

THE 11TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

RELIGION AND CAPITALISM IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY:

values, identities, and politics



Srebrno jezero

4-5 September 2026

ORGANIZED BY

The Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade
(Forum for Religious Issues)

The Center for Empirical Research of
Religion, Novi Sad

RELIGION AND CAPITALISM IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY:
VALUES, IDENTITIES, AND POLITICS

Published by

Institute of Social Sciences
Institute of National Significance
for the Republic of Serbia

Belgrade, 2026

Supported by

Ministry for Science, Innovation
and Technology Development

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Publisher

Marta Sjeničić

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(ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE)

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



Silver Lake, Veliko Gradište, 4–5 September 2026

Emilija Mijić, Nena Vasojević

Institute of Social Sciences
Belgrade, Serbia

THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH BETWEEN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INVESTOR URBANISM: THE CASE OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SERBIA

Investor urbanism implies the investment of private capital in the construction and expansion of the city, and the experience in Serbia points to the fact that public spaces are practically privatized and used for residential and commercial, primarily consumer facilities, while the existing infrastructure of the city is only burdened even more without the investor's obligation to invest in it. Economic growth is regarded as a public good, although it does not necessarily imply social development; more often, it entails the devastation of public spaces, the prioritization of capital over citizens, and ultimately the commercialization or repurposing of cultural, material, and architectural heritage in attractive urban locations.

The National Library of Serbia, which houses more than five million items, including valuable medieval manuscripts, is located on the Sveti Sava plateau. Together with the Church of Saint Sava, it forms an urban, spatial, cultural, and historical unit of Belgrade and is a protected cultural asset. Today, the structural stability of the building, as well as the repository that preserves the most significant national body of books, is under threat, as trees in the protected park zone were cut down without consulting experts to initiate the construction of the underground "Skerlićeva" garage without the necessary construction analyses and documentation.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the public narrative and examine the position and stance of the Serbian Orthodox Church regarding the endangerment of the area where the largest Orthodox temple—the Church of Saint Sava—and the National Library are located, considering that the Serbian Orthodox Church is a co-investor, i.e., it is financing the construction of the public garage being built by the private company Concord West. On the other hand, employees of the National Library of Serbia, cultural heritage experts,

and the broader cultural public have appealed to institutions to enforce the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage, halt the construction, and ensure the protection of the National Library from potential damage—both to the building itself and to the cultural heritage preserved in its repository—as well as to provide safe access to the entrance, which has not functioned properly since the works began in 2024.

Keywords: Serbian Orthodox Church, National Library of Serbia, investor urbanism, cultural heritage