Introduction

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Migration. The word conjures up images of countless Syrian refugees *en route* to a safer place, of young Africans trying to cross the Mediterranean, of Indian and Nepali construction workers slaving in Qatar, of Mexicans risking their lives to cross the border with the USA and of German Pegida supporters protesting against the presence of Muslims in Europe.

Migration-related issues regularly make the headlines, and seldom in a positive way. But migration has many different faces: Chinese entrepreneurs in Mali boost the local economy, Indian nurses meet the demands for personnel in British hospitals and nursing homes, while the remittances sent home by Sikh taxi drivers in Norway, Filipino domestics workers in Kuwait or Polish immigrants to the USA are of vital importance to the economies of their countries of origin. However, migration dynamics do not only have social, political and economic implications; they also bring about changes in the religious landscape, in religious beliefs, and practices and in the way people understand themselves, each other, and the world around them.

The essays collected in this volume intend to raise and illustrate a range of issues on identity and religion, as encountered by people affected by the dynamics of migration. Human beings, be they as individuals or organized in communities, take the central stage in this volume; their experiences of migration, their faith, and their quest for identity formation form the focus of the reflections in this book. Published in Brill's *Theology and Mission in World Christianity* series, the volume addresses questions pertaining to migration, identity, and Christian belief, which originate in various geographical locations and which demonstrate new modes of interconnectedness; thus the volume aims to contribute to the ongoing academic discussions on the meaning of mission, theology, and the Christian tradition in general, and does so in a worldwide perspective.¹

The authors of this volume are theologians, missiologists, anthropologists, religious studies scholars, American Studies scholars who work in and reflect

¹ The articles collected in this volume were previously published in the thematic issues of the journals *Exchange* 43 (2014) and *Mission Studies* 32 (2015). The contributions were first presented as papers in the study group "Migration, religion, and identity" during the International Association of Mission Studies' Toronto Assembly in August 2012 and have been reworked and expanded since.

on diverse settings; they cover a wide range of scholarly enquiry. They offer exercises in scholarship, which balance systematic and empirical research, in order to articulate methodological challenges in studying migration. By doing so they affirm that the study of migration needs to be conducted in ways that seek to address and reveal the complexity and fluidity of migration phenomena.

The title of this volume connects identity, religion, and migration as three increasingly important keywords within the social and human sciences, but also keywords that are problematic to define universally. The juxtaposition of these three concepts (as also created by e.g. Hämmerli and Mayer 2014) aims at creating open spaces, where innovative approaches in studying migration may be formulated. After reviewing a large body of literature touching upon religion, migration, and identity, we, the editors of this volume, formulate the following initial observations:

1. Much of the research on migration, religion, and identity works with theoretical biases originating from North American contexts. While the importance of researching migration dynamics within North American contexts remains patent, migration needs to be researched at a similar level of intensity in other socio-geographical contexts, thus generating empirical data and theoretical insights from different contexts and facilitating studies from a comparative and synchronous perspective.
2. Researching the religious within migration dynamics seems to have a preference for the exotic and the more spectacular cases. This is especially noticeable in Europe. Here again, undertaking research on less exotic but more common phenomena related to migration would bring more balance in the present research agenda. For example, we argue that next to favoring the study of African Pentecostal communities in Europe, the cases of African mainline churches' presence in Europe should also be explored.
3. While much of the research refers to integration, little attention is given to questioning the role of religion within integration paradigms and policies. It seems to be a tacit expectation that through integration processes migrants' religion will eventually withdraw into the so-called private sphere. We argue that such expectations need to be readdressed through research that focuses on the importance of religion for identity formation in contexts affected by migration and on the role of religion in the public sphere.

4. Methodological nationalism continues to prescribe research on migration, identity, and religion, resulting in research mainly defined through the lenses of ethnicity, land of origin, and nationality. It is a challenge for theology-missiology to find new categories and elements for demarcating plausible research units, especially in view of carrying the contextualization debate further.
5. While much of the research studies religion and identity through the lenses of immigration, little attention is being given to the communities in the contexts of departure. There are indications that migration affects the departure contexts in such a way that the issues of religion and identity in those contexts require renegotiations.

The above described initial observations led us to collect a number of papers which through empirical research and theoretical reflection explicitly broaden the horizon of researching migration. The premise of the editors is that the study of migration in its close relation to identity and religion will result in changes in how people (such as policy makers, taxpayers, religious leaders, members of the faith community, researchers) think and act in relation to migration dynamics at numerous levels of everyday life.

