Minding Methodology

Theology-Missiology and Migration Studies

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1 Introduction

Minding methodology within academic research calls attention to tensions in understanding the role and the place of academic research done by human agents and its relation to discourses key-worded with objectivity and scientific method. A growing corpus of contributions within the wide spectrum of academic disciplines calls for awareness regarding methodology, emphasizing the need for intellectual integrity and improved research assessment. Acknowledging that the academic setting is but one of the numerous interrelated settings out of which and within which theology-missiology operates, the present chapter focuses on the academic setting, where theology-missiology is identified as a discipline which also relates to migration studies.¹ The hyphenated form of theology-missiology visualizes the assumption that the two components are integral to each other; when one is used alone, it implies the other as well.

The present chapter understands methodology as the total sum of the “assumptions that underline any natural, social or human science study, whether articulated or not” (McGregor and Murnane 2010: 420; emphasis mine) which then translate into research questions, methods and research design. Methodology starts with the researcher’s ontology, epistemology, and logic. It is the way of being in, looking at, and understanding the world that at the ground level prescribe *what* to research and *how* to research. Research questions, designs, and methods all depend on the epistemological dimensions of methodology.

The present chapter assumes that theology-missiology as an academic field of inquiry is relational and therefore must be dialectical and should aim at conversation. The attitude of listening and initiating dialogue between and conversation among disciplines and researchers fosters a double benefit: it allows the comparative principle to do its work and it acknowledges that even within the same discipline, multiple methodologies are at work and are at the heart

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of knowledge creation. Too often, like other disciplines, theology-missiology interprets the application of scientific methods as a means to achieve objectivity (objectivist reductionism, “pure” realism). By doing so it stimulates an immediate unnatural detachment between researcher and research, leaving the core components of methodology unarticulated, in a particular epistemology. As the quote below illustrates, confining research in discourses to theory seems to be safer than epistemological disclosures.

... migration is too diverse and multifaceted to be explained by a single theory. Efforts at theory building should be rather evaluated by their potential to guide research and provide cogent hypotheses to be tested against empirical evidence, and by their contribution to a better understanding of specific facets, dimensions and processes of migration (Arango 2004: 15).

Methodology, when not efficiently addressed, may lead to repetitions of the dominant pattern of research design in the study of migration and to the use of “the classical recipe” of one-sidedly perceived action research aimed at finding immediate solutions to immediate problems. To paraphrase and further enrich Nina Glick-Schiller’s classic methodological nationalism recipe (2008: 2) for the field of theology-missiology, one could prescribe the following: take a city, or a town, in any case a politico-geographically identifiable location, choose a group of (im)migrants, if possible one with a clear ethnic identity, formulate a research question which touches upon the problematic relationship between church, Christian communities and society (e.g. problem of integration, illegality, criminality, exclusion, human rights), read some theoretical publications on migration, try to understand what the Bible has to say about migration and migrants, reflect a little while and surely you will come up with plausible research results. If the researcher eventually happens to be a (im)migrant herself, this increases the credibility of the research, because the academic world of migration studies is longing to see the appearance of migrant theologians-missiologists doing research on migration.

The conversing and dialoguing epistemological attitude of the present research however does not allow such behavioural irony, because irony itself might be the result of interpretative assumptions originating in tacit research epistemologies. Therefore, without delegitimizing modes of research, the present chapter seeks to mind methodology by addressing the problem of methodological nationalism. The core of methodological nationalism lies in the assumption that the nation-state is the most natural and necessary

representation of society and therefore the most logical unit of analysis in social sciences and humanities (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002; Glick-Schiller 2007; Wimmer 2007; Beck 2007). The chapter further assumes that ongoing conversation and dialogue does not seek a nuanced understanding of the complexity of the topic of dialogue and conversations but rather it creates a “fusion of horizons” (in Gadamerian terminology) “an achievement of shared understanding in which the inadequacies and limitations of each participant’s initial understanding become transparent and what is valid and valuable is retained within a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of the situation under discussion” (Carr 2006: 430).

The present chapter, inspired by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek’s and Louise O. Vasvári’s understanding of the comparative cultural studies, interdisciplinarily addresses issues related to methodological nationalism. Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári insist on a methodology which calls for interdisciplinarity “with three main types of methodological precision: intra-disciplinarity, multi-disciplinarity and pluri-disciplinarity” (2011: 17). To be precise, intra-disciplinarity in this chapter means methodological considerations regarding research on migration within theology-missiology at large, multi-disciplinarity means seeking dialogue and conversation with the disciplinary other (including epistemologies!). Intra-disciplinarily this chapter problematizes two theological conceptualizations of migration: migration as *locus theologicus* and migration as context. It argues that revisiting meanings attributed to “locus” and “context” may lead to a more relevant theological praxis related to migration. Multi-disciplinarily it focuses on ethnicity and introduces the models of boundary making (Wimmer 2007) and structuration (Morawska 2009) as means of combating methodological nationalism. Pluri-disciplinarity means addressing the viability of teamwork and it calls for collaboration between scholars who are theologians-missiologists and those who are not.

2 Methodology is More than Method

Awareness for methodological issues in migration studies is growing, but more reflection and conversation is needed in order to be able to adequately discuss methodology and to find new and innovative ways that take the complexity of migration into consideration. Stephen Castles, one of the leading voices on migration in the social sciences, for example, has explicitly returned to the issue of methodology, even after building up a solid scholarship on human mobility. His research project *Social Transformation and International Migration in the 21st Century* proposes to “re-examine the theoretical and methodological

basis of international migration research”.² Claudio Canaparo (2012) addresses the issue of methodology and migration studies as a philosopher, proposing a “radical constructivist epistemology” built on axioms. Recent theological publications show a similar tendency. Daniel Groody aims at exploring “new ways in which we might examine the theological territory of migration and even challenge some of the underlying philosophical, if not ideological, presuppositions behind the debate about migrants and refugees” (2009: 642). In his review essay on how migration has been dealt with by theologians in the last fifty years, Gioacchino Campese (2012) points to scholars such as Pieter de Jong (1965), Giacomo Danesi (1980), Orlando O. Espin (2000; 2006), and the already quoted Daniel Groody, as scholars who touch upon the question of methodology.

