



BRILL

MISSION STUDIES 32 (2015) 181–202



brill.com/mist

Religion, Migration and Identity

A Conceptual and Theoretical Exploration

Martha Th. Frederiks

Utrecht University

m.t.frederiks@uu.nl

Abstract

This article aims to give a representative overview and appraisal of insights and theories developed thus far in the field of religion, migration and identity. It investigates whether the present conceptual toolbox is adequate to describe and analyze the impact of migration phenomena on individual and communal expressions of faith. The article first explores the concepts “migrant” and “migration”. It then discusses theories focusing on the significance of faith and religious communities for migrants, followed by theories pertaining to the changes effectuated by migration in the religious landscapes of the country of origin as well as destination. The article argues that there is a need for further clarification and stipulation of key terms in the discourses on religion and migration, as well as a necessity to do more comparative research, since most of the prevailing theories so far have emerged from research on Christian migrant communities in the USA. Finally, it identifies areas for further research.

Keywords

migration – faith – religious communities – identity – Christianity – theory – concepts

* Martha Frederiks (1965) is professor for the Study of World Christianity at Utrecht University. Frederiks studied theology and Islamic studies at Utrecht University and at the Duncan Black MacDonald Institute in Hartford, CT. From 1993–1999 she lived and worked in West Africa in the field of Christian Muslim Relations. In 1999 she returned to Utrecht University. In her research Frederiks focusses on both historical and more recent developments in African Christianity.

Introduction

Over the last decades a wealth of literature on religion and migration has been published. Initially, anthropologists and sociologists spearheaded the debate but soon researchers from religious studies and theology, including missiology, also joined the arena. Key questions in the reflection on religion and migration include whether the present conceptual toolbox is adequate; whether the concepts used are distinct and precise enough to enhance comprehensive reflection and whether theories developed in one context can be extrapolated to others.

Thus far, the missiological debate seems to have focused mainly on theory-building pertaining to migrants (and especially Christian migrants). Researchers have investigated and continue to investigate the transformation of religion and religious communities in the context of migrants' experiences; more specifically, they have researched how migration has influenced the faith, practices and community formation of people who migrate and what significance faith and religious communities hold for migrants when coping with the stress, insecurities and challenges of migration (see e.g. Adogame and Weissköppel 2005; Adogame 2013; Hanciles 2008; Schreiter 2009; Simon 2010; Stepick 2005; Währisch-Oblau 2009). Relatively little attention has been paid thus far to the fact that migration also impacts the religious traditions and beliefs and practices of "non-migrants".¹ Yet in many areas, migration has profoundly changed the religious landscape, both in terms of multi-religious diversity and in terms of intra-religious diversity (see e.g. Henkel and Knippenberg 2005; Gallo 2014).

Although in no way attempting comprehensiveness, this article aims at giving a representative impression and appraisal of some of the insights and theories developed thus far. It begins by looking at theories that focus on how the experience of migration affects the personal and communal faith expressions of people who migrate. Because this is an extensive field, I distinguish three different levels of theory: (a) theories about personal faith as spiritual and social resource for people actually crossing borders; (b) theories that study the role and significance of religious communities for people who migrate; and (c) theories that focus on migrants' transnational networks, leading to conceptual reflections what notions like "context" and "locality" might actually entail for

1 I recognise that the labelling of people in broad categories such as "migrant" and "non-migrant" is problematic. Also, I am aware that these terms imply a whole range of underlying assumptions of belonging and non-belonging, nation states, etc. (see below and the article by Dorottya Nagy in this issue).

migrants and migrants' religious communities. Then, having surveyed the field of religion and migrants' experiences, I turn to the second, far less explored field of how migration affects the beliefs and practices of those who have not physically moved, but whose landscape has changed due to migration.

Before embarking on this scheme, the article begins with a conceptual excursion, exploring those often-used but seldom-defined terms "migrant" and "migration".

Migrants and Migration

"Migrant" and "migration" are – obviously – two central concepts in the research on religion and migration. Surprisingly however, these terms are usually employed without explanation or stipulation, presuming that the reader will understand what the concepts entail. Attempts at definitions – even working definitions – are rare, also in the wider field of Migration Studies. The International Organization for Migration provides a rather general but widely-used definition of migration, describing migration as "a definite physical move from one location to another" and adding that "[f]or international migration the locations involved are clearly two distinct countries" (IOM 2003: 295). An often quoted definition of the term "migrant" is the 1998 United Nations definition which stipulates that a long-term international migrant is "a person who has moved to a country other than his/her country of usual residence for at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes the new country of residence" (UN 2002: 11).

Reflecting on these and similar rather general definitions of the concepts migration and migrants, Harald Kleinschmidt (2003: 12) concludes that "[a]t present migration is predominantly a social science term", one that was developed to serve "the practical needs of administrators"; the term "comprises of all sorts of movements that involve a change of residence. The period of one year or longer has often been understood to mark the difference between ordinary movements from place to place and migration". While terms like "migration" and "migrants" may have their administrative use, as academic categories these concepts are rather problematic. Researchers of migration have indicated as much, pointing out that governments, policymakers and researchers use a variety of criteria, such as length of residence, nationality, country of birth or the country of birth of parents, to determine who is a migrant and who is not (e.g. Schoolr 1995: 7–8; Anderson and Blinders 2013: 2–5). There is no standardization or across-the-board consensus on the criteria that determine whether a person is a migrant or not. On the contrary, it seems that some of

the stakeholders are rather served by a certain fuzziness of the concept; governments and individual politicians use the terms at their own expediency, in order to advance their own cause.

