

Governance of the Multi-Religious

University of Copenhagen,

June 3-4, 2026

3 June in 7A-2-04, 4th June in 6B-4-04, High Note lecture in 21-0-54

Invitation

Across Europe and beyond, religion is said to be governed, regulated, managed, or accommodated. Whether framed through religious freedom law, integration policy, counter-extremism measures, welfare administration, or public institutional practice, contemporary states operate on the assumption that religion is an identifiable and governable object. Academic scholarship has, to a significant extent, adopted similar vocabularies. Yet governing religion, especially Islam and, increasingly, the multi-religious, poses profound conceptual and practical challenges to both law and policy and to scholarship. Law, politics, and administration must translate internally diverse, contested, and lived traditions into legally actionable facts. We can observe that courts determine what counts as doctrine; ministries define legitimate representatives; municipalities design and manage prayer rooms; legislators codify family practices; welfare institutions categorize religious identity.

The examples can be drawn from all over Europe; from the French creation of ‘L’Islam Lumiere’, to the Qur’an burning laws in Denmark, to ‘Körperschaftsstatus in Germany’ and to establishment frameworks in e.g. United Kingdom or Finland. All of this goes beyond merely regulation of religion, rather states, legislators and administrators actively participate in producing or even manufacturing particular versions of it. The workshop “Governance of the Multi-Religious” begins from this tension: what does it mean to govern religion when the object of governance is unstable, plural, and deeply entangled with political imaginaries and theological ontologies of nationhood, security, integration and social cohesion? And what does it mean to claim that European states “govern” religion when religion today consists of a complex confluence of established Christianity, long-recognized Jewish communities, diverse Muslim groups, humanists, ‘nones,’ ‘ex-’ movements, and fluid forms of affiliation that resist institutional containment? Much contemporary governance of these formations follows neither classical constitutional models nor the scholarly paradigms that continue to structure academic debate. Law, politics, and administration must render internally diverse and contested traditions into legally actionable facts, and we see this happening in courts, in municipalities, in prisons and in universities, where the everyday challenge of the multi-religious is uncircumventable.

“Governance of the Multi-Religious” invites critical reflection on this grooving tension. Moving beyond the familiar vocabulary of governance, regulation, and management, the workshop explores how legal categories, administrative procedures, parliamentary initiatives, and sub-parliamentary practices actively shape what religion can be. Are existing paradigms, especially those developed

around the governance of Islam in light of a majority Christianity, adequate in light of increasingly multi-religious and internally heterogeneous societies? Or, do they obscure the constitutive work through which states craft recognizable, partnerable, governable and controllable forms of religion? Particular attention will be given to latent Christian templates embedded within European constitutional and institutional frameworks, including recognition schemes, public space management (such as multi-faith rooms), and legislation in areas such as family law, criminal law, and integration policy.

The workshop proceeds along two complementary trajectories. The first examines legal, political, and administrative innovations in governing and limiting religion more broadly, which may be understood, drawing on Foucauldian perspectives, as technologies of governance and forms of governmentality. The second trajectory pushes this analysis further by investigating the structuring implications of these practices: how religion itself changes, transforms, reforms, or is reinvented through the languages, powers, and legal frameworks of religious actors. Here, insights from Foucault may be read alongside Bourdieu, Derrida and broader theories of structuration to explore the generative effects of governance—how religion is not only constrained but also reshaped and produced a new.

Finally, the workshop situates these developments within their transnational European context. Governance models circulate across jurisdictions through parliamentary debates, administrative cooperation, and supranational jurisprudence. Particular attention will be paid to intra-European dynamics, including Nordic–French exchanges and the role of European legal institutions, in shaping shared yet contested repertoires for managing religious diversity.

We look forward to presentations from scholars in law, political science, sociology, anthropology, history, and religious studies that critically interrogate the conceptual foundations and practical consequences of governing the multi-religious. Comparative and interdisciplinary approaches are especially welcome.

The workshop is cohosted by the *Exploratory Network on Law and Religion*, funded by the Danish Independent Research Foundation (grant no 4362-00040B) and hosted at [Centre for the Study of Religion in Society, Culture and Law \(SCALA\)](#), and by *Out of Step or Leading Light*, 2025-2027, funded by the Franco-Nordic Programme, led by the University Centre of Norway in Paris (CNUP) and the Fondation Masion des Sciences de l'Homme (FMSH).