Campese expresses the need of developing a “proper methodology, beginning with a thorough scientific analysis of the reality of migration, which entails an ongoing collaboration with the social sciences that study this phenomenon” (Campese 2012: 9). This quote in itself could be taken as a starting point to address methodological issues because it touches the major nerve of the problems connected to methodology: *assumptions*. Campese’s claim, for example, suggests that the social sciences would provide the most beneficial interdisciplinary collaboration for theology in order to scientifically analyze migration. Throughout the disciplines there is much misunderstanding on methodology. One of the major confusions is caused by the interchangeable usage of the terms “methodology” and “method”. For example, Castles uses theories and methodologies in the title of his project; this suggests that methodologies do not necessarily compound theories. Confusion also arises when sections on methodology immediately step into assessing the presuppositions of others instead of first clarifying the presuppositions of the research(ers). Caroline B. Brettell’s and James F. Hollifield’s edited volume *Migration Theory* (2000) illustrates how tempting it is for researchers to simply ignore methodological issues by either only dealing with ‘theories’ or using the term methodology for methods. For example, while Brettell and Hollifield aim at creating “cross-disciplinary conversation about the epistemological, paradigmatic, and explanatory aspects of writing about and theorizing migration in history, law and social sciences” (2000: 2), through the short cut of a schematic matrix they claim that research questions are discipline driven in the first instance and therefore each discipline formulates its own specific questions. The question of methodology is then abandoned and the focus is on theories, methods and

2 Description from Castles’ website. http://sydney.edu.au/arts/sociology_social_policy/staff/profiles/stephen.castles.php. Accessed 25 May 2013.

tools instead. A careful look at the questions they bind to each discipline reveals that all the questions they formulate, could be asked by all the disciplines listed in their matrix. Questions such as “how does law influence migration?” or “how do we understand the migrant experience?” are not unique to a single discipline. While scholars from different disciplines may have the same or similar questions, the issue of methodology will arise as a point of significant difference. The second edition of the book in 2008 with two additional chapters continues to further illustrate struggles with methodology. Adrien Favell's article, without explicitly using the word methodology, addresses the issue of obstacles to interdisciplinary dialogues (Favell 2008: 259–278). Through the concept of postdisciplinarity he questions the mono-methodological disciplinary vision previously made by the volume's editors. Postdisciplinarity, for Favell, is an epistemological claim that dismisses the opposition between realism and constructivism. He states “*all* social sciences . . . should be constructivist in their self-understanding” (268–269, emphasis his) but/and meanwhile, when perceiving migration one cannot dismiss “the material fact that migration is something that happens when a real (physical) person moves in real (physical) space.” (269). A postdisciplinary approach, then, means one that

begins to question and dismantle some of the fixed points and conceptualizations provided by our standard definitions of international migration in the international state system. These, clearly, are political constructions of the modern world, exhaustively carved up as it is into distinct nation-state units. This world should, in our migration theory, be subject to political and historical deconstruction. Yet nearly all chapters *assume* that we know what migration is, and that we can accept the units—from which people move to which they move—given by the political world we live in (269; emphasis mine).

To question conceptualizations and deconstruct theories is minding methodology. The word “mind” (recalling both the noun and the verb) is primarily implied here not for the sake of alliterating the title but because it encompasses such complex processes as thinking and feeling, the conscious state of thought, and remembering, and at the same time it underlines the importance of its object.

Within theology-missiology, the question of methodology should be addressed not for the sake of fashion (as Bevans observes to be often the case 2009: 135–136) but because there is a real need to re-discuss and reveal the nature of research. Within theology-missiology, it is important to question the conceptualizations and theories, to look at the level of assumptions

and try to observe and understand what is going on. The question of methodology cannot be simply erased by using denominational labels as defensive covers because denominational labels too need further elaboration and a denomination is not necessarily identifiable with one single epistemological stance. It is not sufficient to say that one uses a Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran or Pentecostal methodology because these terms do not clarify in a satisfactory way the ontological, epistemological and logical components of research. Especially in the case of migration studies, denominationally labelled methodologies might too easily be associated with institutionalized forms of Christianity, with so-called “national churches” which in turn seem to be perceived by governments as NGO’s and become partners or enemies of the (nation) state in addressing the problem of migration.

It is important to keep in mind that methodologies are neither fully denominational nor discipline bounded, and unless made transparent in research they more often misinform than inform. “Methodologies shape the diversity of the entire body of knowledge” (McGregor and Murnane 2010: 420) but in order to create dialogue and conversation within the body of knowledge (Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári 2011: 16) one needs to be able to profoundly get to know the other and therefore a researcher should be ready to methodologically introduce and expose his/her research. Methodology cannot avoid self-positioning through which crucial categories of identification and identification of the other become verbalized, which in turn will influence the academic dialogue on same topics by researchers of different methodologies using the same or similar methods.

3 Methodological Nationalism

The question of identification and identity as a methodological matter is central in migration studies. Categories of identification come forth from the research unit through which researchers study migration phenomena and its actors. The most obvious and easily adaptable research unit is the state, and more precisely the nation state. The nation state paradigm dominates research on migration in all disciplines. There is research on Mexican migration in the USA (Chiquiar and Salcedo 2013), Polish migrants in the UK (Burrell 2009), Romanian migrants in Spain (Bleahu 2004), Moroccans and Turks in the Netherlands (Bevelander and Veenman 2006), Turks in Germany (Sirkeci *et al.* 2012) to name a few.

The nation state unit and its components prescribe identification of people who experience migration phenomena either as “migrants” or “non-migrants.”

In the last two decades, a growing number of social theorists have started to question the validity of the nation-state paradigm and started to talk about methodological nationalism within migration studies (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002; Wimmer 2007; Glick-Schiller 2007). The term itself was coined in the seventies but gained popularity together with the rise of globalization theories (e.g. transnationalism). The term encompasses questions about the interrelatedness of history, nation state and modernity (Chernilo 2011). Two definitions capture the core of methodological nationalism. One from migration studies describes it thus:

Methodological nationalism is an ideological orientation that approaches the study of social processes and historical processes as if they were contained within the borders of individual nation-states. Nation-states are conflated with societies and the members of those states are assumed to share a common history and set of values, norms, social customs and institutions. [...] it reminds us that conventional "objective" social theory harbors a political position and that researchers routinely identify with the concerns and discourses of their own nation-state (Glick-Schiller 2007: 6).

This definition reminds theologian-missilogists of the large number of dissertations based on the methodological nationalism pattern. Another definition underlines that whenever nation-state and (modern) society mean the same thing, methodological nationalism is present because of "the equation between the idea of society and social theory's key conceptual reference and the historical processes of modern nation-state formation" (Chernilo 2011: 99). This phenomenon seems to penetrate all levels of human inquiry (both academics and the social world itself) and results in "the paradox [...] that no one admits being committed to it, and yet its presence is allegedly found in every corner of the contemporary social scientific landscape" (Chernilo 2011: 100) and even beyond.