In the UN definition, like in most definitions, demographic criteria – in this case residence and duration – form the decisive factors that determine whether a person is a migrant or not, leading to an immensely diverse category of people, all being called “migrants”. Attempts have been made to propose alternative definitions. Kleinschmidt, a historian by background, has suggested a less demographic-oriented definition of migration; he stipulates migration as “a relocation of residence across a border of recognized significance.” (Kleinschmidt 2003: 17). This “recognized significance”, according to Kleinschmidt, can consist of language, culture, and so on. Kleinschmidt’s alternative is helpful in that it disentangles the term migration from the phenomenon of nation-states and describes migration as relocation across a variety of borders of difference. Also, Kleinschmidt’s definition opens up the possibility to identify a change of residence across a variety of borders, such as geographic, linguistic, political, cultural, religious borders, as migration. Yet Kleinschmidt’s definition does not aid in for example narrowing down the subject group “migrants”.

Others have attempted to refine the concepts by dividing the category “migrant” into subcategories, such as privileged migrants, migrants from former colonies, temporary labor migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, undocumented migrants, and the like (Castles and Miller 2009: 4). But there is no consensus on these sub-categories or their usefulness and scholars have been quick to point out that the distinctions between these groups are fluid (Faist 1995: 182).

Generally speaking missiological literature has tended to adopt the concepts “migrant” and “migration” without much query, neither attempting to coin alternative definitions or terms nor formulating additional criteria or showing an awareness of the hazards implied by using such politically charged terms. Also, the question presents itself, whether for missiological (and theological) purposes the present social science conceptualizations of the terms “migrant” and “migration”, which are based solely on demographic criteria, are sufficiently distinct to enable meaningful missiological reflection. Neither demographic delineations of the concepts nor Kleinschmidt’s alternative definition of “relocation across a border of recognized significance” takes into account the experiential dimensions of migration, which seem pivotal to much missiological/theological endeavor. Contemporary missiological reflections mainly seem to converge around the question whether and if so how the migration experience affects personal and communal expressions of the Christian faith.

The efficacy of the terms for missiological reflection can be questioned even further. Let me make my point by giving a personal example. I myself have spent nearly a quarter of my life living outside the country where I was born, the Netherlands. Though my period “abroad” has profoundly shaped my outlook on life, I do not and have never conceived myself as a migrant. Yet by the standards of the UN definition as well as other social science definitions, I was classified as a “migrant” for a substantial part of my life. However these social science categorizations do not correspond with my self-perception or the way I assess the years I lived in West Africa. I may have demographically fitted the categories of migration and migrant, yet personally I construe this period of my life differently.

Having said this, I hasten to add that I realize that my “story of migration” may be profoundly different from a Mexican who has crossed the USA border without official papers; it also may be profoundly different from a Philippine domestic worker in Qatar, a Ghanaian studying in the UK, a Chinese businessman working in Hungary or an Indonesian boat refugee attempting to reach Australia.

Stanley John, in his contribution to this issue of *Mission Studies*, has pointed out that even persons coming from the same country and the same state within that country may have quite diverging experiences. Studying Kerala Christians in Kuwait, John describes on the one hand the hardship and exploitation of low-skilled Kerala contract workers living in Kuwaiti labor camps and on the other hand the quite comfortable lives of highly trained Kerala upper-middle-class migrants, working as professional doctors, dentists and engineers in Kuwait.

Case-studies like John’s not only problematize the general category “migrant”, but also critique the tendency in migration research to homogenize migrants on the basis of ethnicity or nationality. The well-known theorists of migration Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick-Schiller use the term “methodological nationalism” for these over-simplifications and homogenizing tendencies; the term endeavors to disclose and critique the fact that many researchers seem to (have) work(ed) with the unvoiced postulation that nations are homogeneous cultural and social-economic units, that ethnic groups always live within the confines of a nation state, that national identity can be essentialized and that all migrants from a certain country are similar and behave alike (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002; see also Smith 1978: 1155). In this issue of *Mission Studies* Dorottya Nagy further explores the subject of methodological nationalism.

In an attempt to capture the vast diversity among migrants, Steven Vertovec has coined the term “super-diversity”. The term aims to stress that within this seemingly lucid and uniform category of “migrants”, stories of migration differ,

because the duration of migration and people's goals, aims, reasons and experiences of migration differ (Vertovec 2007: 1044–1049). Migration dynamics and experiences may also differ, when not just mere individuals migrate but whole groups of people coming from the same village or the same region settle communally in a new destination country.

These reflections about the conceptualization of the term migrant inevitably lead to the conclusion that “the migrant” does not exist. The seemingly simple and self-evident word “migrant” covers a highly diversified group of people, who have very different biographies and migration stories. The diversity in migration trajectories and migration experiences may result in different assessments as to whether people consider migration an event (or series of events) in their biography or a profound identity-shaping experience. As early as 1978 Timothy Smith observed that when (and only when?) migration involves intense and at times even traumatic experiences of separation, disorientation, uprooting and resettlement, migration is a “theologizing experience” (Smith 1978: 1175).

This diversity of trajectories and experiences may also be a determining factor as to whether – and if so, to which extent – people actively experience what Alejandro Portes and Dag MacLeod have called a “sense of multiple belonging” and “multiple identities” (Portes and McLeod 1996: 527–528). These varied experiences may also determine whether or not people continue to identify themselves as – and want to be recognized as – migrants. And it is exactly this identity-shaping aspect of migration that is not, and cannot, be captured by definitions based on mere demographic criteria.

Religion in the Context of Migrants' Experiences

Researchers have made it abundantly clear that religion plays an important role in the lives of many migrants, both at the individual level and at the communal level (Stepick 2005: 13; Schreiter 2009). As noted above, already several decades ago Timothy Smith spoke about migration as a “theologizing experience”. According to Smith, when migrants grapple with the bewildering experiences of loss, separation and disorientation, faith provides them with a vocabulary to express these experiences and construe meaning, while religious communities offer structure, support and intimacy (Smith 1978: 1181–82).

