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## Religion and Superdiversity

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# Religion and Superdiversity: An Introduction

by MARIAN BURCHARDT (Max Planck Institute for the Study of  
Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen) and  
IRENE BECCI (University of Lausanne)

## Introduction

About 10 years ago, Steven Vertovec (2007) coined the notion of superdiversity in order to describe a scenario in which a rapidly growing number of migrants remained outside the existing social, economic and cultural categories that are routinely used to describe migration flows, and to pinpoint the increasing complexity of variables describing the social status and everyday lives of migrants in Britain. Since then, the term has been taken up across the social sciences and has more generally been used to describe social dynamics in societies characterized by high levels of immigration and population mobility (Meissner and Vertovec 2015; Meissner 2015). While religion was initially not very central to debates around migration-driven diversity, this has changed dramatically over recent years (Becci, Burchardt and Giorda 2016). In this special issue, we explore the multiplication and dynamics of religious differences and the extent to which the notion of “religious superdiversity” suggests a fruitful avenue to guide research and theorization.

Before the term superdiversity appeared, the concept of religious diversity was employed in a number of ways. We suggest that there are three main sociological discourses in which it served different purposes. First, in earlier secularization theory, religious diversity was chiefly understood against the backdrop of post-Reformation Christian diversity and seen as a factor that either favored or hindered religious belief and participation. Peter L. Berger (1967) famously suggested that the visible existence of different religions

undermined in the eyes of the believer the credibility of all of them. Theorists of religious economies (Stark and Finke 2000), on the contrary, saw religious diversity in open market situations as a condition of religious vitality. Second, and subsequently, theories and accounts of new religious movements (Barker 1999) were primarily interested in the cause and consequences of religious heterodoxy, which they linked to changes in the very institutional form of religion and its far-reaching deinstitutionalization (Luckmann 1967). Third, more contemporary approaches are primarily animated by the increasing presence of migrant religions and centrally interested in how they are accommodated in the institutional frameworks of the nation-state and in how their presence challenges dominant regimes of citizenship and secularism.

We suggest that today, there is a need to better understand how, in contemporary societies, religious diversity is afforded visibility, how it is spatially arranged and emplaced, and how religious diversity becomes a category whereby ordinary people render their social worlds legible (Stringer 2013, Wessendorf 2014). The term superdiversity opens up new perspectives in this regard. We propose that the relationships between religion and superdiversity needs to be elaborated and suggest that there are two majorly distinct ways to do so. First, there are important questions about “religion in the context of superdiversity,” which address the relationships between religion and other status categories in contexts of migration-driven diversification such as race, ethnicity, legal status, age, and

gender. And second, we emphasize the emergence, parallel development and mutual constitution of different kinds of religious differences, in other words: the interactions of different religious diversities which gives rise to what we call religious superdiversity. However, as we will also show, both perspectives cannot be isolated from one another. Research into diversity in contemporary immigration societies must take up the challenge not only to conceptualize religion as a marker of difference but also to recognize the internal diversity of practices, identities and epistemologies that are grouped under the label of religion. In what follows, we analyze each of these issues in some detail, scrutinize sociological and anthropological approaches to them and highlight the ways in which the articles in this special issue further our understanding of them.

### **Religion in the Context of Superdiversity**

As mentioned above, religion did not play a major role in earlier scholarly debates on migration. This situation has changed drastically and social scientists now view religion as central to understanding immigrants' choices, migration trajectories and social integration (Levitt 2007, Kivisto 2015, Connor 2014, Banchoff 2007, Burchardt 2016). Similarly, we note that religion used to play a minor or simplified role within scholarly and normative debates on societal paradigms that emerged from political theories around migration. Dominant during the 1980s and 1990s, the paradigm of multiculturalism was geared towards emphasizing the recognition of multiple cultural heritages in terms of country of origin, and in the North American context, the rights of First Nations (Kymlicka 1995). Religion was reduced to an aspect of ethnic culture and belonging. Subsequently, the paradigm of diversity and especially that of superdiversity were meant to ameliorate the shortcomings of multiculturalism in accounting for the internal differentiation of migrants' characteristics (Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah 2010; Cattle 2005, 2012). Importantly, these paradigms also seemed to

open new conceptual spaces for considering the location of religion.