The critique of methodological nationalism does not deny the importance and the role of the nation-state in the contemporary world but questions its conceptualizations and the power attributed to it. It is indeed "the irony" as Glick-Schiller calls it that while migration scholars are engaged in the study of globalization phenomena, in the study of the flow, mobility and motion of people and materials worldwide, they continue to use "concepts of society and culture that reflect essentialist and racialized concepts of nation" (Glick-Schiller 2007: 5). In spite of the fact that much of the theological-missiological

scholarship on migration criticizes politics and governments, the power and centrality of nation-state remains uncontested. In this way, churches are seen as major tools for promoting “national integrity and unity”; churches may run programs called repatriation and/or integration. By the same token, even the multicultural theory of society, quite favoured within theology-missiology, turns out to operate with methodological nationalism either because the so-called “non-migrant” party claims the right to decide how long national and ethnic labels can be used for a certain “migrant” group or because “migrants” themselves continue to identify themselves through national and ethnic categories. In the case of Moroccans in the Netherlands, for example, even “the third generation” can still be labelled as Moroccan, which in many cases has a negative connotation, implying that Moroccans are secondary to Dutch. But the self-identification as Moroccan may imply the same, namely, that Dutch and their culture is secondary to Moroccans and their culture.

Methodological nationalism is more complex than the hidden competition of nations and nationalities. It works in two directions, creating larger groups and creating smaller groups of identification. In the case of enlargement or boundary extension, it operates through patterns of relational identification, meaning that group identification is practiced in order to clearly set up boundaries between *we* and *they*. Two cases are fascinating examples in migration studies when it comes to theology and migration. The first one is the so-called Asian-American theologies which implies a whole set of negotiations of identities and identification. For example an Asian-American identifier is adopted after a long row of resetting and extending boundaries: a Hong-Kong person is a Hong Kong person when she encounters a citizen of the Peoples’ Republic of China, but when they together encounter a Vietnamese they adopt the Chinese identifier, again when this group, outside Asia, encounters a non-Asian, the Asian label becomes the group identifier. Asian-American means setting boundaries in two directions implying being Asian in America and being American in Asia and meanwhile also extending boundaries in two directions: being Asian and being American. It is through such relational identity formation that most various migration trajectories come together at the level of the largest identification possibility. It is at this level of identification that Asian-American theologies are articulated. The second example is an imagination of Africa as the highest identification category and this then combined with understandings of migration may result in programs and theories such as “Bringing back the Gospel to Europe” (Währisch-Oblau 2009) and “Transforming Christianity through African migrations” (Hanciles 2008).

When shrinking boundaries of identification, methodological nationalism distinguishes between two boundary markers: citizenship and ethnicity. The arguments above already demonstrated that nation states are about boundary making in terms of belonging. It is through the political management of belonging that the categories of citizens and non-citizens make sense; by the same token people who share the same locality can be divided into migrants and non-migrants. Ethnicity connects to nationalism in the sense that “[n]ationalism is rooted in, and is one expression of, ethnic attachments, albeit perhaps, at a high level of collective abstraction. The ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ or ‘nationality’ are, respectively, varieties of ethnic collectivity, and ethnicity, and are likely to be historically contingent, context-derived, and defined and redefined in negotiation and transaction” (Jenkins 2008: 148). Within theology-missiology, ethnicity is a much valued category of identification and an element of the classic understanding of mission and of doing contextual theology. Based on classic understandings of ethnicity as a “matter of ‘cultural’ differentiation” (Jenkins 2008: 169), theology-missiology, in its encounters with migration studies, continues to “reify ethnic groups and their boundaries” (Jenkins 2008: 169). Focusing on ethnicity through (artificially) creating homogeneous groups as research units may result in the oversimplification of the ongoing complex negotiations of identity at the level of individuals. It is important to note that, as Jenkins puts it, “[s]ocial groups are not ‘things’” (Jenkins 2008: 169). The flip side of the argument is also noteworthy: researchers should not be misled by collective self-identifications. The purpose of this discussion is not to contest the authenticity of a group e.g. which identifies itself as Asian-Americans but it is legitimate to ask how, based on which patterns, socialization, and categorization such identification happens. Listening to individual voices might help verifying the validity of the ethnic label attached to a group.

Another dimension of methodological nationalism is that its core concepts such as nation-state, ethnicity, citizenship, and nation are strongly connected to land and owned territory. Localities in this way become nationalized and ethnicized. Historiographies of nation states, although dominated by immigration stories, underline the occupation of the land, and legitimize the ownership of the land. Here again homogeneity in terms of nationhood and/or ethnicity dominates the discourse. Following this logic, migration processes then create the categories of “locals” and “non-locals” where the latter mean migrants as if they were not part of the locality where they live. Theories of assimilation, integration, marginalization, acculturation, and multiculturalism are based on the perception of the social world through methodological nationalism implying that “it is made up of different kinds of peoples, each

characterized by a unique culture and, at least initially, a separate social universe" (Wimmer 2007: 10), implying an owned territory, a piece of land.

The arguments presented above clearly demonstrate that the present chapter does not question the legitimacy of identity formation through the national and ethnic lens. It calls attention, rather, to the danger that these identity markers create social fields of power which compete with each other and are often used through politics (in its broadest sense) to create and maintain inequality in the sense of "We are better than the others", "We are the owners of this land not they." After all, dealing with migration means dealing with the perception and assessment of the Other. In what follows, the article focuses on two conceptualizations of migration within theology-missiology, and explores to what extent these contain traces of methodological nationalism.

4 Intra-disciplinarity: Locating Migration

There are two significant, and, again, interrelated statements on positioning migration within theological studies which influence theory formation: one looks at migration as a *locus theologicus*, the other perceives migration as context and makes it into an entry for constructing so-called contextual theologies. Both views focus on the human experience related to migration and nurture a whole spectrum of dichotomies such as local–non-local, native–non-native, stranger–non-stranger. At first glimpse, both discourses lack methodological nationalism yet on examining them it seems that these too allow space for methodological nationalism. The article proceeds by problematizing these discourses for the sake of combating methodological nationalism.

