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values, identities, and politics



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INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
BELGRADE

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

(ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL
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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



Silver Lake, Veliko Gradište, 4–5 September 2026

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS*

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OF THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
**RELIGION AND CAPITALISM IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY:
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(Silver Lake, Veliko Gradište, Serbia)

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FROM PILGRIMAGE TO A TOURISM PRODUCT: RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND CAPITALISM IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

A complex social phenomenon that integrates religious, cultural, and identity dimensions, pilgrimage represents a religious practice of traveling to a sacred place, motivated by faith, spiritual needs, and the desire for transformation, whether personal or collective. This symbolic and often physical act of approaching the sacred, through spiritual purification, entails visiting a holy site, pursuing a spiritual goal, and engaging in a shared experience, most often mediated through ritual travel. Contemporary changes in the tourism market indicate that the concept of pilgrimage is evolving and expanding beyond a strictly religious framework, and it is precisely this transformation that forms the basis for the development of religious tourism, where traditional pilgrimage intertwines with tourism practices and the principles of a market economy.

The paper analyzes the transformation of pilgrimage from a traditional religious practice into a tourism product within the context of the development of global capitalism in contemporary society. Drawing on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, it examines how processes of globalization, commodification, and marketing influence the changing meanings and functions of religious travel. The study also considers the role of various subjects involved in religious travel, such as religious institutions, the state, and the tourism industry, in shaping and managing religious tourism destinations, as well as the implications of these processes for local communities and cultural heritage. Increasing attention is given to the impact of digitalization and contemporary media on the promotion of religious tourism destinations, as well as to the growing role of individualized spiritual practices in shaping tourism demand. In this context, religious tourism is viewed both as a space

for intercultural dialogue and as a potential site of conflict, particularly under conditions of intense global migration and political tensions. Special emphasis is placed on the relationship between spirituality and the market, where religious tourism simultaneously serves as a space for preserving religious values and for their economic exploitation. The paper analyzes how contemporary religious tourists redefine travel motivations, moving between faith and consumer patterns, thereby blurring the boundaries between pilgrims and tourists. Particular attention is paid to the paradoxes of contemporary religious tourism, reflected in the simultaneous strengthening of religious visibility and its commercialization within both domestic and international tourism markets. Finally, the paper highlights the need to establish a sustainable model for the development of religious tourism that would reconcile economic interests with the preservation of authenticity, cultural heritage, and the spiritual significance of pilgrimage in contemporary society, while emphasizing the importance of ethical principles and responsible governance of this complex social phenomenon.

Keywords: religious tourism, pilgrimage, capitalism, society

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The Forum for Religious Issues (FOREL) is a research group at the Institute of Social Sciences that explores contemporary religion from an interdisciplinary perspective by bringing together researchers from the Institute of Social Sciences and external scholars from the fields of sociology, philosophy, anthropology, political and legal studies. FOREL informs the scientific and general public about its findings based on research evidence, and organizes international scientific meetings, conferences, roundtables, and panel discussions.

Center for Sociological and Anthropological Research specializes in the fields of sociology, gender studies, sociology of religion, political sociology, and political anthropology. The Center has a long tradition of research in the sociology of religion and religious studies, focusing on religion in post-conflict and post-transitional societies, secularization and desecularization, religious identity, and religious organizations.