The chapters in this volume address the dynamics of migration processes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, characterized by an intensification of human mobility through voluntary or enforced decisions and also improved means of communication and travel. Thus, the realm of living of individuals as well as groups has expanded, with many having the experience of living in more than one geo-political or cultural territory and with large numbers of people living as individuals or as groups in places different from their country of birth.

Theory building on novel dynamics of migration has resulted in new conceptualizations of “interconnectedness” (Castels 2002, 2010; Castels *et al.* 2015; Anthony McGrew 1992; Held and McGrew 2002), such as transnational (Nina Glick-Schiller *et al.* 1992; Glick-Schiller 1995, 2015; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007) or globally-stretched (Vertovec 2007) networks and their relation to localities. In reflection on localities such terms as “deterritorialization” (in a whole range of attempts for its conceptualizations from Appadurai 1996, still referring back to Deluze and Guattari 1972, 1987; Tomlinson 1999, and Rockefeller 2011), “super-diversity” (Vertovec 2007; Meissner and Vertovec 2015) and “multiple belongings” (Portes 2000; Christiansen and Hedetoft, eds. 2004) entered the academic discussions. This vocabulary addresses the complex relationship between

locality, territoriality and nation states when it comes to migration. Different migration patterns illustrate how people involved in them create multiple belongings in terms of religiosity, socialization, or employment.

By coining the term “superdiversity” Steven Vertovec (2007) has stressed, that though groups of people may share similar experiences of migration, migrants—even when they come from the same ethnic background (see Stanley in this volume)—form a highly diverse group of people and interpret their migration stories in different ways; the superdiversity approach underlines that migrants are and remain connected to real localities and territories. The concept of “superdiversity” was meant to function also beyond identifying and describing new phenomena and it has searched to offer a tool in opening up ways for new methodologies in the study of migration, in order to produce change at the level of policy making.

The above-mentioned theoretical approaches and the developments they refer to, pose profound questions to key missiological concepts such as “inculturation” and “contextualization”. What are the worlds, the cultures, the contexts in which people who have a migration (hi)story live? How do the actual locations of residence and former locations of residence interact with each other? Do they coincide or partly overlap? How does locality shape migrants’ experiences and transnational connectivities? And how do these developments shape Christianity and fashion individual and communal religious identities? What is the meaning of terms like “inculturation” and “contextualization” in relation to migration? Do they lose their validity? Do they need reconceptualization or do alternate terms need to be developed? The urge for the present volume originates in unsettled discussions around the questions formulated above.

Religion within the contributions of this volume is researched in terms of Christian identities. The volume is organized in such a way that chapters with an explicit methodological question form a frame around chapters with a more explicit case-study approach, highlighting unfamiliar and surprising constellations, created through the condition of migration, also in terms of becoming and encountering refugees.

Martha Frederiks’ contribution opens the volume by surveying and assessing some of the theories developed so far. By doing so, the chapter creates space for further theoretical explorations of the religion-migration-identity juxtaposition. The chapter explores the often taken-for-granted concepts “migrant” and “migration”, maps theories which connect migration and the significance of various aspects of religion in coping with migration, and identifies areas for further research.

Dorottya Nagy explores methodology; she demonstrates how a lack of reflection on academic presuppositions results in the propagation and protraction of methodological nationalism in much academic work on religion, identity, and migration. She argues that methodological precision is required, in order to better describe, analyze, and understand identities and representations. She exhorts scholars not merely to explicate their assumptions and methodology but also advocates that the field of religion and migration should venture into more multi-, pluri- and intradisciplinary approaches.

Hiromi Chiba's contribution is the first case-study in this volume. Chiba addresses the role of the protestant church in the US Refugee Resettlement program during the early Cold War era. She takes the reader back to the 1940s and 1950s, when following World War II and the rise of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, hundreds of thousands of displaced Europeans sought resettlement in the United States. Based on thorough archival work, Chiba describes how American protestant churches—and the American Methodist Church in particular—took a leading role in responding to the influx of refugees. Chiba demonstrates how churches, moving beyond denominational and even religious differences, became actively engaged in the 'resettlement' of displaced people. Chiba also hypothesizes that it was during the post-war period that American protestant churches, urged on by a missiology of 'good neighbourliness' and against the grain of their time, began to develop their role as promoters of ethnic tolerance and religious pluralism within the society. Chiba's article is an invitation to missiology's further engagement in the study of religion, migration, and identity formation from historical perspectives.

