

## How did universal religions shape the construction of particular communities and identities?

The SFB »Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400-1600 CE)« (VISCOM) proposes a comparative approach to explore the interaction between religious and political visions of community. All three religions were not only used to legitimize imperial rule, but they also encouraged other forms of community, be they local, regional, civic, or ethnic. However, in each case, the impact worked in different ways. In order to study these differences, VISCOM attempts to bridge the gaps between history and social anthropology, between European and Asian studies, between religious and political history, and, more generally, between research on discourse and on practice.

This Opening Conference, Comparative Methods in the Historical and Social Sciences represents a first step by reflecting on the process of comparative research and model-building itself. The scholars brought together in Vienna will bring into focus ethnic, religious, political and civic communities, as well as their interdependence. By comparing the different methods employed in the study of different types of community, they will explore the chances and pitfalls of such an interdisciplinary dialogue. Thus, the conference's aim is to open up new methodological perspectives, while at the same time stimulating research in the specific fields and raising new questions for VISCOM to study.

### LOCATIONS

Theatersaal der ÖAW  
Sonnenfelsgasse 19  
1010 Vienna

Seminar Rooms, Institute for  
Medieval Studies (IMAFÖ)  
Wohllebengasse 12-14, Ground Floor  
1040 Vienna

### HOSTED BY

University of Vienna  
Austrian Academy of Sciences

### INFORMATION

SFB VISCOM Project Coordination  
Institute for Medieval Studies  
Wohllebengasse 12-14  
1040 Vienna  
Tel.: +43-1-51581-7206  
rutger.kramer@oeaw.ac.at  
<http://www.univie.ac.at/viscom>

SFB – Spezialforschungsbereich

# VISIONS of COMMUNITY

First VISCOM  
Conference  
Vienna

26-28 January 2012

comparative  
methods  
in the  
historical  
and  
social  
sciences

FWF  
Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

universität  
wien

OAW  
Österreichische Akademie  
der Wissenschaften

VIS  
COM

---

Thursday 26 January • Theatersaal ÖAW • 13:00 Reception

---

13:30-15:30 **Welcome**

Barbara Weitgruber, *BMWf*  
 Christoph Kratky, *FWF*  
 Michael Viktor Schwarz, *University of Vienna*  
 Sigrid Jalkotzy-Deger, *ÖAW*

**VISCOM: Presentation of the Project**

Walter Pohl (*Vienna*)

**Comparative Methods – Chances and Limits**

Frank Rexroth (*Göttingen*)

---

15:30 - 16:00 *Coffee break*

---

16:00-18:00 **Power and Ethnicity – Comparative Perspectives**

Patrick Geary (*Princeton*)  
 Daniel Varisco (*Hofstra University, New York*)

---

Friday 27 January • Theatersaal ÖAW • 9:30 Reception

---

10:00-12:00 **Empires and Culture**

Garth Fowden (*Athens*)  
 Bert Fagner (*Vienna*)

---

12:00 - 13:15 *Lunch break*

---

13:15-15:15 **Religious Communities and Social Networks**

Leonard van der Kuijp (*Harvard University, Cambridge/Mass.*)  
 Kate Cooper (*Manchester*)

---

15:15 - 15:45 *Coffee break*

---

15:45-17:45 **Cities and/as Communities**

Ludwig Steindorff (*Kiel*)  
 Florian Schwarz (*Vienna*)

---

17:45 - 18:15 *Coffee break*

---

18:15-20:00 **EVENING LECTURES:  
 Religion and Group Identity**

Andre Gingrich (*Vienna*)  
 Rebekka Habermas (*Göttingen*)

---

Saturday 28 January • Seminar Room IMAFO • 9:00 Reception

---

9:30-11:15 **Religious Communities in Heterodox Environments**

John Tolan (*Nantes*)  
 Paul Dresch (*Oxford*)

---

11:15 - 11:45 *Coffee break*

---

11:45-13:00 **Conclusions**

Christina Lutter (*Vienna*)  
 Oliver Schmitt (*Vienna*)  
 Anne Regourd (*Vienna*)

*Final Discussion*

---

subject to change