In 2009 Robert Schreiter listed some of numerous reasons why religion can be of significance for individual migrants: religion can be the reason for migration, religion sustains people in times of difficulty, religion can serve as an identity marker in a new context or as a source for reconciliation and healing

in cases where the story of migration and the migrant's experiences have been humiliating, hurtful, violent or demeaning. Religion can also aid a person in giving meaning to his/her migration experiences or function as a resource in resolving adjustment issues (Schreiter 2009).

Smith observed that migrants also seem to turn to religion to ensure continuity with the past (Smith 1978: 1161). Prema Kurian goes a step further than Smith, arguing that in situations of migration migrants seem to rediscover the importance of religion and intentionally embrace religion as an identity marker, thus becoming more religiously active in the new destination country than they were before migration. Using the example of Indian Hindu migrants to the USA, Kurian demonstrates how for Indian-Americans, religion (in this case Hinduism) has become a key symbol of both identity and difference in the American society (Kurian 1998: 40).

There is no doubt that many of the observations made by academics like Stepick, Smith, Schreiter and Kurian are astute and pertinent; yet a word of caution seems called for. Most theory building on migration and religion arises from qualitative research conducted in the North American context. Very little systematic comparative research has been done to cross-check whether these findings can be extrapolated to other contexts such as South-East Asia, Africa, the Gulf or even Europe. Nancy Foner and Richard Alba's research for example seems to underscore the need for cautiousness in this respect. They have demonstrated that where immigrant religion in the USA is generally considered a bridge to integration, immigrant religion in secular Europe is regarded far less favorably; at times immigrant religion is even considered a barrier to integration in European societies (Foner and Alba 2008; see also Frederiks 2014: 221–222).

In addition, recent quantitative research does not seem to substantiate the claim that immigrants turn to religion in situations of migration, even in the USA. In an article with the telling title "God Can Wait", Diehl and König argue that recent empirical evidence from Canada, the USA and Germany indicates that religious participation seems to decrease rather than increase in the pre- and post-migration period. They attribute earlier findings regarding an increase in religious participation to a focus on pioneer migrants, who according to Diehl and König were disproportionately involved in establishing religious communities; later cohorts seem to experience different religious dynamics. Among other reasons, Diehl and König point to migrants' limited opportunities for religious participation to explain their findings: nowadays, migrants seem to give precedence to "secular" priorities such as finding a house, a job, and so on; in addition, they may lack the time and infrastructure to attend religious gatherings or find that religious facilities are not easily accessible,

especially for religious minorities (Diehl and König 2013: 9–11). Also, nowadays, the availability of religious programmes on the internet may offer a convenient alternative to the personal attendance of worship. Diehl and König acknowledge that migrants, for whom migration is a disruptive experience (e.g. due to a hostile environment of racism, discrimination and exclusion) are more likely to maintain their religious practices than those who do not have such experiences (Diehl and König 2013: 11; see also Connor 2010: 381–382).

It has also been widely recognized that not only personal faith but also religious communities play an important role in the lives of migrants. In research on religious migrant communities two intersecting yet distinct trends can be distinguished. One trend has what I (for lack of a better expression) call a “context-of-arrival-oriented” research focus. Scholars working on this study how migration to a new context impacts the religious beliefs, practices and community formation of migrants; they also investigate what role religion and religious communities play in this process of settling. The other trend takes a transnationalism-oriented research approach. Scholars working on this focus on the implications of the fact that migrants – as individuals and as communities – maintain networks of relationships (religious and otherwise) that keep them connected to their country/region/culture of origin and to kindred communities around the world. They investigate what this implies for migrants’ interaction with and loyalties to the new context of residence and reflect about the significance of locality, geography and context for migrants.

I am aware that the above distinction is to some extent artificial as the two trends – in research as well as real life – are intertwined; migrants and migrants’ communities interact both locally and transnationally and often simultaneously. Its main purpose is to outline the different trends in theory-building. In the text below I first survey the context-of-arrival-oriented debates and theories, after which I turn to the transnationalism-oriented research, reviewing some of the theories as well as some of the challenges transnationalism poses to current theological endeavor.

Stephen Warner has postulated that religious communities in general and ethnic-based religious communities and religious minority communities in particular, often function as a “home away from home”. According to Warner, religious communities oftentimes serve as a safe haven, a place of physical, spiritual and emotional support in a strange land as well as a secure space for initiating and extending social and business networks (Warner 1993: 1059–1063; Warner 2005: 88). In those situations where migrants experience marginalization in the destination country, religious communities also serve as sheltered spaces where people’s dignity and self-worth is affirmed and where their talents are appreciated, where people with no option but to work as clean-

ers and garbage men in their new country of residence, may serve as pastors, leaders and elders (Warner 2005: 237). This spiritual and social capital role of religious communities has been widely recognized (Stepick 2005: 20; Berger and Redding 2011: 1–5). Although not of exclusive relevance for migrants only, the social capital represented by religious communities, is particularly valuable for migrants who have to start as it were from scratch in a new environment.

Yet the significance of religious communities for immigrants is not limited to the “home away from home” role identified by Warner. Marie Friedmann Marquardt, working with undocumented Mexican-Americans in Doraville, Georgia has demonstrated that religious communities take on a wide array of roles. In addition to the well-known roles of the “safe haven” and “home-away-from-home”, religious communities often function as guides to the new society; they serve as “training ground” for public participation and integration, a place where immigrants in a relatively safe environment can “learn the rules of engagement with the broader society”. Other religious communities, according to Marquardt, operate as places of resistance, which critique the dominant social order and encourage people to draw on their spiritual and cultural resources to “collectively formulate oppositional interpretations of the values of the dominant society” (Marquardt 2005: 191, 208–211; see also Hankela 2014: 343–387; Ebaugh and Salzman Chafetz 2000: 15). When culturally or ethnically more-or-less homogenous, religious communities often serve as sites of cultural retention and reproduction, linking the past, the present and the future (Smith 1978: 1168–1174). However when cultural retention and reproduction become core-activities, migrants’ churches² may lapse into religious nostalgia, risk ethnic or cultural captivity or may cultivate an “other-exclusive” identity, that disallows those who are different (Belousek 2012: 590).