Pavol Bargár examines the oft-repeated claim that Nigerian-initiated churches in Europe fail to attract a membership beyond the West African community. By analyzing the strategies used by three Nigerian-initiated churches in Prague (Czech Republic) to move beyond their ethnic origin, Bargár demonstrates that this claim needs modification and draws attention to the complexity on the ground, by pointing to aspects such as situational knowledge and experience of the pastors, language politics, worldviews, styles of worship, and outreach strategies when addressing the triad of migration, religion and identity. Bargár's research emphasizes once again the wide socio-political and religious diversity of the European contexts, highlighting that the story of African migrants in the Czech Republic (and possibly also in other Central and Eastern European countries) differs distinctly from Western European experiences.

Stanley John presents a case-study of Kerala (India) Christians in Kuwait. In his contribution John describes the divergence in social and legal position of short-term contract-laborers on the one hand and well-established

middle-class Indian migrants in Kuwait on the other. John observes that these two groups in Kuwait rarely interact and demonstrates how the disparity in social status of these two groups profoundly affects their potential of religious expression and community formation. Thus, John's case-study problematizes homogenization of migrants on the basis of ethnicity and spells out the importance of social diversification in processes of identity formation.

Deanna Womack takes the reader to communities of Arab Christians in the United States. Womack's paper displays that by moving to the USA, Arab Christians seem to exchange their religious minority status in the Middle East for an ethnic minority status in America. She especially highlights how second generation migrants contest these identity constructions based on ethnicity and language, resulting in intergenerational tensions and power struggles within Arab Christian communities in New Jersey. Womack also remarks that Arab Christians in the USA suffer from the negative imagery produced by the "war on terror" discourses, which associates Arabs with Muslims, leading to feelings of alienation and non-belonging among Arab Christians in the USA.

Stephen Pavey and Marco Saavedra introduce the reader to world of the so-called "undocumented youth activists" in the USA: mainly young adults who arrived in the USA as children accompanying their undocumented parents. Because these young people lack a social security number they cannot legally work or vote and are subject to arrests and deportations. Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, activism and experiences of friendship, Pavey in dialogue with activist Marco Saavedra discloses the callous world of American immigration regulations and its impact on the lives and human dignity of these undocumented youth. In the second half of the article, the authors explore the challenges that the reality of undocumented youth poses to faith and theology and then cautiously seek to articulate words of hope and human dignity amidst the fear and despair. By coauthoring of the chapter, Pavey and Saavedra give an example of innovative ways in exploring identities and representations.

Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu's contribution bridges the more case-study focused chapters with those explicitly dealing with theoretical issues. Asamoah-Gyadu explores the pastoral challenges of Ghanaian migrants' churches in relation to the often murky waters of issues related to visa, residential permits and other forms of documentation. Asamoah-Gyadu describes how many Ghanaian immigrants interpret their documentation problems in terms of attacks from supernatural forces and envious witches at "home" in Africa and demonstrates how this framing in turn informs the approach of the leadership to care and counselling, leading at times to dubious practices. Asamoah-Gyadu widens the discussion on life narratives as forms of interpreting migration experiences. Interpreted life-stories addressed through the

migration-religion-identity juxtaposition become primary sources for revisiting ethics also from the point of systematic theology.

The final chapter of this volume has been written by the late Ross Langmead, who passed away in June 2013, before he could submit the final version of his text. Langmead was in search for a theology of mission in the context of refugees and asylum seekers and identified “hospitality” as being central for such a theology and one which leads towards friendship as a safe form for human interaction. By identifying Gustavo Gutierrez as one of his dialogue partners, he suggests that a theology of mission which advocates the case of refugees and asylum seekers necessarily becomes another form of liberation theology, this time realized in the socio-economic and political complexities of Australia.

With Langmead’s contribution the circle is complete. The reader arrives back to the beginning in order to start the next circle, because this is what the editors of the present volume invite their readers to do: to join in the work of making a difference by revealing, addressing and interpreting the complex yet fascinating areas where migration, religion, and identity appear to be meaningful only in their interrelatedness, spelled out in the everyday life of ordinary people.

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