The changing religious landscape in Europe and implications for religious education.
Overview

- Some trends in the changing religious landscape
- Paganism as a case study of the ‘new religiosity’
- Research on young people
- Implications for religious education
‘No religion is the new religion’

- Linda Woodhead’s claim (2016c) for December 2015 as the tipping point into a ‘non-religious’ majority in Britain
- 46% ‘no religion’ plus ‘none stated’ = 50% (British Social Attitudes Survey 51% in 2013)
- 18-24 year olds ‘no religion’ = 60%
- Rapid change since census data
  2001=16%, 71% Christian; 2011=25%, 59% Chr
‘Religion has become something that other people do’ (Andrew Brown)
Rest of Europe?

- 69% born after 1984 in Belgium ‘non-religious’ (Franken, 2016)
- European Values Study
- Presumption of secularity ‘Europeans do not go to church anymore, they do not believe in God anymore, they do not seem to be religious at all’
- Reality much more complex
- ‘Not so much less religious [than rest of world], but differently so’ (Davie, 2002)
Fun with statistics

- Atlas of European Values 2008 - Quiz
- Least religious: Belarus, Estonia, Sweden, Switzerland
- Most religious: Turkey, Poland, Italy
- Most atheists: France
- Biggest sense of sin: Northern Ireland
- Most open to truth in all religions: Iceland, Finland, Norway, Denmark
- 41% of Latvians believe in reincarnation
- 49% of Austrians believe in a life-force. BUT...
Sources

- Sociologists of religion such as Davie, Day, Dinham, Heelas, Voas, Weller, Woodhead
- Research on young people and religion/religious education by such as Berglund, Blaylock, Collins-Mayo, Franken, Jackson, Nesbitt, Robbins and Francis, Roebben, Schihalejev, Schwetizer, von der Lippe, Wallis.
- My own research with young people and Pagans
The increased public visibility of ‘religion’

- Experts agree (Davie, Habermas, Jackson, Schreiner)
- Iranian revolution 1979
- 1989, 9/11 2001
- Council of Europe 2002, 2008
- CORAB 2015 in UK
- Coincides with lack of ‘religious literacy’ (Davie, Dinham, Moore in USA)
Change 2: Loss of Christian ‘monopoly’

- Christian churches and Christian cultural heritage still important/influential/funded
- Still influences RE even in Sweden, Norway, England (Berglund, Alberts, Cush)
- ‘Chain of memory’ breaking - in England 40% stay Christian, 95% stay ‘no religion’.
- ‘Precarious’ in most of Europe (Davie)
- Parental attitudes (Voas)
- Consequent lack of Christian religious vocabulary in spite of RE
Changes 3: Increasing diversity

- Increase and increased awareness
- Major traditions and NRMs

Muslims as largest minority/in media
(Europe 6%, France 7.5%, Germany 5.8%, UK 4.8%, Finland 0.8%, Portugal 0.3%).

- Awareness of ‘internal’ diversity – ‘not monolithic’ (Jackson); denominations, conservative versus liberal, official versus actual practice, debates in media,
Changes 4: ‘Patchwork religiosity’

- Drawing upon multiple traditions for personal spiritual development ‘patchwork religiosity’ (Lähnemann, 2008); ‘existentially interfaith’ (Nesbitt, 2011); ‘whateverism’ (Plasterk in ter Avest, 2010) ‘religion a la carte’ (Franken, 2016)

- Rejecting ‘boxes’ (BSU research by Horler)

- ‘Believing without belonging’ (Davie 1994) and ‘Belonging without believing’ (Sea of Faith)
Change 5: new hybrids

- ‘transformation through encounter’ (Ward, 2015)
- Forest Church – reconnecting with nature
- Christian-based but open to Pagans
- Makes use of Pagan-style rituals

Stanley, B (2013)
*Forest Church*

[www.mysticchrist.co.uk](http://www.mysticchrist.co.uk)
Change 6: The rise of the ‘nones’

- ‘Nones’ not necessarily atheist, Humanist, anti-religion, or lacking in beliefs/values

Woodhead: 41% atheist, 22% agnostic, 17% theist, 25% spiritual practice (private) 11% ‘spiritual’ 100% moral/social liberals 0% see religious leaders as guides

- Just don’t identify with label ‘religious’ or joining ‘institutions’, external authorities
Change 7: ‘Spiritual Revolution’?