In an interesting comparison of two rather dissimilar case-studies – comparing Korean Presbyterians and Indian Hindus in Queens, New York City – Pyong Gap Min explored how processes of cultural retention and reproduction take shape. Min observed that in the case of the congregationally-structured Korean Presbyterian Church the religious community life functions as the locus of cultural retention and reproduction. He describes how the Korean church functions as a surrogate family where children are taught Korean etiquette, language and culture, where Korean festivals are celebrated and Korean food is consumed (Min 2005: 106–107). In the case of the Indian Hindus however, there was no structured congregational life. Religion was first of all “domestic religion”, taking the form of rituals at shrines in the home, of observance of food and purity regulations and occasional visits to the temple for rites of

2 I owe the term migrants’ churches to Dorottya Nagy (2009: 69).

passage and the celebrations of festivals (Min 2005: 116–117). Min concludes that the Korean Presbyterians use participation in community life rather than the content of their religion as the means for cultural transmission; Indian Hindus on the other hand retain their culture mainly through the content of their religion, namely the ritual practice at home and at the shrines. Min also concludes that groups coming from a context where religion and culture are interwoven have an advantage when it comes to preserving the culture of their country/region of origin through religion (Min 2005: 118–119).

Min's cross-religious comparison underscores the need for cautiousness in extrapolating findings and theories based on research among Christian migrant communities to other religious traditions. Christianity with its membership system, its religious hierarchy and its organized religiosity has distinct organizational and ritual features. Other religious communities may have rather different structures and qualities; hence the impact of migration on the religious dynamics of Christian communities may differ substantially from other religious traditions.

Generally speaking researchers seem partial to the positive role that religious communities play in the lives of migrants. Relatively little research seems to dwell on the fact that migrants' religious communities are also contested spaces, as is for example evidenced by Deanna Womack's contribution in this issue of *Mission Studies*. Womack highlights how generational and language issues result in tensions in Arab-speaking Protestant churches in New Jersey (for similar examples see Warner 2005: 244–48). Robert Schreiter has pointed to changing perceptions about gender roles as a potential source of conflict (Schreiter 2009: 166–69). Also the continuous influx of newly-arrived migrants can create tensions in religious communities (Ebaugh and Salzman Chafetz 2000: 13). Robert Calvert, in an ongoing Ph.D. project at Utrecht University, has documented how some migrants' churches in The Netherlands suffer from incessant power struggles among the leadership, resulting in break-away communities. Not only over-ambitious religious leaders turn religious communities into arenas of conflict; churches at times also suffer from ethnic rivalries amongst groups of parishioners. Calvert witnessed a Cape Verdean take-over of the Portuguese-speaking Roman Catholic Church in Rotterdam, when a group of Cape Verdean parishioners imposed a predominant Cape Verdean expression on the liturgy, thus marginalizing all other groups.³ These, and similar findings, caution against tendencies to romanticize the phenomenon of migrants' Christian communities. They evidence that migrants' churches

3 Robert Calvert is a Ph.D. student at Utrecht University and I am grateful to him for sharing his insights.

are not merely “safe havens” and “homes away from home”. Migrants’ churches are also places of intense contestation, where power struggles, generational clashes, gender conflicts and ethnic rivalry are ubiquitous.

Researchers have not merely investigated the significance and dynamics of religious migrants’ communities in their new context of residence. There is also a growing body of literature that focuses on the transnational relationships of migrants and migrants’ communities. Researchers are in unison that religion seems versatile in moving along these transnational networks, crossing borders and migrating alongside its adherents (Hüwelmeier and Krause 2010). This is aptly summarized by Peggy Levitt in her book title *God Needs No Passport* (Levitt 2007).

Many of the challenges linked with migration in the era of globalization are intimately connected with the emergence of nation-states, of borders, citizenship and passports, of permits and conceptualizations of land as owned by either groups or individuals or states. However migration researchers like Stephen Castles and Mark Miller have pointed out that the increased interconnectedness in the global era (caused by migration movements, social media etc.) challenges those very conceptualizations of the world as consisting of semi-autonomous units called nation-states (Castles and Miller 2009: 3, 45). This is not to say that borders, permits and passports do not represent very real impediments in the lives of many migrants. But it is equally true to say that individuals and communities, despite all these hurdles, interact and maintain relations across cultures and borders of nation states.

Since the early 1990s, researchers have pondered upon the question of the significance of the fact that, enabled by modern means of communication, individuals and communities increasingly establish and intensively maintain what have become known as transnational or globally stretched networks. Linda Basch, Nina Glick-Schiller and Christina Szanton Blanc, who have published extensively on this phenomenon, define transnationalism as “the processes through which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded relations that link together their countries of origin and settlement”; they add: “[w]e call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders” (Basch, Glick-Schiller and Szanton Blanc 2013: 8). And indeed, many people (known as migrants) who have actually moved – and may continue to move – across these borders, maintain in their daily lives relationships between and across geographic or cultural or political entities. Moreover, their lives seem to encompass several “worlds” simultaneously; they actually seem to *live* in more than one geo-political or cultural territory at the same time. They are, for example, in heart and mind present in the lives of their families in Manila or

Jakarta or Cairo, while at the same time living and working in the Gulf states. Simon Coleman and Katrin Maier take these reflections even one step further; they eloquently argue, in an article on the Redeemed Christian Church of God in the United Kingdom, that migrants do not merely build social fields across political and cultural borders but that in the mind and imagination of London-based Nigerian migrants, territorial spaces as widely diverse as London and Lagos conflate into one imagined landscape or geography, where London influences decisions and acts in Lagos and vice versa, and where the two (or more) become one imagined joined geography, literally *one world* in the minds, the lives and actions of people (Coleman and Maier 2011: 453–454).

