The case of Muslim victims of 22 July

Ida Marie Høeg, University of Agder

This paper examines the funeral ceremonies of three Muslim adolescents – Mona Abdinur, with a Somali background, and Bano Rashid and Rafal Jamil with a Kurdish background, who were victims of the terror attacks at the youth camp 22 July 2011 at the island Utøya. The important question in this respect is: Did the terror attacks and the subsequent interreligious funeral ceremonies create an arena where ritual actors, objects and actions transform interactions and redesign networks? With particular focus on the emotional dynamics that arise from the rituals and in light of Actor-Network Theory, I will describe and examine the role of flowers and how these entities and humans work as a network. Based on films, media reports and in-depth interviews with organisers and participants in these three funerals, I will argue that violence and terror attacks may provide social mobilisation where these rituals and the accompanying emotions pave the way for contact and connections in a setting where the public cemeteries were the arena for negotiating national identity.

Voices in Court. Shaping the Law at the trial of Anders Behring Breivik

Ingvild Folkvord, NTNU (Trondheim)

The paper will focus on some of the judicial practices that emerged during the trial of Anders Behring Breivik in the City Court of Oslo, Norway, after the terror attacks perpetrated on 22 July 2011. Embracing an interpretive point of view mainly inspired by the philosopher Ernst Cassirer, I will shed light on various performative practices, this in order to show how they contribute both to an early commemoration of the terror attacks and to giving the catastrophic event a specific form. The paper will draw particular attention to the expressive dimension live and recorded voices have on the process of transformation that is required from the trial in order to reach a collective state in which justice is recognized as being delivered.

Dealing with Death in Contemporary Western Culture: A View from Afar

Marika Moisseeff, CNRS (Paris)

Death is envisaged here as an event involving three types of phenomena: (1) the presence of a corpse, (2) the emotional reactions of those close to the deceased, and (3) collective representations of pain, loss and dying. In Australian Aboriginal communities, as in many cultural settings traditionally studied by anthropologists, the presence of the cadaver knits these three dimensions closely together. In striking contrast with this, in contemporary Western cultural contexts, the concealment (or aestheticization) of the dead body leads to a disjunction of these phenomena that tend to be treated independently. The corpse is handled by medical staff and funeral homes. The emotional reactions of close mourners are taken care of by “psy” (psychologists, psychotherapists, etc.), either directly, as when they are consulted, or indirectly, through their theorization of the mourning processes as made available in various media (magazines, TV programmes, self-help books, etc.). Collective representations of loss, pain and death are built up through narratives – in literature, movies, biographies, etc. – and works of art, but also through the mediatization of the death of distanced personalities: movie or rock stars, famous figures as Lady Diana or Mother Theresa, victims of terrorist attacks or natural catastrophes.

In the former case, the presence of the corpse at the center of mourning rituals allows for an affective sharing and a harmonization of emotions between the different parties at hand: those close to the dead person are invited to exteriorize their inner feelings, whereas those who are more distant are led to interiorize the grief of those closer to the deceased. In the contemporary West, a similar process takes place, but is mediated by far more distanced and easily manageable artefacts than the corpse itself: images, narratives, artistic creations. In the case of collective catastrophes such as the Breivik massacre or the Charlie Hebdo killings, collective commemorations and the conflicts they give rise to, like the corpse in other traditions, allow people occupying different positions to participate in a similar emotional harmonization in which physical presence, affective expression and shared representations of loss are made to converge.

Parallel thematic session 4

Back to Religious Basics and Beyond? Bruno Latour’s Quest

Morny Joy, University of Calgary

In two relatively recent essays (2009; 2010), Bruno Latour revisits his early religious pedigree that he claims has never ceased to inform his present-day pronouncements. Thus, at the same time he has undertaken and inspired various projects of “Re-Assembling,” that investigate “the comparative study of the various ways in which cultural institutions produce truth or “regimes of truth” (2009: ix), he allows that he has also been preoccupied with re-reading “the texts and inscriptions of the religion that ‘matters’ to him” (2013a:113). His family background fostered an early interest in the work of Charles Péguy, while during his time as a self-described “militant Catholic student” at the University of Dijon (1966-73), he studied the hermeneutics of Rudolf Bultmann, both of whom have had a

lasting influence. It is in his book *Rejoicing* (2013a [2002]) that he first reveals in detail his continuing religious preoccupations. At the same time, in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: Anthology of the Moderns* (2013b), where Latour undertakes an overview of the various “modes of existence” he has investigated during his thirty years of study, he now includes religion as one of these modes, though deemed to have certain distinctions from other modes. Latour then proceeds to justify religion’s inclusion as a distinct mode of existence, and then concludes with what could be described as a form of an *apologia pro sua vita*. This paper will examine the claims that Latour makes on the part of religion, which in actuality remains throughout that of Christianity, and will evaluate his specific ontological claims.

