

In Memoriam

Liselotte Frisk



Liselotte Frisk (March 11, 1959 – October 29, 2020) was a Swedish scholar of religion who focused on the research of new religions. She defended her doctoral dissertation on new religious movements in 1993 at Åbo Akademi University, Finland, and worked as a lecturer at Umeå University in Sweden for a few years. In 1999 she moved to Dalarna University, where she developed a profile of studying new religious movements within the field of religious studies. Since 2006 Liselotte Frisk had served as Professor in Religious Studies at Dalarna University, Sweden.

Liselotte has been and will be remembered as one of the founding mothers of the study of new religious movements in Sweden, where she conducted a number of research projects funded by various foundations. Her research focused on the development of new religious

movements in the 1960s and 1970s in Sweden; the mapping of new spirituality in the Dalarna region in Sweden (with Peter Åkerbäck, Stockholm University) (2008–2011); and children in minority religions (2012–2015). The project results were published both in Swedish and English.

In 2015 Liselotte Frisk together with Peter Åkerbäck published a book *New Religiosity in Contemporary Sweden* (Equinox Publishing) based on their research into the Dalarna region's spirituality milieu. This study presents the diversity of spiritual and religious forms in this region of central Sweden, and provides insights into the way local manifestations are linked to the national and global contexts. The nice combination of theoretical and empirical material of this study added to the theoretical discussions of the way that new religious movements have changed the field of religion and spirituality. Rich empirical data provided solid ground for argumentation, which made the study relevant for the international academic community working in the field of studies of new religions.

In 2018 Liselotte Frisk together with Sanja Nilsson and Peter Åkerbäck published a book *Children in Minority Religions: Growing up in Controversial Religious Groups* (Equinox Publishing), which challenged existing stereotypes of poor and deprived childhoods within new religions. The study interpreted rich and carefully collected empirical data both from adults who grew up in new religions and children from within these groups, adding to the ongoing public debates on corporal punishment and healthcare in new religions.

Liselotte has contributed to *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* several times. In 2002 (vol. 6, no. 1) she published a paper, "The Satsang Network: A Growing Posts-Osho Phenomenon." Her other paper, titled "The Narrative of Ma Anand Sheela: Charisma and Institutionalization in the Osho Movement," is forthcoming in the May 2021 (vol 24, no. 4) special issue of *Nova Religio* dedicated to religious leadership, a theme that was always a research interests of Liselotte.

Liselotte served as the director of International Society for the Study of New Religions for four years (2010–2013), and as the vice director of FINYAR, the Nordic society for the academic study of new religions. She has been a founding co-editor of *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* in 2010–2013 and recent co-editor of *Aura*, a Nordic journal publishing academic articles about new religious movements.

Liselotte was one of the founding mothers of International Society for the Study of New Religions, an academic association aimed at the exchange of research and academic cooperation, and the provision of scholarly information about new religions to the public and to government bodies. She was devoted to the activities of this organization, networked intensively, and put a lot of effort

into attracting young scholars of religions studies into the field of the study of new religions.

Liselotte died on October 29, 2020. She was 61 years old and left us far too early. Her research and publication about new religions will have a special place on the bookshelves of many of us continuing to work in this field. But more so, Liselotte's early and unexpected death have left many of us mourning for our friend and close colleague, a person who was not only a devoted scholar but a very sensitive and cordial personality that many of us were so happy to have met and worked with together.

Rest in Peace, dear Liselotte, yours, Milda.

Milda Ališauskienė