- Move from ‘religion’ to ‘spirituality’
- ‘subjective turn’
- Individual, personal, experiential, loose
- No external authority
- Deity immanent if any
- 2005 Kendall – both active ‘religious’ and ‘spiritual’ a minority, but...2035?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion/Belief</th>
<th>Students 2001</th>
<th>Staff 2001</th>
<th>Eng/Wales 2001</th>
<th>Eng/Wales 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pagan</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paganism

- Nature as sacred
- Polytheistic or pantheistic nature-based religion
- In UK: Druids, Wicca, Goddess spirituality, Heathens
- Numbers very small, but...
...indicative of new paradigm religiosity

- The individual, experience, as authority
- Eclectic, drawing upon several traditions
- Stress on ritual, story, myth not doctrines
- Anti-dogmatic; liberal ethics ‘an it harm none, do what thou wilt’
- Networks rather than organisations
- Feminist and Queer influences
- Nature and Environment: immanent divine
- *Conscious* human creation of religion (Nolava)
What about young people?

- In UK 60% 18-24s ‘nones’
- Simeon Wallis and young ‘nones’
  - 7/23 atheist
  - see ‘religion’ as about metaphysical beliefs, organisations, packages
  - may have beliefs but personal
  - may even believe in God but don’t ‘practice’
Young people more generally...

- Many sources including RedCo
- Religion can be important part of identity especially for minorities: Muslim, Pagan, Christian
- Next generation immigrants can become less religious or more
- Decultured religion – can reject ‘cultural’ aspects of parental religion in favour of ‘purer’ version
Young people

- Traditions provide religious and spiritual vocabulary (e.g. young Pagans) – majority non-aligned may lack this
- Majority less likely to come from a religious background (including young teachers)
- Dislike labels ‘religion’, ‘religious’ negative image, defined as propositional belief, disproved theories, blamed for wars, conflicts, illiberal stances (even RS students)
Young people

- May not have any overarching vision, religious or secular, not on spiritual quest
- ‘Happy midi-narrative’ goal of happiness, for others as well as self (Savage et al)
- ‘Believing in belonging’ (Day): reject institutions, doctrines, authority but have values, beliefs, identity focused on relationships, music, youth culture
- Some reject whole idea of a *fixed* identity
Young people

- More tolerant - respect rights of others to religion/belief, individual choice
- Want to learn about each other’s religions and worldviews (RedCo)
- Want a wider range of religions (UK:Dinham and Shaw)
- Deity vague and immanent even for some Christians (Roebben)
- Are perhaps better at handling media than parents ‘we do media studies, we know how it works’ (Cush)
Implications for RE

- Cover a wide range of religions whether in inclusive or denominational settings
- Include newer traditions, hybrids, new forms of religiosity and recognise personal religion
- Care with representation – avoid reification of the ‘isms’ – ‘real’ religion
- Direct experience of religious and belief communities
Implications for RE

- Avoid suggestion that religion is mainly about belief/doctrines/metaphysical truth claims, without neglecting ‘epistemic challenge’ (Conroy)

- More on Dharmic and nature religions – avoids conflation of ‘religion’ with belief in God, doctrine, authority, institutions.

- Must include ‘non-religious worldviews’ – but recognise that many don’t have or want overarching ‘worldview’
Implications for RE

- Take account of gender and sexuality even if difficult
- Provide vocabulary with which to discuss both ‘religions’ and own perspectives
- Space to explore and develop own ‘personal worldviews’ – not just about ‘religions’ and ‘them’
- Focus on ‘purposeful living’ whether within or outwith religious and non-religious worldviews
Implications for RE

- Religious and non-religious worldviews as ‘treasure chests’ of useful wisdom.
- Introduce idea of conscious creation of ‘religion’ in ways that contribute to human flourishing?
- Change the name? (Religious and Moral Education, Religion Education, Religious Citizenship, Sophology (Francis)?)
Conclusion

- The ‘religious landscape’ is changing
- Young people are not the same people as older people
- Therefore, religious education must change