Contesting Evil

Kjetil Hafstad, University of Oslo

It is hard for people, Hannah Arendt states, to live with something that takes your breath and leaves you without words. In my presentation, I will discuss evil and human fragility. I will ask whether certain “soft” responses to evil, learned from philosophy and theology, may have an impact, and if so, to what extent or how effective.

The War of the Trees – analysing the rise and fall of an indigenous mass greening movement amongst the Shona in Southern Zimbabwe using Actor Network Theory (ANT).

Tony Balcomb, University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa

The reforestation initiative under the auspices of Zirrcon (Zimbabwean Institute for Religious Research and Ecological Conservation) in the Masvingo province of Zimbabwe during the eighties, nineties and early 2000, has been acclaimed by some leading scholars in the field as one of the largest movements for environmental reform in Southern Africa and one of the most innovative and successful environmental initiatives of its kind in the so-called “Third World”. The tree planting rituals were innovations based on a eucharist liturgy in African Independent Churches and rain making rituals in Shona Traditional Religion. Actor Network Theory is a tool for social analysis associated with the French scholar Bruno Latour and is based on a definition of agency that includes the entire panoply of forces impinging on a situation. An ANT analysis reveals that the Zirrcon rituals were the result of the assembly of a multiplicity of actors, “entities” or “objects”, that came together from a variety of communities that brought with them a multiplicity of ideas, things, resources, interests, intentions, needs, motivations and expectations, all of which worked together in an “imbroglio” of relationships to bring about the “War of the Trees” with its consequences – both intended and unintended. The Zirrcon project with its rituals were in many ways a classically instructive example of the ecology of indigenous traditions and their potential to assemble a notion of democracy that has become highly desirable in some quarters in the west. It is also instructive of how profoundly western intervention impacts on indigenous movements both for better and worse.

Modes of public preaching as response to violence and uncertainty

Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen & Sivert Angel, University of Oslo

Democratic values and practices were challenged by the refugee crisis caused predominantly by the war in Syria. The political situation in 2015/2016 shifted from an overwhelmingly positive attitude during summer to a more refugee critical opinion during winter. The Church of Norway played a significant role in the public debate. Bishops and church leaders criticized the government for its more restrictive refugee politics. Politicians responded by criticizing the church for being ‘socialists’ and part of a discourse supporting ‘a tyranny of goodness.’

This paper will discuss how political discourse on refugees and ritualized practices are negotiated in strategically sampled sermons. By situating these sermons in contemporary public discourse, it analyses how discourses on politics, values, and religion intersect and are played out

against each other. How do local sermons take part in the political and the theological discourse on refugees? Which are the roles of the different actors within the different layers of the discourse; local church vs. cathedral vs. bishops vs. politicians? Which meanings and values do they convey? How are the models of sociality they construct?

The analyzed sermons are sampled from a congregation close to the point of entrance to the country, Case Border, and from one of the major cities in Norway, Case Cathedral. Also, we have selected sermons by bishops central in the debate. The data material consists of sermons from the periods when the refugee situation was intensely present and contested in public debate (September 2015, January 2015 and March 2016).

The paper shows how the sermons are part of the same theological-political discourse as the bishops but differently done. The refugees are described in ways that let them appear as flexible, abstract and partly metaphorical. The paper explores how the sermons connect refugees to ways of being a 'good' Christian.