While such work is underway (Becci, Burchardt and Giorda 2016; Stringer 2013), important shifts on the ground point to the real urgency of taking religion more seriously in theory development: First, many scholars pointed to the more central place of religion in debates over recognition. Grillo (2010) and Eade (2011) have observed how the object of recognition in Britain has shifted from "race to faith" while D'Amato (2015) has explored the political construction in Switzerland of a "homo islamicus" within a "total discourse" homogenizing Muslim identity (Behloul 2009). Second, we note the increasing importance of the law and court-based decision-making in shaping immigrant integration. This process as well has led to a rise in salience of religion in framing claims of recognition (Koenig 2010). This is particularly important as there has been simultaneously and across Europe a "Multiculturalism Backlash" (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010) and retreat from it (Joppke 2004). While some saw this retreat as rather rhetorical (Poppelaars and Scholten 2008) others insisted that it did have a real political and legal substrate (Joppke 2012). Burchardt and Michalowski (2015) showed in a comparative analysis of 10 European countries that while the cultural rights of immigrants have been curtailed in the context of the mentioned multiculturalism backlash, their religious rights have actually expanded during the same period in most countries (with the exception of Switzerland). Religion thus emerged as a new arena for contestations over cultural boundaries, as a fundamental marker of difference and identity and as an increasingly important category of recognition. It is thus clear that the arenas of religious claims-making is not even playing field but instead hierarchically organized and shot through with power dynamics.

In order to fully appreciate religion in the context of superdiversity, it is equally important to explore how religion may exaggerate, affirm or unsettle established or dominant notions of social and cultural difference both in institu-

tional contexts and everyday life. In many European countries, migrants' religious identity as Christians may help them to lower their profile in public debates on immigrant integration as a social problem, or to foreground commonalities with host societies. If host societies are highly secularized, such as the Netherlands or Belgium, such commonalities may also easily fade, or actually turn into cultural differences (Carol, Helbling and Michalowski 20105). Conversely, in many European public discourses, Muslims are routinely marked as ethnically and religiously different, whereby religious stereotyping exaggerates other grounds of xenophobic rejection. At the same time, we see variable shifts in the demographic composition and public images of religious communities with the rise in Europe of Western Buddhism and African Christianities.

Gertrud Hüwelmeier's contribution to this special issue is based on the ethnography of Germans of Vietnamese origin in bazaars and marketplaces that are considered ethnic and is a clear illustration of "religion in the context of superdiversity." Her ethnography allows us to look at how the religious identities and practices of her informants are linked to, and refracted by, their political orientations within this ethnic category through a focus on interactions, discourse, sounds and aesthetics. These different religious belongings and practices, in this case evangelical and buddhist, exist and at moments clash within this category. However, in Berlin, where her research is mainly located, secularity is the dominant cultural frame. Hüwelmeier addresses the city as a scalar formation and the bazaar as the precise sub-unit in which superdiversity becomes tangible. In the bazaar, religion is not hidden from secular activities but openly displayed and circulates in the same way as money. Religion acquires meaning in bazaar-based interactions as a form of communication and identity differentiation, of social contestation and political affiliation, and of the expression of aspirations to wealth and health.

In her contribution to this special issue, Deirdre Meintel argues that North America provides

a very different context in which the situation that the term superdiversity tries to capture is not as new as it appears to be in Europe. Her article takes a close look at Canada, where local communities have dealt with different religions and ethnicities for a long time. Though religion is often associated with migration, this research highlights that the proportion of non-religious people is often higher among migrants than among non-migrants. Significantly, she insists on the fact that religion is, in this context of superdiversity, very rarely a source of conflict and much more commonly a factor that fosters solidarity and conviviality, but research on this aspect is rare. Boundaries that seemed impossible to overcome in social settings in migrants' countries of origin are being much more easily bridged in Canada. Also Fabretti and Vieri's article in this special issue shows how the relationships between different religious and secular actors can be both conflictive and cooperative.

