**Abstract of Dissertation Subject**

**Representation by Religious Community Leaders at the Swiss Federal level.**

Dialogue, recognition and regulation of religion in Switzerland has traditionally been conducted at the cantonal level. This has resulted in complexity and inconsistency, effectively 26 different regimes encountered by those religions with national reach. My thesis seeks to explore and map the rise in national representation to overcome the barriers created by this, and the consequences as seen by the leaders of religions.

Recent immigration has led to greater diversity of religious practice in Switzerland and substantial numbers of adherents either to newer Christian denominations or religions other than Christianity. The policy of distribution of immigrants across cantons has resulted in wide dispersion of small communities, limiting their ability to represent themselves effectively. There may also be confusion of identity in assimilation as ‘Swiss’ or as citizens of their cantons. Switzerland’s unusually fragmented federal system may be contributing to difficulty in achieving religious integration and contribution to social cohesion by new arrivals.

Representation at federal level is growing, driven by both national religious alliances and increasing government response to societal tensions encountered in the last two decades. This has been poorly explored and documented, and this project seeks to fill the data gap alongside understanding of the views if religious leaders.