Friday 24 FEBRUARY, AFTERNOON SESSION

Single thematic session: July 22 Examined

Are certain ritual forms generative of certain experiences and modes of (democratic) sensibilities? Facts, analysis and critique of the Post-22 July Charette experiments at DogA and Skiringssal
(Discussant TBA)

Jone Salomonsen, University of Oslo, with Ida Marie Høeg, University of Agder, and Cora Alexa Døving, Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities (HL-senteret), Oslo

This session will present facts, analysis and critique of a multi-workshop tool called Charette (or Plansmie in Norwegian) that was used and adapted on four collaborative research occasions as a tool booth to design, assemble and study how self-selected groups of Norwegian young adults would process the significance of the 2011 terrorist attacks against Oslo and Utøya and reflect on questions regarding democracy, extremism and transformative memorial practices. Three sessions took place at DogA, Oslo, in Oct 2014, and one at Skiringssal Folk High School, Sandefjord, in Jan 2015. The Charette turned out to be both a methodological and pedagogical experiment: How to process the significance of July 22 and at the same time raise new societal and political questions with young adults? How to teach democracy by doing it in multiple media at the same time as it is debated? How to design an open and inclusive memorial place that in and through its design elements is felt to express both a gesture of solidarity with victims of terrorism and to instigate a new peaceful, semi-public gathering ground by deploying symbolic cultural objects associated with inclusivity, tolerance and safe space? Two phenomenological questions will in particular be addressed: Can we report how certain forms are generative of certain experiences and can (possibly) enable certain (ethical) modes of conversing and relating to 'the other'? Can we report on any correlations between a groups envisioned effect of a planned ritual form and the embodied format of the group assembly in which that particular imaginary (vision or feeling) was born?

Parallel thematic session 5

Reforming the St. Olav's Ways: On the Revival of Pilgrimage and the Reconstruction of Identity in Contemporary Norway

Marion Grau, Norwegian School of Theology

The work is based on several consecutive seasons of field work and participant observation as a pilgrim and volunteer in various places in the pilgrimage network as well as the study of historic documents and newsreports to assess the historical context, cultural positionality, and social

effectiveness of pilgrimage in Norway and how it is mediated through journalism, writing, and social media.

In terms of method, I engage pilgrimage studies, tourism studies, ritual studies, theologies of pilgrimage, and popular literature on pilgrimage.

The redevelopment of this form of Protestant pilgrimage is set in a context of demographic changes and climate change, all of which are addressed by various groups of pilgrims or other actors in the network. The network features arranged group travel, activist pilgrims raising awareness for causes such as climate change and hospice services, and the like, as well as increasing numbers of local and foreign pilgrims, government officials, pilgrimage activists and pilgrimage priests in the Church of Norway.

This pilgrimage network has been growing rapidly since the late 1990s, after it had been suppressed by Reformation forces, and various shrines and relics were destroyed. Inspired by pilgrimage resurgences elsewhere and especially the Camino, this particular reemergence also involves a renegotiation of the narratives of nation and community, as well as Protestant Christianity, as many elements of ritual and practice previously associated with Roman Catholicism have reemerged within a previously starkly Pietist Norwegian Christianity. The study maps how both pilgrims, hosts, church officials and government officials are renegotiating and reshaping narratives of nation, identity, Christianity, and Protestant practice.

Pilgrimages to Fatima as Ways to Reassert Forms of Democracy and Solidarity

Anna Fedele & David Soares, Lisbon University Institute

This paper is based on ongoing fieldwork about pilgrimages to the Marian shrine of Fatima in Portugal. It explores the ritual creativity of Portuguese pilgrims walking from their hometowns to Fatima to attend the annual celebrations of the apparitions in May and October. It focuses in particular on their ways of creating relationships with divine entities but also with human beings who are not present during the pilgrimage, such as former pilgrims or family members dead and alive.

In a historical moment in which the Portuguese face economic difficulties that have forced many of them to emigrate and the State appears incapable to guarantee real democracy, offering a solution to the strongly polarized distribution of wealth, these pilgrimages appear as a way of reaffirming grassroots forms of solidarity and democracy. Even if not all the pilgrimage groups are organized in the same way, many, if not most of them, rely at least to some extent on the help of local public institutions to find a free shelter for their nights and on the generosity of local people or former pilgrims to host and provide some of their meals. These sacred journeys, that are widely broadcasted by the Portuguese media, therefore help to reassert national values such as those of solidarity and democracy, to reactivate the engagement of local public institutions and to reinforce in a direct or indirect way also the links with those who have been forced to emigrate. Pilgrimages to Fatima therefore emerge as ways of fostering a renewed sense of *communitas* (Turner and Turner 1978) but also to contest the social and political status quo (Eade and Sallnow 1991) and to proclaim and practice new and old forms of solidarity.