Making human experience central to theological reflection is intrinsic to church history and regained emphasis particularly in discourses of mainly Roman Catholic scholars on theological method and methodology especially around and after Vatican II which caused a methodological shift and created new settings for theology in which lay people could also participate (Imbelli and Groome 1992). Acknowledging the diverse and contradictory character of human experience, however, implies a methodological presupposition that attribution of meaning cannot be reduced to any single interpretation generated by direct human experience. This connects back to the horizon widening task of theology and the methodological assumptions of the present paper that through listening, questions never raised before might become important for theological reflection. In this sense positioning migration both as *locus theologicus* and context for theologizing call for further discussions on methodology.

5 Migration as *Locus Theologicus*?

Understanding migration as *locus theologicus* comes from viewing migration as “a sign of the times” and works with the assumption that a proper reading of this “sign” will lead to a deeper understanding and knowledge of God, God’s nature, and God’s relationship to the world. Writings which call for seeing migration as a *locus theologicus* on the one hand leave the question open as to whether this call has anything to do with the *loci* method through which the term itself entered into the theological vocabulary and praxis (Breen 1947). On the other hand, migration seen as a *locus theologicus* is being used as a metaphor and developed into sets of metaphors that transform the theological-missiological reflection on the social phenomena of migration into theological inquiries about God’s nature and into theological anthropology. “The theology of migration has also just begun to interpret the mystery of God from the experience of human mobility” (Campese 2012: 21) and again: “The theology of migration, once again in cooperation with biblical theology has rediscovered the migrant as a metaphor of the true Christian believer” (2012: 22), and theologians “have examined the images of the church already existing in our Christian tradition that reflect the experience of migration and could illuminate it.” The “pilgrim church” (2012: 23–24) figures at a prominent place among the images. The logic of this epistemological circle is that because of the dominant experience of migration in the contemporary world, God, humans, and their relations can be spelled out in migration terminology, and since migration is such a profound experience of contemporary people, the metaphoric language derived from migration will provide a better understanding of who God is, who people (Christians) are and from this understanding the ethics of addressing concrete migration issues will also emerge.

The major problem with this logic is that once migration is made into a *locus theologicus* in this way, there is no end to control the metaphoric usage of the migration language. The corpus of those theological-missiological studies in which migration becomes everything will only increase. Furthermore migration metaphors may problematize the taken for granted ordering of the world in nation states but through their abstraction they tend to propose models of spiritual resignation rather than discernment for theological action. The metaphoric usage however might then result in a methodological canonization of (Favell 2008: 261) and “monopolistic” (Canaparo 2012: 188) approaches to migration studies within theology-missiology where especially God as revealed in Jesus Christ is seen as the ultimate migrant, people are migrants on the earth, the church is a pilgrim church, the Scripture is all about migration, church history is all about migration, boundary crossings, being on the way, and even

the classical *loci theologici* (such as creation, incarnation, and redemption) are explained through migration language. Migration metaphors and associated terms become ontological categories: the nature of the BEING—metaphorically speaking is seen in terms of migration (being, becoming, and being on the way). The theological epistemological claim that God, God's relation to the created world, humanity, and the church are anything but static is a legitimate claim in itself. The question should be asked, however, whether the whole migration vocabulary built around it in order to explain really functions as explanatory or on the contrary it causes confusion, catachreses, and even misunderstandings especially when the migration-vocabulary developed at the socio-political level is taking over.

The issue of migration being a *locus theologicus* becomes even more confusing when the *locus theologicus* itself is taken for a metaphor.

The metaphor of place is both rich and suggestive, pointing as it does to geographical and social location and their fundamental importance for both the interpretation and production of theological discourse. However the metaphor has one fundamental limitation that becomes evident when we look at it from the perspective of migrants: its static character. Certainly we need to drink from our own wells, as Gustavo Gutierrez has so vividly written. But what happens when those wells are left behind, in a geographical sense, in a place of origin far away? From what wells should migrants drink? Do we carry bottled water with us—or will the water become stale? Do we drink virtual water using communication technologies—as when we read newspapers from home over the internet? Do we get inebriated on water from our wells when we are able to visit our places of origin? Can we dig new wells, and are they somehow less hydrating by virtue of the water quality abroad? What happens to us when, as a result of globalization and migration our *locus theologicus* becomes blurred in movement, unstable, not easily recognizable as a “place” socially or physically? Where or how can we situate ourselves to speak meaningfully of God? (Bedford 2005: 103–4)

Without questioning the legitimacy of using metaphorical language in theology, without questioning the genre of narrative and storytelling, or understandings of theological method as being “something of an after-thought” (Song 1999: 2), the quote above illustrates that intra-disciplinary misunderstandings might appear when questions of methodologies remain unaddressed.

Another reading of “migration as *locus theologicus*” would immediately connect it to the loci-method, where *loci theologici* (at least in a Melanchtonian

understanding) seen as a method implies that theology means interpretation of the Scripture not through separated topics but in the awareness that the identified topics together form a theological system of relating to the world in which one lives. Therefore, if migration is identified as an additional *locus theologicus*, it needs to be brought in relationship with other *loci* of the theological assessment through the scriptural reading of a more complex “reality.” The *loci*-method by definition is about building up conceptual relations, and creating organic conceptual entities (systems). “The *loci* method tends to compartmentalize (e.g. in the present case only focus on migration metaphors) by design but the method is misunderstood when this compartmentalization blinds its users to the way in which the topics relate to one another” (Kolb 1997: 319).

The major methodological problem of the emerging theological-missiological migration terminology, however, is the unquestioned and favoured usage of the category of “migrant.” There is a hidden assumption in theological-missiological studies on migration which claims that it is normal to capture identities (human and divine) in the “migrant” label but the same assumptions also suggest that it is normal to divide the populated world into migrants and non-migrants. This assumption indeed translates into socio-political engagement of Christians (both as individuals and in various collective forms) that perceive human identity in the essentialized identity markers of “migrant” and “non-migrant.” By making migration into a *locus theologicus*, Gemma Tulud Cruz formulates the following questions to be put on the theological agenda:

But where is God in all this? How does one do theology amidst this more pronounced, if not new, reality? Where does theology figure in the face of the challenge of borders and strangers? How does one articulate Christ's command to “love your neighbor as yourself,” when the neighbor is a migrant, hence a stranger? How can theology contribute to according dignity to migrant humanity? These are key questions that theology has to grapple with given the problematic conditions inherent in migration (Cruz 2008: 371).