The implications of this phenomenon of the ever-increasing global interconnectedness and the similarly increasing density of transnational networks are numerous; transnationalism poses a number of profound questions about the realities in which people conduct their daily lives. With regard to migrant religiosity, transnationalism for example redresses the conceptualization that the prime landscape with which migrants' religious communities interact is the local landscape of residence. Research findings indicate that many contemporary migrants (individuals as well as communities), facilitated by modern communication media, maintain dense relationships with religious communities in their countries of origin (nationally or spiritually) as well as with kindred religious communities across the globe; today more than ever before (Min 2005; Nagy 2009; Coleman and Maier 2011; Pruiksma 2011). To give an example: the highly mobile membership of the London-based Nigerian Redeemed Christian Church of God interacts on a regular basis with the mother church in Nigeria as well as with sister RCCG churches in the UK, in Europe and across the globe (Coleman and Maier 2011: 455–59). Via facilities like streaming video or skype-connections RCCG communities worldwide can tune into services at the RCCG church headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria, virtually attend ceremonies in sister-churches or interact live with the RCCG General Overseer Enoch Adeboye from any locality in the world. Thus, they constantly engage in what Peggy Levitt has called "transnational religious practices" and at times even maintain "dual memberships in spiritual arenas" (Levitt 2004: 2).

The RCCG is just a random example of how religious communities shape their transnational relationships. Levitt has listed numerous ways in which migrants engage in "transnational religious practices":

They contribute financially to these groups, raise funds to support their activities, host visiting religious leaders, seek long-distance guidance from them, participate in worship and cultural events during return visits,

and are the subject of nonmigrants' prayers. Other migrants participate in religious pilgrimage, worship certain saints or deities, or engage in informal, popular religious practices that affirm their enduring ties to a particular sending-country group or place (Levitt 2004: 5).

Levitt has argued that while all religious migrant groups seem to engage in transnational religious practices, groups shape their transnational relations differently, depending on their organizational structures. Studying the transnational interactions of a number of North American migrants' churches, she distinguishes between what she calls "extended", "negotiated" and "recreated" transnational churches respectively (Levitt 2004: 7–14).

While it is evident that on the one hand many migrants' Christian communities are actively involved with and contribute to their local vicinities (Sar and Roos 2006; Castillo Guerra, Glashouwer and Kregting 2008), it is on the other hand equally plain that most migrants' churches seem to invest much time, energy and finances in their transnational networks. This evokes the question what the prime religious landscape is with which migrants' religious communities engage. There seem to be sufficient indications to hypothesize that for at least some of the migrants' churches this might not be the local religious landscape (e.g. Sarró and Santos 2011; John 2015 in this issue).

Globalization, migration, modern media and transnational networks have each in their own way contributed to an experience of "deterritorialization" (Tomlinson 1999: 106–113). This is not to say that locality is inconsequential. Nienke Pruiksma (2011: 405) has argued that the myriad of individual and communal relationships always takes its starting point in a particular locality and place. In addition, the locality imposes rules and regulations (in the form of legal or political systems) on its residents that provide the boundaries within which residents need to enact their relationships. Further research is required to investigate what role – understood against the background of transnational networks – locality and place play in the religious lives of migrants and migrants' communities and whether, in some instances, the inference is justified that, while locality may not be trivial, it may be interchangeable and is neither conceived to be essential nor the prime location of performative religious acts.

Globalization, migration and transnationalism also pose profound queries to some of the key theological foci of the last decades, such as the quests for inculturation and contextualization. John Tomlinson (1999: 141) has pointed out that globalization has led to "a dissolution between culture and place" and coined the term "deterritorialization" for this. Less and less are culture and

context bound to a specific locality. Where in the past “cultures were clearly demarcated and differentiated in time and space, now ‘the concept of a fixed, unitary and bounded culture must give way to a sense of the fluidity and permeability of cultural sets’” (Morley and Robins 1995: 87). David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995: 87) summarize the consequences, by saying: “Places are no longer the clear supports of our identity”.⁴ While these developments affect all global citizens, they are true in particular for migrants whose social fields encompass several cultural, political and/or geographic territories simultaneously. As discussed above, Coleman and Maier have argued that in the lives of migrants multiple locations conflate into “one imagined geography”, producing a landscape that is unique (irreproducible) to a migrant’s particular biography, his/her migration story and his/her multi-stranded transnational networks. This leads to the question: what does “context” mean when people’s social fields seem to stretch across the globe and people seem to live simultaneously in a particular identifiable locality as well as in several other “imagined” locations? What does “culture” entail when large “super-diverse” groups of migrants have settled in a new destination country, leading to a hybrid cultural mosaic? What does the concept “culture” embody when numerous migrants live in what Coleman and Maier have termed “imagined geographies” that coalesce London and Lagos, Manila and Dubai, San Antonia and Mexico City into one reality, one world?