An often overlooked aspect of religion in contexts of superdiversity is that not only do religious groups multiply as they are formed by different ethnic communities or pray in different languages, but that individuals also draw on multiple religions in crafting their religious lives. In her article, Liza Steele offers a compelling analysis of this phenomenon of "multi-religiosity" and is based on both qualitative and quantitative data. She discusses the limits inherent in the prototypical scientific approach to people's relation to religion which is framed as the result of the overlapping of belonging, practicing and emotional commitment. However, such an overlapping is not the norm. More common are persons who negotiate their link to different religions throughout their life course according to their experiences, relations, situations and mobility.

### **The Emergence of Multiple Religious Diversities: Religious Superdiversity**

While there is, as we have argued above, a need to pay close attention to how religious practices and identities are shaped through their entwinement with categories such as gender and eth-

nicity in the context of superdiversity, we also suggest that we see new ways in which different registers of religious diversity evolve alongside and in relation to one another. Most sociologists use the term religious diversity to describe the migration-driven presence of “world religions” (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism etc.) on different social scales (neighborhoods, cities, nations, the globe).

In an important contribution, sociologist James Beckford (2000) has demonstrated how in scholarly literature, religious diversity refers to the number of religious traditions present in a given setting without regard to their or symbolic or numerical strength, to the number of religious communities with considerable membership but also to the diversity that is internal to large historical religions such as Christianity, Buddhism or Islam. The notion is, moreover, sometimes used to name multiple personal or collective compositions of religious identity, to describe syncretic or hybrid religious processes or even sometimes to refer to the individual practice of *bricolage*. Beyond the question of what the unit of analysis is when the term is used, Beckford has also highlighted the slippage in texts on diversity from a descriptive to a normative level. As a matter of fact, a number of studies on diversity tend to induce from the observation of religious diversity that this diversity is embraced normatively. For Beckford, clearly sociologists should keep “fact and value separate” (1991: 56) and empirically study the existence of diverse religious groups and practices and the public response to it. The reflection on the ideal or the politically most desirable way to respond is a domain that belongs rather to the political philosophy concerned with the notion of pluralism.

Adding to Beckford’s elaboration, we define religious superdiversity as a more encompassing and complex cultural formation involving variables and dynamics such as religious innovation (e.g. scientology or transcendental meditation) that are not directly related to migration and much more connected actually to normative and symbolic dimensions. This matters on the one

hand because the extent to which new spiritual movements and religious migrant groups are or not subjected to national or urban regulations of their practices, ritual and places of worship varies. On the other hand, such regulations also directly influence the labels and categories used to consider and apprehend religious diversity itself. In this issue, Liza Steele discusses that despite the many documented complexities influencing contemporary everyday religion, most quantitative and qualitative research instruments only allow respondents to choose one religious affiliation. If the respondent says that s/he is “not religious,” questionnaire filters often prevent religious participation or feelings from being measured at all.

Moreover, in countries where traditionally Christian churches have been established, religious newcomers’ demand for recognition will be framed by that establishment. In this issue, Vieri and Fabbretti nicely discuss such a case through their analysis of religious superdiversity in Rome. Such processes sometimes create expectations towards heterodox groups (in terms of ethnicity, languages, administrative status, etc.) to conflate in one singular category, as is the case with Islam. The difficulty of the concerned actors to reunite can then even become the evidence of their being unreliable and inconsistent. Paradoxically, and as in a sort of double bind, if the unity comes together, it may then become a factor of fear and suspicion.

Another enlightening example is the notion of the “spiritual.” In recent years an increasing number of persons describe themselves as more spiritual than religious, or spiritual but not religious (Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Houtman 2012). The practices they thereby usually mean are perfectly part of what sociologists would qualify as religious although they might be extra-institutional: tarot, yoga, meditation, neo-shamanism, neo-paganism, etc. The notion of the spiritual seems to have emerged as a practical alternative to religious and secular, as such it often operates as a mediator and blurs clear-cut established boundaries (Huss 2014). Such a process can be illustrated by the recent success, in

the cultural domain, of *exoticized* (Altglas 2015) ideas of authentic pre-Christian religions such as Neo-paganism, Tibetan Buddhism or Mayanism as Manéli Farahmand and Sybille Rouiller show in their contribution to this special issue.