Without questioning the legitimacy of the logic behind these questions, from a methodological point of view, the counter-question which arises is this: is it legitimate to address the contemporary socio-political complexities of migration phenomena by nurturing a theologically recharged terminology which rests on essentializing human identities by using the labels of migrants and non-migrants? It seems that “migration theologies” are closely related to “liberation

theologies” at least in that they use one conceptual entry to address complex socio-political issues. Campese (2012) strikingly mirrors this relationship through the title of his review article on migration and theology: “The irruption of migrants” as analogical to the “irruption of the poor.” Theologizing from this perspective regards migrants as being in need of liberation. Migrants are marginalized, non-citizens, strangers, victims, refugees, dispersed, asylum seekers, illegal, the underside of societies. Susanna Snyder observes that “postcolonial hermeneutics has provided the primary springboard for reading scripture through a forced migration lens. Its appropriatedness stems from two characteristics: the majority of postcolonial scholars define themselves as migrants or exiles [...] and its underlying aim, shared with liberation theology, is to bring about the emancipation of the oppressed” (Snyder 2012: 29). According to this logic, “migration theologies,” then, are indeed the exported forms of liberation theologies. Could it be that questioning and at least partially dismissing the legitimacy of the “migrant”–“non-migrant” dichotomy would become the first liberating act of theologizing on migration for the sake of those directly involved in the complex socio-political phenomena of migration? If migration language dominates discourses on the nature of God, then are longings and aspirations of the so-called migrants to become non-migrants illegitimate? After all, human experiences of migration also contain rhetoric about longing for settlement, new life, creating a new home, becoming citizens, being considered local. Before addressing these questions, the assessment of migration as an experience and “as a rich source of learning about the human condition” and thus becoming “a new context, a new place for doing theology” (Cruz 2008: 368) needs to be briefly addressed. The two can be connected by a statement formulated by Stephen Bevans: “Formally theology was understood as the reflection in faith of two theological ‘sources’ or *loci theologici*: Scripture and Tradition. However, today, [...] theology also considers *present human experience* as a theological source or *locus theologicus*” (Bevans 2009: 165). This present human experience then among others is also called context. It is obvious that this argument is deeply rooted in a Roman Catholic theological tradition and it stirs up the question about the meaning of context.

6 Migration as Context?

Theological-missiological research on migration, mainly associated with the Roman Catholic tradition, seems to develop a theory which could be called theology in the context (experience) of migration, according to which migration can be seen as the context of and experience for theological reflection

(Phan 2003; Bevans 2009; Cruz 2010; Padilla and Phan 2013). In the following, the article focuses on one example, taken from Stephen Bevans, in order to address the issue of potentially allowing space for methodological nationalism in the process of theory formation. Bevans is one of those theologians who expose their methodology and by doing so he initiates dialogue on methodological issues.

Stephen B. Bevans in his *Models of Contextual Theology* (this chapter works with the revised and expanded edition of 2003), following Bernard Lonergan's post-1957 ideas and Karl Rahner's arguments makes the epistemological statement that "[r]eality is not just 'out there'; reality is 'mediated by meaning,' a meaning that we give it in the context of our culture or our historical period, interpreted from our own particular horizon and in our own particular thought forms" (Bevans 2003: 4).

Meaning making seems to happen through a perception of the world (as the object of investigation in this case) dominated by national and ethnic categories and ordered in nation states. Culture, then, too, as one of the major definers of the context, is mainly understood in terms of ethnicity and within the parameters of nation-states. Context here means the present socio-political, geographical and cultural environment, which together with the Scripture and the tradition (both with their socio-political, geographical and cultural environments) present the relevant sources for theological reflection and make theology contextual. It is remarkable to see how national and ethnic labels, dividing the human agents into so called participants and non participants, influence the reflection on contextual theology. Bevans raises the question whether a nonparticipant in a context can do contextual theology (2003: 18) and translates this question as "Can a non-Ghanaian do Ghanaian theology? Can a white U.S. American do black theology? Can a North American contribute to Latin American theological reflection on God's liberating action in history? Can a male do feminist theology?" (2003: 19). Bevans answers this question with a "firm no" because "non-Africans do not know how Africans feel or perceive reality" (2003: 19) but he leaves a small space for people who do not "fully share the experience of the other . . . to contribute to the development of a contextual theology" (2003: 19); nevertheless, according to this logic there will always be participants and nonparticipants and the latter category, mainly based on cultural differentiation made through ethnicity, will never fully become part of the context. It is again remarkable to read Bevans' self-reflection. While putting himself in the category of a *bona fide* nonparticipant, who tried to adapt Filipino and Italian culture, he comes to the conclusion that "I think that my greatest lesson in my contact with other cultures has been

learning what it means to be a U.S. American. In other words, I have found that one very important way to learn who you are is to learn, in encounter with another, who you are not" (2003: 20). Nonparticipants therefore should accept the reality of the "host culture" and together with it the reality that "she or he can never be a real part of it or direct contributor to it" and further "[a] genuine contextual theology, in other words, can indeed grow out of genuine dialogue between the participants in a particular culture and the stranger, the guest, the other" (2003: 21). Reversing the logic of this reflection would mean that the greatest benefit of a "Filipino" or an "Italian" residing in the USA would be that he/she learns what it means to be a "Filipino" or an "Italian".

The example taken from Bevans generates some questions: why do ethnic and national labels remain such core components of theological demarcations of the context? Why does the experience of migration need to be translated into terms of ethnicized and nationalized culture? What do the categories Filipino, US American, and Italian mean within a theological discourse? The question about the meaning of the context remains and it seems that somehow the danger of methodological nationalism is related to it. The growing body of literature in migration studies which has been done as contextual theologies seems to acknowledge the legitimacy of the essentializing ethnic, national and continental lens when proposing titles such as *Developing a Contextual Theology of Postcolonial Filipino American Diasporic Identity*, *Asian Theology of Migration*, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization*, *African Migration and the Transformation of the West*, *Korean Diaspora and Christian Mission*, and *Asian-American Theologies*.