And which implications could these questions about culture, context and locality have for the quest for contextual theologies? Should contextual theologies continue to take geographical territories or units as their point of departure? Should they analyze power structures as they are exercised in a particular locality in the world (Wimmer 2013: 113–139)? Should they inculturate religious traditions in neatly defined integrated cultures that seem as much a product of imagination as the imagined landscapes of contemporary migrants? Or are contemporary contexts and cultures always hybrid, a concoction of local and global (Schreiter 1997: 1–14)? What are the contexts and cultures that shape Christian traditions and theologies in an age of migration? Are migrants’ contexts and cultures mainly the networks, the transnational relations of individuals and communities and the power structures these represent as Pruiksma (2011: 399–405) has suggested? Are the methodologies and the terminologies we have developed so far and the approaches we have taken, not in need of re-conceptualization? And is it not mandatory to work out alternative

4 In a recent research the concept of “deterritorialization” has been critiqued for overlooking the importance of locality and for ignoring the power exercised by transnational agents such as multinationals (Kofman and Youngs 2008: 16–18).

terms and approaches in order to capture the complex realities that globalization and migration produce?

Migration Changing the Religious Landscape

Migration affects and transforms the beliefs, practices and community formation of people who migrate. That much might be clear by now. But migration also affects “non-migrants” and the worlds they live in. In some regions of the world, migration has profoundly changed the religious landscapes. Reinhard Henkel and Hans Knippenberg (2005: 7) have stated that migration to Western Europe has resulted in an expectancy modification and has queried the predictions that Western Europe was to become an increasingly and irreversibly secular sub-continent, where religion was relegated to the private sphere. Migration and migration religiosity, Henkel and Knippenberg maintain, have firmly repositioned religion into the public domain and debate (Henkel and Knippenberg 2005: 7).

Migration has at times brought religions to a destination country, that were not or only marginally present in the context before the event of migration; such is the case with Kerala and Philippine Christians in the Gulf region, with Muslims in Western Europe or with Sikhs and Hindus in the UK or Canada or the USA. Similarly, in some instances migration has profoundly changed the religious landscapes, transforming previously predominantly religiously-homogenous areas such as the Gulf States, into religiously plural territories. Elsewhere in this volume Stanley John has described the profound effect migration has had on the religious landscape in Kuwait, with Christians now forming 14 per cent of the population, and Buddhist, Hindus, Sikhs accounting for another 11 per cent.

Scholars such as Grace Davie, Vicente Bedmar and Verónica Cobano-Delgado Palma have evidenced that these changes at times have led to frictions, tensions and heated public disputes about rights of migrants to express their religiosity in the public domain (Davie 2000; Bedmar and Palma 2010; Hüwelmeier and Krause 2010; Frederiks 2014). The presence of migrant religiosity has generated debates about the role of religion in the public domain (e.g. veils, halal slaughtering or homosexuality) and spearheaded discussions about the freedom of speech, of expressing religiously motivated behavior and opinions, of propagating one’s faith and the freedom of conversion. Do female Muslim migrants for example, if they so wish, have the right to demand treatment by a female doctor? Should Sikhs on religious grounds be exempted from security rules and allowed to wear a sword? Are religious immigrants entitled

to recognition of their religious calendar or transform the physical landscape by building mosques or *mandirs* or churches? The debates are still raging in many countries around the world.

At other times migrants have brought along forms of a religious tradition that was already present, but adhere to a different cultural or denominational manifestation of that tradition (Warner 2005; Stepick 2005; Währisch-Oblau 2009). This has also given rise to tensions. For the North American context Yvonne Haddad, Jane Smith and John Esposito have argued that African and Hispanic migrants have not felt welcomed or at home in the destination country's religiosity, leading to the establishment of separate migrants' religious communities (Haddad, Smith and Esposito 2003: 7); Claudia Währisch-Oblau (2009: 308) and others have made a similar observation for Christian immigrants to Western Europe. Again this evokes a series of questions. How do and should local Christian communities interact with Christian migrants who have divergent religious beliefs and practices? Though spoken in a different time and context, Martin Luther King's words that 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week still seem to describe the reality in most countries (King 2010: 203). Very few migrants seem to find a "home away from home" in parishes of indigenous mainline churches in the destination country; many seem to agree with Währisch-Oblau's informant who stated: "If you cannot pray in your mother tongue, it just doesn't feel right" (Währisch-Oblau 2009: 308).

Peggy Levitt has argued that extended transnational churches such as the Roman Catholic Church seem more flexible and have more resources available to accommodate migrants and diversity than negotiated transnational churches such as Protestant churches (Landeskirchen) whose very identity is often linked to a certain area, a certain language and a certain history (Levitt 2004: 7). Extended transnational churches, Levitt asserts, can draw on a wide variety human resources and cultural expertise from their dense transnational networks to accommodate linguistic or cultural diversity. Yet Martha Frederiks and Nienke Pruisma (2010: 149–151) have argued on the basis of studies conducted in the Netherlands that few parishes of either two categories of churches seem to attain a cultural and/or racial mix or a parish configuration that includes both newer and older residents.

What does the (somewhat problematic) concept of hospitality, that is gaining more and more currency in theological and ecclesial circles mean in situations such as these (e.g. Nagy 2009: 237–243; Sutherland 2010; Langmead 2014)? Is the hospitality of non-migrants limited to soup-kitchens and polite intercultural or interreligious exchanges while their religious communities continue to cling to their privileges or does the migration context also lead to profound

reflections among non-migrant indigenous churches about identity and inclusiveness and how to create an open identity that welcomes, embraces and celebrates diversity?

Migration not only affects non-migrants in destination countries, but also non-migrants in the countries of origin are affected by migration. So far little research seems to have been conducted into the “feedback loop”, investigating how migrants’ experiences, beliefs and practices in their new country of residence via transnational networks influence and change religious practices and beliefs in their country of origin (see e.g. Grodź and Smith 2014). A possible exemption is formed by those cases where transnational religious practices have had explicit political implications. Prema Kurian has argued for example that the nationalist Hindutva movement thrives on the support and remittances of Indian-American Hindus (Kurian 2003: 157), whilst David Mittelberg (1999: 6–7) amongst other has shown how American Zionist Jews, through funds and lobbying, wield major political influence in support of the state Israel. Yet in those cases where the influence is less politically charged and possibly more subtle, research findings into the impact of migration on religious beliefs and practices of sending countries seem virtually non-existent; this is a research field still awaiting exploration.