Encompassing formations of religious superdiversity have been brought about by several key sources, which we now briefly analyze. First, as mentioned above, transnational migration not only helped to diversify religious landscapes but also diversifies existing religious traditions, for example Western Christianity that is transformed through the practices of African and Asian Christians. Migration has caused internal differentiation of religious traditions but such traditions have also been reshaped and reinvented simply through the reception and circulation of ideas, practices and discourses. Second, the postcolonial interrogations and deconstructions of the notion of religion have supported claims to recognize groups formerly considered to only have “culture” or “indigenous tradition” but not “religion” (see e.g. the debates on indigenous spiritualities). Looking at the factor of religion as a hologram, one can indeed realize that it inflects all other status variables. In other words, sociologists and anthropologists of religion have raised awareness about the fact that there is indeed a situation of religious superdiversity in current societies and that religion itself contains diversity in terms of gender, age, network relations and so on. And third, religious and philosophical innovation has become visible in numerous and culturally eclectic movements committed to new spiritualities. Each of these groups or movements is shaped by particular spatial practices and topographies, which are linked to national and urban histories, including their ethnic and gender hierarchies and power relations that shape the meanings of space and place. Farahmand and Rouiller compare two such movements that are characterized by the suffix “neo”, one within neo-shamanism in France, the other one revalorizing the Mayan culture and religion in a New Age fashion in Mexico. In both movements, participants are very mobile and this mobility itself is

the engine for new hybridizations and innovation. Significantly, both movements draw together ethnic markers and spirituality, and in fact construe spirituality as foundational to ethnicity. Here, superdiversity shapes religious expressions through the questioning of the external boundaries of the notion of religion. Skillfully woven into one another, Manéli Farahmand and Sybille Rouiller’s ethnographies focus on the similarity of ritual objects despite all the difference and on some structural parallels in the life-courses of the protagonists of the movements.

Fabretti and Vieri’s research conducted in the Italian capital city of Rome offers unique insights into the city as a particularly spatial and scalar formation of specific religious superdiversity. Their study ties this formation to cultural and political-institutional factors at work. The authors argue that because of the image of Rome as the ‘religious city’ par excellence, all kinds of diversity tend to be expressed through the register of religion. Anchored in national imaginaries, reflected in urban aesthetics and materialities, and circulating through global media networks, the image of Rome as a religious city draws notions of difference into religious idioms despite the fact that Italy’s legacy of monolithic Catholicism seems to suggest otherwise. Fabretti and Vieri astutely observe how this image has produced and enhanced religious diversity, by encouraging diverse religious groups to make and mark their places in the urban space in a monumental way. Similar to the other studies presented in this issue, they also highlight that religious superdiversity simultaneously develops at global and local scales.

One of the challenges arising from this conceptualization of religious superdiversity is certainly its operationalization in empirical research. In this issue Liza Steele discusses how she has found and tried to make sense of multiple ties to religion when she encountered people with multiple religious commitments in one of her research projects. For instance, how can one measure the practice of Buddhism among Christians and Jews, regular church attendance among those who say

they are not religious, and the children of mixed religious couples who might be raised with some level of identification with the spiritual traditions of both parents? In a highly original approach, she considers how to quantitatively capture such situations through an analysis of data from the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life in the United States in 2009.

Taken together, the contributions to this special issue make it clear that religious diversity is not a given but that it is itself constructed through a variety of patterns of human mobility throughout people's life course and across the globe as well as through changes in political orientation, class, and gender. These locally grounded and historically crystallizing layers of religious expression and especially their interconnectedness articulate what we call formations of religious superdiversity.

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# Enhancing Spiritual Security in Berlin's Asian Bazaars

by GERTRUD HÜWELMEIER (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

## Abstract

Reunited Germany is increasingly characterized by new groups of immigrants, particularly since the recent arrival of refugees from Syria and various other places. Like many migrants before, they bring along religious imaginaries and practices, thereby contributing to the diversification of the religious landscape. Churches, mosques, shrines, temples and other places of worship function as new markers of place-making in the urban sacred.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork among migrants in multi-ethnic bazaars in Berlin, this paper seeks to explore the performance of religious practices in superdiverse marketplaces, where Vietnamese and other ethnic groups ask spirits and gods for protection in localities increasingly characterised by economic insecurities. Simultaneously, traders from various countries respect and tolerate each other's diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds, thereby enacting cosmopolitan sociability in the hustling and bustling Berlin *Asiatowns*.