Displaying the context of contextual theology however is more complex than its ethnic, national and nation-state related problems. It is remarkable to see that Bevans in his *Theology in Global Perspective*, strongly influenced by David Tracy, exactly after the chapter on his assessment on contextual theology, elaborates on the "Catholic method" of doing theology and states that "the 'analogical imagination' is the most profound assumption of the Catholic epistemology" (2009: 190). The *analogia entis* "is the philosophical concept that is, I believe, the lynch-pin of the Catholic worldview. This is because it asserts the fact that *our* experience, *our* history, and the visible things of *this* creation [...] are nevertheless *clues* to what God and God's action in this world are like. It is the perception of *similarities* in the *difference* between ourselves and God" (Bevans 2009: 190; emphasis his). Similarly to the self-reflection made on the issues of participant and non participant, the logic of the exercise brings one back to a better understanding of the self and from his/her situation to a better understanding of God, but the question of (better) understanding

of the Other remains unaddressed as well as the issue of others of the same context. Socio-political actions built on arguments that migrants enrich “us”, the host society, it is to “our” benefit to have “them” among “us” seem to mirror an egocentric understanding of the context. Again, when transposing this logic to migration studies it would mean that the categories of migrants and non-migrants are taken for granted; the categories are given and imply contexts, and then theologizing on migration is being done by migrants and by non-migrants both individually and collectively, and the danger there is a hidden assumption that these two categories, just because of the assumption that they cannot fully share the same context in terms of experiences, can never fully understand each other (Nagy 2009). The maximum that one then can expect according to this logic are multicultural encounters or even communities where again the unity in diversity principle is mainly being spelled out (even celebrated) through essentialist national, ethnic or continental identifiers.

In Bevans’ rich theological work however the issue of context reappears and especially in his latest publications, he equates it with experience. While arguing for the centrality of experience in doing theology he states that “it is the honoring or testing or critiquing of experience that makes theology *contextual*. What this means is that, for contextual theologians, *anything* can be a source of theology” (Bevans 2011: 9–10; emphasis his). Any sort of experience, anything can become the context for theologizing.³ Context here “points beyond culture or place to include social location (e.g. doing theology out of the experience of women), and social change (e.g. doing theology in the context of migration)” (Bevans 2009: 167). Applying Bevans’ understanding of context to migration studies is challenging. His arguments for the preference of “context” because context widens the focus from culture and place to social location or social change is partially convincing because culture, place, social location and change are interrelated and should not be seen as separate units of analysis. Deterritorialization discourses therefore should be handled with utmost care because theological reflection done in migration studies cannot avoid a minimum understanding of the space (in whatever terms) in which migration-related questions are studied. Similarly, theology cannot avoid addressing the issue of culture but the question is: with what concept of culture is it working?

3 At this stage Bevans argumentation recalls the “contextualism” spelled out by Paul L. Lehmann in his *Ethics in a Christian Context* (1963; Lehman 2006). For Lehmann, the context of contextual theology is the Christian community where Christians and God interact with each other in a concrete situation defined by processes, events, and happenings within concrete time and space. The concreteness and uniqueness of the situations make also the (ethical) questions and the way Christian communities deal with them concrete and unique.

Migration studies stimulate theological reflection to move away from a narrow understanding of culture based on nationality or ethnicity.

While keeping the discussion on methodological nationalism alive, the process of broadening the concept of context generates a shift in focus. When context is equal to experience and migration is seen as an experience, migration as such becomes the context of theology and it is not theology any longer seeking its way in the context of migration. Migration is an abstract noun and conceptualizing it as context might suggest that context in contextual theologies (on migration as well) remains at its informal level meaning “social, political, geographical or economic ‘environment’, ‘situation’, ‘conditions’ or ‘background’ and hardly ever in the specific sense of ‘context of text or talk’” (van Dijk 2008: vxiii). If this is the case, the danger of methodological nationalism reappears.

The challenge of theologically engaging in migration studies in terms of contextual theology and avoiding methodological nationalism still seems to lie in (re)conceptualizing the very notion of “context.” The “context” of contextual theology has been hardly ever conceptualized and therefore it would be misleading to assume that it offers a clear meaning. The question here is whether theology-missiology could revisit the concept of context so that it might have a greater relevance for migration studies and contribute to theory building. It is beyond the scope of the present article to offer a relevant conceptualization of context for migration studies, but it seeks to point to directions which might bring about innovative research.

7 Contexts for Communicating Migration

In their attempt to revisit or even re-conceptualize the notion of “context” theologian-missiologists should be reminded of one of the core tasks of their discipline: communication. In its task to communicate through discourses, translation, mediation, interpretation or hermeneutics, language and therefore linguistics as an auxiliary discipline has always played an important role for the theological praxis. In fact context as a *terminus technicus* entered into the multidisciplinary usage through linguistics. For instance, in developing a theory of context, the linguist Teun A. van Dijk departs from the thesis that it is not the social situation (informally called context, the context of the most contextual theologies) itself that shapes the structures of the discourses (written or oral text) but those components of the communicative situation which the participants of the discourse identify as “systematically relevant” and meaningful (2008: x). These dynamic processes of meaning giving generate

the so-called context models, which according to van Dijk are the “missing link between discourse and society, between the personal and the social, and between the agency and structure” (2008: xi). According to this argumentation, contexts are “not some kind of objective condition or direct cause, but rather (inter)subjective constructs designed and ongoingly updated in interaction by participants as member of groups and communities” (2008: x).

Van Dijk’s conceptualization of context, only superficially sketched here, could refresh theological research on migration in several ways. Firstly, it would call attention to the importance of the ongoing talks, discourses and non-verbal communication related to migration phenomena where the accent is on the ongoing nature of the situations and discourses created by the inter-relatedness of human beings. Questions such as what exactly is being communicated about migration become central to research and how, under which terms does communication happen? To what extent are ethnic or national labels relevant in a given context? The variety of contexts within the same geographical or socio-political area should be sufficient evidence against methodological nationalism.

Secondly, such a conceptualization of context would help understand that Christian communities or other types of communities could be seen as contexts in which discourses on migration happen and they may not need ethnic or national identifiers. Thirdly, focusing on contexts which communicate (on) migration, dismisses arguments which *a priori* label migration as good or bad and instead reveal the complex nature of migration phenomena. The leading questions then will not be: Is labour migration good or bad? Should refugee camps be built or not? Instead of these research will try to map the complexity of migration related issues. Questions such as to what extent is it legitimate to talk about immigrant communities or migrant churches especially versus local churches, what are the implications of migration to communities without parents and how migration phenomena restructure and shape the Church will become important. Questions about self-identification and identification by others will be also asked as well as why certain Christian communities identify themselves through ethnic, national or continental lenses? Such questions need to be asked in the epistemological attitude of “longing to understand the Other” through dialogue and conversation.

Fourthly, conceptualizations of context in terms of dynamic processes of meaning giving dismisses the one locality-one culture paradigm. It is the awareness that within a geographical locality a large number of contexts (communities) are possible, and the cultures and discourses within these contexts are manifold and changing and not necessarily dominated by patterns of ethnic

identification. Fifthly, acknowledging the ongoing, ever changing nature of the context pays attention to the element of time in researching migration. In some contexts discourses on migration might rapidly change where in others the same discourses might remain for a longer period of time.