Setting a Research Agenda

Rather than formulating a conclusion, I would like to end this exploration by making some observations, in an attempt to formulate a research agenda for the years to come. The first observation I would like to make, is that there is a need to clarify some of the key terms in the field. Much work has been done and is being done in the intersecting fields of migration, religion and identity, yet seemingly self-evident terms like migrant, migration, context and culture continue to obscure discussions. Highly politically charged and administratively malleable terms like migration and migrants cannot be utilized naively or without a thorough inquiry; rather they require a precise stipulation or additional criteria in order to be of use in theological and missiological explorations. The second observation I would like to make is that there is a need to conduct comparative research in the field of religion, migration and identity in contexts other than the Western world. Current theory is to a large extent based on qualitative research conducted in the United States and to a lesser extent in Western Europe. A cross-check is required in order to verify whether these theories can be extrapolated to other contexts. Therefore it is vital that comparative research be conducted in Western and non-Western contexts

alike. My third observation concerns the research object. Most research projects to date have focused on migrants and how migration transforms their religious beliefs and practices. Far fewer studies have investigated how migration affects the beliefs and practices of “non-migrants”, both in destination- and sending countries. There are still major lacunas in our knowledge of how religion “migrates” along transnational networks to new destination countries and why some religious beliefs and practices change, whilst others seem to endure. Even greater is the void in our knowledge whether, and if so how, religion “revisits” sending countries along those same transnational networks and whether, and if so how, this leads to the transformation of religious practices and beliefs and possibly religious landscapes “back home”.

My fourth and final observation concerns the current theological quest for contextualization. Globalization and migration have rather profoundly changed the way people perceive, experience and shape culture and context. Culture and context have more than ever before become fluid, diffused and hybrid concepts. If the assumption is correct that Christianity needs to be contextualized in order to be relevant and meaningful, theologians in general and missiologists in particular still face a major task in exploring what the terms context and culture mean in our present day and age. This “task” comprises the development of a conceptual and methodological toolbox that enables meaningful reflection on the contextualization processes of the Christian faith, amidst the complex realities that globalization and migration produce, thus attempting to keep the Christian tradition relevant and germane.

References Cited

- Adogame, Afe (2013). *The African Christian Diaspora. New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Adogame, Afe and Cordule Weissköppel, eds. (2005). *Religion in the Context of African Migration*. Bayreuth: Breitinger.
- Anderson, Bridget and Scott Blinders (2013). *Who Counts as a Migrant? Definitions and Their Consequences*. Oxford: Compass.
- Basch, Linda, Nina Glick-Schiller and Christina Szanton Blanc (2013). *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-states*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
- Bedmar, Vicente L. and Verónica Cobano-Delgado Palma (2010). “The Muslim Veil Controversy in French and Spanish Schools.” *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations* 21, 1: 61–73.

- Belousek, Darrin W.S. (2012). *Atonement, Justice and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- Berger, Peter L. and Gordon Redding, eds. (2011). *The Hidden Form of Capital: Spiritual Influences in Societal Progress*. New York: Anthem Press.
- Castillo Guerra, Gorge, Marjolein Glashouwer and Joris Kregting (2008). *Tel je zegeningen. Het Maatschappelijk Rendement van Christelijke Kerken in Rotterdam op hun Bijdrage aan Sociale Cohesie*. Nijmegen: Nijmeegs Instituut voor Missiologie.
- Castles, Stephen and Mark J. Miller (2009 [1993]). *The Age of Migration*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan (Fourth Edition).
- Coleman, Simon and Katrin Maier (2011). "Who Will Tend the Vine? Pentecostalism, Parenting and the Role of the State in 'London-Lagos.'" *Journal of Religion in Europe* 4, 3: 450–470.
- Connor, Phillip (2010). "Context of Immigrant Receptivity and Immigrant Religious Outcome. The Case of Muslims in Western Europe." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, 3: 376–403.
- Davie, Grace (2000). *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diehl, Claudia and Dietrich König (2013). "God Can Wait. New Migrants in Germany Between Early Adaptation and Religious Reorganization." *International Migration* 51, 3: 8–22.
- Ebaugh, Helen R. and Janet Salzman Chafetz (2000). *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*. New York: Altamira Press.
- Faist, Thomas (1995). "Boundaries of the Welfare State: Immigrants and Social Rights at the National and Supranational Level." In Robert Miles and Dietrich Thränhardt, eds. *Migration and European Integration: The Dynamics of Exclusion and Inclusion*. London: Pinter Publishers: 177–195.
- Foner, Nancy and Richard Alba (2008). "Immigrant Religion in the U.S. and Western Europe: Bridge or Barrier to Inclusion?" *International Migration Review* 42, 2: 360–392.
- Frederiks, Martha (2014). "Religion, Ethnicity and Transnational Migration: An Epilogue." In Stan Grodz and Gina Smith, eds. *Religion, Ethnicity and Transnational Migration Between West Africa and Europe*. Leiden: Brill: 219–229.
- Frederiks, Martha and Nienke Pruiksmä (2010). "Journeying Towards Multiculturalism? The Relationship Between Immigrant Churches and Dutch Indigenous Churches." *Journal of Religion in Europe* 3, 1: 125–154.
- Gallo, Ester (2014). "Introduction. South-East Asian Migration and Religious Pluralism in Europe." In Ester Gallo, ed. *Religion and Migration in Europe: Comparative Perspectives on South-East Asian Experiences*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate: 1–24.