**Keywords:** religious diversity, transnationalism, migration, Asiatown, bazaar, Berlin, Vietnam

## Introduction

In 2006, a group of Vietnamese Charismatic Pentecostal Christians gathered in the *Asia Pacific Center*, a global trade centre in the eastern part of Berlin that opened its doors in 2004 and was managed by Vietnamese. On the site of one of the former headquarters of the East German intelligence service, this group, members of the *Holy Spirit Church*, rented a hall to proselytize traders and visitors in the multi-ethnic bazaar. One of the church's pastors, who had been invited from the western part of Germany as a guest preacher, pointed to the many small altars inside the trading halls, most of them located near the cash box, where they serve as places for worshipping the god of wealth and the god of the place. Vietnamese traders decorate these altars with fruit, cigarettes, alcohol, and incense. The pastor, however, considered these religious objects to be dwellings of demons and the devil,

representing evil and therefore needing to be eradicated.

A year later, a Vietnamese Buddhist pagoda was inaugurated in that same bazaar. About two hundred Vietnamese participated in the ritual, and monks were flown in from Paris to consecrate what was the first Vietnamese Buddhist pagoda in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. Religious objects such as Buddha statues had been shipped to the pagoda from as far away as Ho Chi Minh City, and, still wrapped in cellophane paper, were waiting to be unpacked during the ceremony. In the course of the ritual, participants burned incense and decorated the main altar with food and fruit for deities and spirits. Moreover, various altars were established in a side room of the new pagoda, displaying photographs of the departed. Traders and clients visit this place to ask the spirits for protection and good business. On special occasions, Buddhist monks pray for

the deceased, and families join them on other days that are personally meaningful, such as on the anniversary of the death of one's father. Besides Vietnamese, who no longer form the ethnic majority in Berlin's *Asiatowns*, there are Muslims from India, Pakistan and Turkey who also perform religious practices in the bazaar; Similar to Sikhs, they pray in their shops before they start their business each day.

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There is a growing awareness that, over the past two decades, globalization and transnational migration have altered the face of ethnic and religious diversity in societies all over the world. Like many other cities, the city of Berlin, due to the fall of the Berlin Wall and its diffuse nature of migration flows since the early 1990s, has experienced an increase of new groups of people who bring along religious imaginaries and religious practices from a variety of countries. Therefore, the multiculturalism of an earlier era, conceptualized broadly as an ethnic minority paradigm, has been replaced by what Steven Vertovec (2007) calls "super-diversity", characterized by an increase of different categories of migrants, nationalities, languages and religions. Taking this research perspective into account, I will focus on migrant-run marketplaces in Germany's capital that have been established in the past ten years. By exploring a variety of religious practices in these multi-ethnic localities, I argue that the bazaar is not only a place for economic exchange, but a site where religious performances are conducted on a regular basis, in particular by praying to gods and spirits for health and wealth, to compensate economic and existential insecurities. However, without referring to the politics and religious practices in the respective homelands and to transnational social, cultural and religious ties, we cannot grasp the impact and significance of religious diversity in the host country.

This article investigates religious diversity in a particular place, namely the bazaar, by taking

into account the dynamic interplay of religious practitioners among an increasing number of "new, small and scattered, multiple origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants" (Vertovec 2007: 1024), who have arrived in Germany in the last decades, both before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>1</sup> It was not until many years after the reunification of Germany that the German authorities slowly began to realize that Germany had become a country of immigration. Only recently, at the end of 2015, when hundreds of thousands of refugees were arriving from Syria and other regions, did the authorities gain awareness that German society would dramatically change over the next few years, becoming much more diverse than ever before in terms of ethnic but also religious diversity.