Context remains a central notion through which theologian-missiologists continue to engage with migration studies. The above formulated thoughts are but initial impulses to keep methodological discussions on the notion of context alive, and to underline the necessity of digging deeper in the complexities created by interrelatedness.

At the level of intra-disciplinarity, thus, dialogue and conversation implies listening to the Other who may be operating from other traditions of inquiry. Theological reflections on migration formulated by biblical scholars, students of practical or systematic theology, church historians, and the countless intra-disciplinary mixtures of these never hermetically closed fields, experts with different training, together will enrich the dialogue and the conversation within the various contexts. Methodologically intra-disciplinarity is a precondition of multi-disciplinarity.

8 Multi-disciplinarity: Anticipating Conversation

Theology-missiology done in a contextual way claims that it is an interdisciplinary field of study by definition. Such an aspiration should first of all address the question of “do we really (intend to) understand the Other”, speaking from another discipline? Or do we simply, without questioning, rely on the results of research done in other disciplines? The fact that numerous theological-missiological research starts with “using” the statistical data gained through quantitative methods by sociologists as taken for granted realities illustrates how research done through hidden methodologies is taken as a starting point for theological-missiological reflection. Here again the simple question arises what kind of epistemology legitimates the division of the world population into migrants and non-migrants, not to speak about the expended terminology on labelling people within the collective terms “migrants” or “immigrants”? What is that theological-missiological epistemology which “simply” goes with the rhetoric of integration theory or theories on multiculturalism? Asking these critical questions and trying to get some satisfactory answers to them would first of all show the desire to understand the disciplinary Other and the care taken in entering into dialogue with other disciplines but would

also stimulate theologian-missiologists to disclose their methodology. In the following sections, the article enters into multi-disciplinary conversation through the concept of ethnicity as connected to theory building.

9 No to Methodological Nationalism: Going Beyond the Ethnic Lens

The concept of “ethnicity”, as previously argued, belongs to the core vocabulary of theological practice throughout the ages. The theological genealogy of the term is too complex and too loaded just to be dismissed for the sake of preventing methodological nationalism. The ethnic lens and ethnicity should figure in theologizing on migration also because people continue to use the ethnic label as primary identifier. Yet, new methodological departures defining new frameworks and units for analysis are needed.

Andreas Wimmer (2013), through his ethnic group formation or boundary-making paradigm offers one such new framework for addressing ethnicity. Wimmer develops his paradigm through critical reading of Johan Gottfried Herder’s philosophical-theological theory of the history of humanity (Herder 1968)⁴ which, in Wimmer’s reading, gives a clear and strict division of the world (through the metaphors of garden and cultivation) where distinct nations belonged to demarcated territories. In this reading, Herder’s perception of ethnicities and nations unproblematically coincide and if they resist migration (uprooting) they mirror the *Genius eines Volkes* (Herder 1968: 234), a unique (ethnic) culture nourished by a shared language, close ties between the members, they share the same memory of the past and the same vision for the future (to make *das Volk* flourish). According to this logic, nationhood defined in ethnic terms constitutes culture. From the field of theology Herder’s worldview as one fuelling nationalism has been challenged, among others, by Karl Barth, who refuses to “explain everything in terms of nationality and the history and distinctive of one’s people” (Barth, CD III/4, 1960: 306).⁵ Noting that the connection between Herder and nationalism grew into a fuelled debate in which various positions exist, readings of the world in terms of

4 Originally written between 1784–91.

5 It is remarkable to note that starting with his Göttingen lectures (1921–1925), Barth continued to develop his theologizing on nationhood and nationalism by first combating the so-called *völkische Bewegung und Theologie*. More on Barth’s approach to nationhood and nationalism see Carys Moseley (2013). *Nations and Nationalism in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

distinguished territories and homogenous cultures defined through ethnicities still exist.

Andreas Wimmer's (2007, 2009, 2013) boundary making paradigm calls caution for applying the so-called Herderian epistemologies to migration studies. The proposed paradigm does not question the legitimacy of ethnicity either in terms of ethnic groups (self identification) or ethnic categories (social categorization) (Jenkins 2008), but seeks to make sense of the complexity around the concept of ethnicity. Wimmer formulates four axioms of the paradigm: ethnic groups are not "objectively" given components of the social world but they are results of boundary making social processes of "reversible" nature; agents of a given group use diacritical markers such as language (also dialects), dress, music, family structures, architecture, customs, or facial features, skin colour and more to create ethnic boundaries. Markers create ethno-linguistic, ethno-religious, ethno-regional, ethno-cultural, ethno-somatic, and ethno-national categories. The agents from both sides of the boundary are actively involved in boundary construction (we and they, we and the others) hence the boundary making paradigm's primary focus is the process of group making, the formation and transformation of the so-called ethnic groups. These axioms provide theology-missiology with the tools to scrutinize its own views of ethnic groups. The third axiom once again touches upon the issue of creating minority and majority groups and, one step further, makes the claim that the world is "legitimately" dividable into migrants/immigrants and nationals. "The boundary-making approach denaturalizes the distinction between immigrant minorities and national majorities on which immigration research is based" (Wimmer 2007: 19). Denaturalization questions the applied terminology around migration phenomena and also reveals that identity markers such as citizen, non-citizen, immigrant and national only make sense and became a problem when the state monopolizes "legitimate means of movement" (Torpey 2000: 6). This goes hand in hand with the state's monopolization of the "legitimate use of violence" (ibid.: 4). Migration phenomena mainly channelled through state politics, then, result in an extended terminology and identification categories of "desired and undesired migrants." Here again, theology-missiology needs to reflect in which ways it aims to address migration as a political question and in what ways it chooses to do so.

Wimmer's efforts in resituating ethnicity for the sake of migration studies result in concrete proposals for research designs. He, like Glick-Schiller and others, proposes to "de-ethnicize" research designs in order "to see both the emergence of ethnic groups and their absence" (Wimmer 2007: 28). Territorial units (regions, localities such as cities, towns, neighbourhoods), individuals with different backgrounds as units of analysis or a distinguished social

class, institutional environments, social dramas (events) as units of analysis, (Wimmer 2007) seem to offer innovation for migration research without contesting the importance of ethnicity in migration processes.