- Grodź, Stan and Gina Smith (2014). *Religion, Ethnicity and Transnational Migration Between West Africa and Europe*. Leiden: Brill.
- Haddad, Yvonne Y., Jane I. Smith and John Esposito (2003). "Introduction. Becoming American: Religion, Identity and Institution Building in the American Mosaic." In Haddad, Yvonne Y., Jane I. Smith and John Esposito, eds. *Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish and Muslim Experiences in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers: 1–18.
- Hanciles, Jehu (2008). *Beyond Christendom: Globalisation, African Migration and the Transformation of the West*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Hankela, Elina (2014). *Ubuntu. Migration and Ministry. Being Human in a Johannesburg Church*. Leiden: Brill.
- Henkel, Reinhard and Hans Knippenberg (2005). "Secularisation and the Rise of Religious Pluralism: Main Features of the Changing Religious Landscape of Europe." In Hans Knippenberg, ed. *The Changing Religious Landscape of Europe*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis: 1–13.
- Hüwelmeier, Gertrud and Kristine Krause (2010). *Travelling Spirits: Migrants, Markets and Mobility*. New York: Routledge.
- IOM (International Organization for Migration) (2003). *World Migration 2003: Managing Migration. Challenges and Responses for People on the Move*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- King, Martin Luther (2010). *Stride toward Freedom. The Montgomery Story*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Kleinschmidt, Harald (2003). *People on the Move: Attitudes Toward and Perceptions of Migration in Medieval and Modern Europe*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Kofman, Eleanora and Gillian Youngs, eds. (2008). *Globalization: Theory and Practice*. 3rd edition. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Kurien, Prema (1998). "Becoming American by Becoming Hindu: Indian Americans Taking Their Place at the Multicultural Table." In Stephen Warner and Judith Wittner, eds. *Gatherings in the Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigrants*. Philadelphia: Templeton University Press: 37–70.
- (2003). "Gendered Ethnicity. Creating a Hindu Indian Identity in the United States." In Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, ed. *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press: 151–173.
- Langmead, Ross (2014). "Refugees as Guests and Hosts: Towards a Theology of Mission Amongst Refugees and Asylum Seekers." *Exchange* 43, 1: 29–47.
- Levitt, Peggy (2004). "Redefining the Boundaries of Belonging: The Institutional Character of Transnational Religious Life." *Sociology of Religion* 65, 1: 1–18.
- (2007). *God Needs No Passport. Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape*. New York: The New Press.

- Marquardt, Marie Friedmann (2005). "Structural and Cultural Hybrids: Religious Congregational Life and Public Participation of Mexicans in the New South." In Karen Leonard, Alex Stepick, Manuel Vasquez and Jennifer Holdaway, eds. *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*. New York: Altamira Press: 189–218.
- Min, Pyong G. (2005). "Religion and Maintenance of Ethnicity Among Immigrants: A Comparison of Indian Hindus and Korean Protestants." In Karen Leonard, Alex Stepick, Manuel Vasquez and Jennifer Holdaway, eds. *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*. New York: Altamira Press: 99–122.
- Mittelberg David (1999). *The Israel Connection and American Jews*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Morley, David and Kevin Robins (1995). *Spaces of Identity. Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*. London: Routledge.
- Nagy, Dorottya (2009). *Migration and Theology. The Case of Chinese Christian Communities in Hungary and Romania in the Globalisation Context*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum.
- Phan, Peter C. (2003). "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church." *Theological Studies* 64: 495–519.
- Portes, Alejandro and Dag MacLeod (1996). "How Shall I Call Myself? Hispanic Identity Formation in the Second Generation." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19, 3: 523–547.
- Pruiksma, Nienke (2011). "Reconsidering Context: Gendered Transnational Practices in the Celestial Church of Christ Covenant Parish in Amsterdam." *Journal of Religion in Europe* 4, 3: 388–408.
- Sar, Jaap van der and Roos Visser (2006). *Gratis en Waardevol. Rol, Positie en Maatschappelijk Rendement van Migranten Kerken in Rotterdam*. Utrecht: Stichting OIKOS.
- Sarró, Ramon and Joana Santos (2011). "Gender and Return in the Kimbanguist Church of Portugal." *Journal of Religion in Europe* 4, 3: 369–387.
- Schoorl, Jeannette (1995). "Determinants for International Migration: Theoretical Approaches and Implications for Survey Research." In Rob van der Erf and Liesbeth Heering eds. *Causes of International Migration*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities: 3–14.
- Schreiter, Robert (1997). *The New Catholicity. Theology Between the Global and the Local*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- (2009). "Spaces for Religion and Migrants Religious Identity." *Forum Mission* 5: 155–171.
- Simon, Benjamin (2010). *From Migrants to Missionaries: Christians of African Origin in Germany*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang Verlag.
- Smith, Timothy L. (1978). "Religion and Ethnicity in America." *American Historical Review* 83, 5: 1155–1185.

- Stepick, Alex (2005). "God is Apparently Not Dead: The Obvious, the Emergent and the Yet Still Unknown in Immigration and Religion." In Karen Leonard, Alex Stepick, Manuel Vasquez and Jennifer Holdaway, eds. *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*. New York: Altamira Press: 11–37.
- Sutherland, Arthur (2010). *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Tomlinson, John (1999). *Globalization and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- UN (United Nations) (2002). *International Migration Report 2002*. New York: United Nations.
- Vertovec, Steven (2007). "Superdiversity and Its Implications." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, 6: 1024–1054.
- Währisch-Oblau, Claudia (2009). *The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe: Bringing Back the Gospel*. Leiden: Brill.
- Warner, Stephen R. (1993). "Work in Progress towards a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 98: 1044–1093.
- (2005). *A Church of Our Own. Disestablishment and Diversity in American Religion*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Wimmer, Andreas (2013). *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wimmer, Andreas and Nina Glick-Schiller (2002). "Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences." *Global Networks* 4, 2: 301–334.