Ritual Critique of Power and Behavior: Kundum Avudwene Ceremony in Ghana

Samuel Etikpah, Pentecostal University Ghana

Kundum is the main annual festival of the Nzema and Ahanta in the Western Region of Ghana. Members of Churches, Mosques and representatives of African traditional religion (ATR) participate in the Kundum festival. Government officials and several numbers of Ghanaian citizens and visitors to the country attend. The major Kundum festival rituals include liturgical pronouncements (taboos), series of libation, invocations, mythological narratives, drumming, dancing, eating, the sharing of food, mourning for the deceased, dispute resolution, assemblies of chiefs and people (*durbar*), and the ceremonial expulsion of evil. Newly invented Kundum rites include interfaith fundraising services, football games, and beauty and joking competitions.

A group of young male Kundum participants perform festival songs (*avudwene* in local parlance) to criticize chiefs and individuals for corrupt behavior. During the performance of *avudwene*, 'Paramount chiefs and other political figures are deliberately subjected to relentless attack, criticism and insult in order to drive home the value of openness' (Agovi 1995, 60). Though many festivals in Ghana involves ceremonial singing, the song performance in the Kundum festival is unique in its element of unrestricted critique and lampooning. My REDO conference paper describes the structured division of artistic work that produces the ideas, ridicules and criticisms expressed in *avudwene* and examines issues of ritual credibility, ritual authority, gender, chieftaincy and democracy. *Avudwene* assesses and interprets the social values, conducts and conditions of the people annually. It embodies a call for personal and social transformation. However, women are excluded from the production of the open critique and free lampooning. Ritual can be a critique of political leadership and behavior. Ritual practice can also be a patriarchal gesture at democracy. The paper contributes to an improved analysis of ritual social effectiveness.

Pluralisation or polarization? The clash of festive performances within the public sphere of the Polish Woodstock festival.

Grzegorz Brzozowski, University of Warsaw

The spaces of modern festivals can be seen as not only a stage of effervescent performative involvement but also a public sphere of negotiation of cultural differences. Woodstock is the biggest Polish open-air festival, attracting up to 800 000 participants (2011). Designed in 1995 as redefining the heritage of both American Woodstock and Polish anti-communist Jarocin punk festival, it is ruled by the principle of radical inclusiveness (no entrance delimitations). The event's policy resulted in an elevated pluralisation of attendants, expressed through self-designed performances reinventing the festive spatiality and employing its materiality. To which extent can the shared phenomenal conditions of festive sphere accommodate diversity and a possible clash of displayed cultural identities, while establishing performative rules of their democratic coexistence? How does the culture of the festive assembly of Woodstock relate to other polarized performative events of Polish public sphere?

The project combines a neo-Durkheimian academic analysis (theories of cultural performance by Jeffrey Alexander) with a presentation of a short movie composed of ethnographic material gathered within the Polish Woodstock, providing an insight into the phenomenology of its public space as constructed through diverse performative actions of its participants. Some of them, relying on established religious references (Jesus Camp, Hare Krishna Camp), are forced to negotiate the rules of coexistence within the shared space of display, facing the possibilities of clash with representatives of other religions as well as the critical response of the regular participants, who develop their own carnivalesque, subversive performative culture. Some evangelizing actions blend into the visual language of the regular Woodstock culture. Many of the actors of the festive space meet in the main festival alley, where the rules of the space – and possibilities of intervention – need to be constantly reinvented; this alley became the topic of the visual part of the project.

Sacred Pampering and Cultivating the Divine Feminine: Women's Circles and Well-Being Festivals as Sites of Sisterhood and Dissent

Chia Longman, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin/Ghent University

This paper draws on ethnographic research in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany at women's gatherings involving ritual and ceremonial practices during festivals, conferences and monthly 'circles' that celebrate the 'feminine.' Based on an analysis of participant observation at and in-depth interviews with initiators and leaders of these events, I show how these sites provide for a need among some women for enhancing their well-being by reclaiming the 'feminine' in a spiritual and ritual post-secular vein, characteristic of the subjective turn in late modernity. Critics of the new spirituality and therapy culture would likely analyze such discourses and practices of the new feminine as

‘technologies of the self’ that merely empower the individual woman (predominantly white and middle-class) and are the product of a form of neo-liberal (and secular) governmentality that forecloses political critique and social change. However, I argue that firstly, these sites do provide modes of sociality and building community, for example by reclaiming ‘sisterhood’ that can be analyzed as instances of feminist consciousness-raising. Secondly, I argue that although circles and festivals can be viewed as pertaining to the ‘private’ gender separatist rather the general ‘public’ sphere; often in their ethos, ambitions and concrete projects, they are directed at transforming society towards more justice and well-being for all.