Another stimulus for theological-missiological reflection on migration and ethnicity is the change of the focus from investigating how an ethnic group conserves itself to looking at how ethnic groups are being shaped, constructed, and transformed. This aspect closely relates to Ewa Morawska's concept of "emergence" where the relationship between structures and agents is perceived as "a process of continuous becoming" (Morawska 2011: 7). She speaks of structuration as a process in which

(while the) upper structural layers (economic and political systems, cultural formations, technological civilizations) set the "dynamic limits" of the possible and impossible within which people act, it is at the level of the immediate social surroundings that individuals and groups evaluate their situations, define purposes, and undertake actions. The intended and, often, unintended consequences of these individual and collective activities in turn affect—sustain or transform—these local-level and, over time larger scope structures (Morawska 2009: 3).

Focusing on group processes and taking into account their ongoing transformation means that research focuses on entities "with emergent properties" and looks at "how various parts are brought together in a unique way, to produce properties and outcomes that cannot be explained fully by reference to the separate parts" (O'Reilly 2012: 5–6). Such an entity "emerges out of people's meanings and actions," but once it emerges it begins to live its independent life and becomes authoritarian but always related to the actors (migrants and non-migrants) which constructed it (Stones and Moog 2009). The recognition that migration processes create social structures also connects to Wimmer's proposal for finding and defining new research units and stimulates research on identifying the components of the structures, their interrelatedness, and the role of the human components within it. The interpretation of community as context could be easily studied through the structuration model either as structures of their own or as being components of larger structures.

Both the boundary making paradigm and the structuration model offer multi-disciplinary occasions to innovatively engage in migration research without losing the importance of ethnicity and the reality of nation states as categories of identification and refreshing contextual modes of theologizing on migration. The opportunities of multi-disciplinarity are manifold and if

theology-missiology would like to grow into a more interdisciplinary discipline it would be worth looking for more ways of multidisciplinary research because in this way sustained beliefs, conceptualizations, entities and their relatedness meet and engage with each other, and create “theorized contextual frames” (Stones 2012: 5).

10 Pluri-disciplinarity: Researching Together Across Disciplines

The third aspect of interdisciplinarity according to Tötösy de Zepetnek and Vasvári is pluri-disciplinarity and it means “analysis and research by teamwork with participants from other discipline[s]” (2009: 17). While multi-disciplinarity focuses on the individual researcher’s pioneering and adventuring in other disciplinary fields, pluri-disciplinarity proposes interaction among researchers from different disciplines. Such an approach to research implies a new understanding of theologizing. Pluri-disciplinarity means that next to individually cultivated research, theological-missiological research should be done in team work. This might imply that theology-missiology takes the initiative and invites disciplinary others to create platforms of working together. Practically speaking, forms of working together may vary from conferences, workshops, and edited volumes to initiating a pluri-disciplinary journal for migration studies. The leading methodological imperative of pluri-disciplinarity is the strong conviction that together more can be achieved and done, it assumes inclusion and by it also transformation at the societal level.

Pluri-disciplinarity proposed by theology-missiology in migration studies also calls attention to the need of creating teams where research is not only done but also written in multiple languages. While acknowledging the need of an academic *lingua franca* (in most cases English), it also formulates the need of creating space and facilities for doing research in other languages, respectively cross translating the findings and practicing knowledge valorisation, and thus being beneficial for the larger society.

Pluri-disciplinarity also calls for comparative studies at least in two dimensions: at the level of the variety of disciplines and at the level of the variety of research topics connected with migration. Scholars looking at the same topic from a different disciplinary training and together widening the topics within migration research would create new forms of inter-disciplinary praxis; a praxis with a comparative imperative inherent to it. The present state of research shows that theologian-missiologists have been focusing on collaboration with social scientists, mainly with anthropologists and sociologists but

collaboration should be extended with scholars from other disciplines as well such as political studies, law, economy, literature, psychology, media studies, history, arts and medicine.

At the present, also due to the so-called “uneven agenda”⁶ (Davie 2012: 281) there are only a few themes (e.g. migration from Mexico to the USA, diaspora studies, Islam and migration, Christianity and migration, refugees and asylum seeking) which dominate migration studies but pluri-disciplinarity calls for more, for giving attention to hidden components within the complexity of migration worldwide (e.g. childcare as a form of migration, communities affected by emigration). Still further, pluri-disciplinarity would also bring together scholars of international migration and the so-called domestic migration. Such collaboration would also combat methodological nationalism because different conceptualizations of the nation state and its components may mutually challenge each other.

Finally, pluri-disciplinarity, by asking for epistemological and ontological clarifications is a difficult way of doing research but it implies the creation of innovative research units, designs, and cross-fertilizations regarding research methods. Pluri-disciplinary teams do not mean epistemologically and ontologically homogeneous teams, on the contrary, one of the values of them is that they invite the methodological Other to collaborate; teams which without dialogue and conversation will not work.

11 Conclusion

The present article began with the claim that there is a need to address the question of methodology in migration studies in general and in theology-missiology's migration research in particular. It started with the observation that methodological nationalism characterizes much of the research on migration. In minding methodology this chapter has called for interdisciplinarity as an epistemological attitude assuming that interdisciplinarity properly understood and practiced nurtures awareness about methodology and helps in formulating/verbalizing research methodology. The chapter has used the concept of interdisciplinarity both by calling for awareness about the growing body of literature on migration within theology-missiology and other disciplines and by arguing for initiating relationships with scholars

6 Grace Davie calls attention to the “uneven agenda” in research which means the concentration of money and focus are concentrated on very limited areas which serve the interests of the instances which generate money for research.

both theologians-missilogists and scholars from other disciplines in order to enrich and further understand the complexities related to migration. By applying the principle of interdisciplinarity, the article has addressed the issue of methodology in order to detect and help prevent methodological nationalism.

The chapter seeks to generate further dialogue and conversation on how theology-missiology researches migration, and how research methodology prescribes and translates into socio-political actions, and together construct ethics on migration. By addressing some of the key concepts, such as context, *locus theologicus* and ethnicity which are applied in theologizing on migration, and in this case, also connectable with methodological nationalism, the chapter seeks to create space for overlooked insights and to connect previously unconnected arguments.

Methodology, with epistemology, ontology, theory, and method as its components, remains a key question to be addressed continuously when theology-missiology researches migration. Consequent displays of methodologies may then create resources for responsible actions at all levels at which theology-missiology informs churches and Christian communities concerned about migration. Minding methodology in migration studies would also translate into interdisciplinarity, together finding ways/paths for research that transcends methodological-nationalism. The present chapter upholds its initial aim of generating more discussion and theological-missiological reflection on migration underlying the claim that through dialogue and conversation we (scholars) can better understand each other and it demonstrates that there is much work to be done in migration studies by theologians-missilogists.

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