



On Tuesday, January 23, 2024 at 11am at CEDEJ, **Emir Mahieddin** will present his research **Channels to Heaven. Media and Styles of Authority among Arabic-speaking Pentecostals in Sweden.**

Abstract

Since the early 2010s, the so-called « migrant churches » have become major players in the renewal of the Swedish religious landscape, particularly in Stockholm. Small Evangelical congregations are thus flourishing in this Nordic capital. Amongst them, Some Arabic-speaking communities, predominantly Egyptian, invest in audio-visual technologies to preach the Gospel in the diasporas of Northern Europe, as well as in Maghreb and Mashreq countries.

Drawing on the portraits of two pastors (a Swedish-Egyptian and a Swedish-Lebanese), one of which was a pioneer of Arabic televangelism in Scandinavia, this talk will focus on the Pentecostal conceptions of audio-visual and digital technologies, and in particular on the way these media contribute to shape different styles of authority. An analysis of the content of some of the programs broadcasted through satellite TV and online reveals the rhetorical strategies deployed to construct the authority of Evangelical Christianity as an “authentic faith”, as opposed to Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism and Islam, which are portrayed as “traditions” or “religions”, among other terms used pejoratively in order to discredit them.

This mediatic activity is not devoid of prophetic interpretations of their specific role in “God’s plan” for humanity in general, and for the Middle East in particular, which in turn have political implications. While these televangelists from the Arab world are often accused of being agents of “Western imperialism”, it is important to have a closer look at the complexity and heterogeneous character of their positioning in the global, political and religious arena.

Emir Mahieddin is an anthropologist, CNRS researcher, and member of the Centre d’études en sciences sociales du religieux (CéSor) at the School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris (EHESS). His research centres on Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in Sweden, with a particular focus on the transformation of morality and ethical values and, lately, on issues related to migration. In 2018, his research project “Pentecostal Migrants in Secular Sweden: Influences and Challenges”, was granted funding from the Swedish research council (2019-2022), and was hosted at the Multidisciplinary Research Centre on Religion and Society (CRS), at Uppsala University. He is the author of a monograph entitled “Faire le travail de Dieu. Une anthropologie morale du pentecôtisme en Suède” (Karthala, 2018). In 2022, he was awarded with the CNRS Bronze Medal for anthropology. He is currently being hosted at the CEDEJ.