Parallel thematic session 6

Materializing politics: savage thoughts and objects

Paul-François Tremlett, Open University, London

This paper focuses on the Occupy Democracy protest that took place in October 2014 in Parliament Square, London and in particular, on the destruction of protest objects by Police and so-called Heritage Wardens. The destruction of these objects is taken as a point of departure for de-centring politics and citizenship away from rarefied notions of Western reason, rationality and the subject to focus instead on tangible protest objects and their agency in the performance of politics. Yet the focus is not on protest objects at the expense of human participants but rather, in pursuit of Eduardo Kohn’s conception of The Open Whole (2013), on situating protest objects, protestors, Police and Heritage Wardens alongside the monuments and buildings of Parliament Square, with the Square itself conceived not simply as the space in which the protest takes place but as an agentive participant in the protest. I argue that re-thinking politics and citizenship in terms of a mode of entangled cognition that Claude Lévi-Strauss termed *bricolage* which privileges assemblages of humans, objects and places provides an alternative basis for conceiving the field of the political, and which can be a vanguard for deeper and more inclusive democratic imaginaries (Bennett 2010; Hodder 2014; Latour 1993 and 2005; Lévi-Strauss 1966).

Rituals of resistance and the struggle over democracy in Turkey

Agnes Czajka, Open University, London

The 2013 Gezi Park protests and the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey are watershed moments in the at least decade-old struggle over Turkish democracy. These two moments are, in many ways, irreconcilable. Yet, they have both given rise to a host of rituals through which competing conceptions of democracy are discursively and nondiscursively articulated within the Turkish public sphere. Turkish democracy has thus become increasingly ritualised, with competing articulations of democracy coming to a head in rival public displays, including communal *iftars* (fast-breaking evening meals) during the month of Ramadan, the *demokrasi nöbeti* (democracy vigil), and the newly institutionalised *demokrasi bayramı* (democracy holiday). Interestingly, and perhaps unexpectedly, it is the ostensibly ‘conservative,’ ‘Muslim’ rituals – such as the communal *iftar* first organized during the Gezi Park protests – that offer a more radically open and inclusive articulation of democracy than the ostensibly ‘secular,’ government-backed events and memorialisations.

The proposed paper will, first, offer a brief overview of the decade-old struggle over democracy in Turkey. It will then attend to the aforementioned rituals, and explore the distinct and often competing articulations of democracy they foreground. Finally, using Derrida’s work on democracy, and particularly his notion of ‘democracy-to-come’, the paper will consider the possibilities these rituals open up (or close down) for democracy in Turkey.

A Clearing in the Forest of Democracy

Jone Salomonsen, University of Oslo

(Abstract TBA)

Effigies, democracy and iconoclastic citizens

Zaki Nahaboo, Liverpool Hope University

The usage of effigies in protest movements generates unique expressions of democracy. I develop this premise by analysing the following events: the 2015 anti-Charlie Hebdo protests in Pakistan, the 2011 Egyptian revolution, and the 2016 grassroots campaign against Hillary Clinton. The effigies used in these politically diverse events highlight common ritualistic dimensions. They symbolically convey, reflect, regulate and condense a range of criticisms and affect into non-human bodies that can be tried *in absentia*. At the same time, the spectacular and often carnivalesque display of violence exceeds 'civilized' expressions and expectations of democratic protest. I argue that the disciplinary and disruptive effects of effigy manipulation captures a moment where a democratic people emerges, which cannot be understood through existing theorizations of free speech or 'mob rule.' I develop W.J.T Mitchell's understanding of iconoclasm to argue that rituals of effigy torture and burning constitute what I term 'iconoclastic citizens.' How citizens charge physical objects with qualities akin to false idols offers a conduit for exploring how ritualised practices of effigy disfigurement is itself a site of refiguring the demos.