My contribution focuses on particular localities, namely Berlin's new *Asiatowns*, which are trading sites located in the eastern part of the city and run by migrants. I explore different religious practices in these multi-ethnic locations, which are characterized by high levels of trans-

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national migration. In doing so, I refer to ideas about the increasing complexity of variables in view of the everyday lives of people in particular places. These notions are in conjunction with Steven Vertovec's and other scholars' more recent thoughts on diversity in the marketplace (Hiebert et al. 2015). I argue that looking at religious practices in a particular place, namely the bazaar, broadens the perspective of the marketplace as a pure economic locality, as trader's beliefs and practices suggest engagement with powerful realms beyond this world. Due to massive insecurities in migrants' lives, in particular with regard to residence permits, health issues and economic activities, performing religious rituals will help to compensate risk-taking behaviour in the marketplace.

Over the past ten years, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork among Vietnamese in East and West Germany and in North and South Vietnam, while participating in religious rituals in various contexts, including Pentecostal networks and Catholic churches in Berlin and Hanoi as well as in many Vietnamese Buddhist pagodas. I took part in spirit possession performances, ancestor veneration rituals and sessions with diviners. As many Vietnamese are engaged in trading, I carried out fieldwork in a number of marketplaces in Hanoi and in Berlin, thereby focussing on religious practices performed in bazaars. It is exactly in these locations that diasporic Vietnamese encounter Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others who are also trading in these places and performing prayers and rituals to enhance economic success, health, and family happiness. As the bazaars under consideration were established by Vietnamese investors in the eastern part of Berlin after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I proceed by focussing on different groups of Vietnamese in Germany and their respective religious orientations.

#### **North/South Vietnamese in East/West Germany**

In exploring what makes Berlin a unique place for the encounter of both boat people from South Vietnam and contract workers, a majority from

North Vietnam, I will briefly focus on the different histories of Vietnamese immigration to the two Germanies, which has certain impacts on the different groups' religious practices in the now reunified host country. Long before the arrival of *boat people* in the late 1970s and *contract workers* in the 1980s, a small number of former students from socialist North Vietnam had spent a seminal period of their lives in East Germany. Known as 'die Moritzburger', these 300 children of communist cadres were sent to Moritzburg near Dresden in the 1950s and were educated according to East German standards (Hüwelmeier forthcoming). Later, a number of them returned to study at East German Universities. Together, with thousands of students from Vietnam and young people from different socialist fraternal countries, they were trained at East German universities, while many others studied in China, the USSR, Poland or various countries in Eastern Europe. Transnational connections fostered and maintained by Vietnamese students, apprentices, interns and contract workers in the socialist past contributed to the strengthening of economic and social ties that exist to this day between locals in former East Germany and Vietnam (Hüwelmeier 2011; Schwenkel 2015) as well as between people in other socialist countries, such as the Czech Republic and Vietnam (Alamgir and Schwenkel 2016; Hüwelmeier 2015b) and Poland and Vietnam (Szymanska-Matusiewicz 2014; Hüwelmeier 2015a). Consequently, in particular in consideration of the "importance of networks in former socialist countries" (Hardy 2002: 476), the cross-border connections which had been established during the Cold War became extraordinarily significant after 1989, when tens of thousands of Vietnamese contract workers lost their jobs and housing in the GDR and large numbers of Vietnamese from former eastern bloc countries entered reunified Germany as asylum seekers or as non-documented migrants. They settled beside former refugees from Vietnam, who had come to West Germany as *boat people* in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Baumann 2000; Bui 2003; Hüwelmeier 2008),

and whose mutual relationships with respect to religious affiliations, for example to Pentecostal networks, contributed to the outreach of Pentecostalism from West Germany to East Germany, from there to the Czech Republic, to Poland, to Vietnam, and from there to Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

Based on a bilateral agreement between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the GDR in 1981, thousands of contract workers, most of them coming from the northern part of Vietnam, went to work in GDR state-owned companies (Dennis 2005). They remained in the GDR for four to five years, living in special housing under the control of the East German state authorities and the Vietnamese embassy. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and Germany was reunited in 1990, the fate of the Vietnamese contract workers still living in eastern Germany was up in the air. During this time of great insecurity, the government of the newly reunited Germany sought political solutions for the migrants, including financial incentives for returning to Vietnam and temporary legal guidelines for those who did not wish to return to their home country (Hüwelmeier 2010).

