
Decline and persistence of religiosity in the contemporary world

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Résumé

The aim of my paper is to examine patterns of religious change in Europe and in other parts of the world from the perspective of multiple modernities. I argue that the level of religiosity and the direction of religious change depend on three factors: a) the degree of disenchantment of the prevailing (world)religions, b) the level of existential security, and c) the impact of modernization on religious life. The proposed conceptual framework is explored by comparing religious change in ten cultural-religious macro-regions that differ in regards to these factors, using World Value Survey (WVS/EVS) and International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data from 89 countries. The empirical analyses indicate two contrasting patterns of development: In the Protestant and Catholic countries of Europe, as well as in Confucian East Asia, the combination of extensive disenchantment of the prevailing religions and a high level of material wellbeing and existential security has led to a massive decline in religiosity over the course of the 20th century. In contrast, most parts of the Global South, sub-Saharan Africa, the Muslim world, Hindu and Buddhist South Asia, and Latin America are characterized by the persistence of enchanted forms of religion, low levels of existential security, the emergence of powerful religious revivals in response to social crises provoked by rapid modernization, and high levels of individual religiosity. Analogous tendencies of religious revivalism and persistence of religiosity can be observed in Orthodox Eastern Europe and the USA. The final section will address the mutual interactions between disenchantment in religious institutions, socio-economic development, and the social significance of religion

Mots-Clés: religious change, multiple modernities

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