The political division of Germany into West and East therefore affected the destinations of migrants from different parts of Vietnam: while boat people, mainly from southern Vietnam, sought refuge in West Germany, other Vietnamese migrants, mainly from northern Vietnam, arrived in East Germany as contract workers. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, other groups of migrants, namely Vietnamese asylum seekers who had been contract workers in other former socialist countries, entered reunited Germany as well. Internal differences among Vietnamese in Germany are mainly based on pre-migration political differences, and continue to shape the interactions among Vietnamese communities in Germany today. Post-1990 immigration from various regions in Vietnam and very recent migration from rural localities highlight the increasing complexity of diversification such as date of arrival, city and rural background, legal status

and gender, as has been noted in reference to the term super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). A number of Vietnamese encounter each other in the new Asian marketplaces in Berlin, as well as people from various other groups, and therefore these multi-ethnic localities are perfect places for doing ethnographic fieldwork on ethnic and religious diversity.

Germany underwent a tremendous economic and political transformation after the fall of the Berlin Wall, bringing with it social insecurities for an increasingly large part of the population, which included migrants. Vietnam has changed its economic system as well. Since 1986, when economic reforms were introduced in a period known as *đổi mới*, Vietnamese society has undergone dramatic diversification, not only in terms of its transformation towards a socialist market economy, but also with regard to the resurgence of ritual and religious practices following this economic developments. Worshipping gods, deities and national heroes can be observed in many places in contemporary urban Vietnam (Salemink 2015), including in its marketplaces (Hüwelmeier 2016). As these processes are connected with the proliferation of capitalism in the Socialist country, one has to closely look on the specificities of the local practices in all places of ethnographic research in order to understand its transnational outreach and its backlash to the home country.

Marketplaces are likely to be conceptualized as predominantly secular, almost exclusively economic places, where traders and clients alike organize their daily business. Referring to recent discussions on religion in urban spaces in general (Becci et al. 2013; van der Veer 2013), I will explore bazaars as urban places where vendors and clients pray before they sell and buy. After a number of small trading places, which were established in the 1990s by Vietnamese former contract workers, the first global trade centre in Berlin, the *Asia Pacific Center*, opened its doors in 2004, followed a year later by the *Dong Xuan Center*. From the start, these locations were not only places of commerce and trade, but also

places where different groups of Vietnamese encountered other groups, such as vendors from India, Pakistan, China and Turkey, and visitors from Poland, Russia, Germany, and many other countries. At the very beginning, both bazaars were dominated by Vietnamese traders, but over the course of several years the ethnic composition of traders has changed dramatically as a result of new migration flows and of people mixing and mingling in many places. This change in demographics is reflected in the efforts of the owner of the *Dong Xuan Center*, a former Vietnamese contract worker, to change the name of the global bazaar to *Asiatown*. He told me that some traders proposed the term *Vietnamtown*, in order to differentiate this bazaar from the many Chinatowns worldwide, but he considers the label *Vietnamtown* inappropriate, seeing as the Vietnamese have become a minority in the market over the last few years, while Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, and vendors from other Asian countries now make up the majority of ethnic groups among the stallholders (Hüwelmeier 2013b).

### Religious diversity in Berlin's Asiatowns

Multi-ethnic marketplaces in post-socialist Berlin are only small parts of the city, but these locations are nonetheless perfect places to carry out ethnographic fieldwork in eastern Berlin neighbourhoods and to investigate religious diversity in a multi-ethnic surrounding, where Germans, Russians, Vietnamese and others live together in *Plattenbauten* (socialist block apartments) built by the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s. It is in these neighbourhoods where migrant-run marketplaces were established almost ten years ago. A number of the apartment buildings' residents, mostly poor people, visit the bazaars on a regular basis, as they consider these marketplaces as sites where they can buy cheap products and where they can afford to visit the Vietnamese hairdresser. According to the traders I talked with during my periods of fieldwork, the majority of Vietnamese clients are former contract workers in the GDR, former GDR students, or recently

arriving newcomers, while some customers are boat people from the western part of Berlin who also buy products in these marketplaces. A small number of the clients have a Chinese-Vietnamese background.

Most of the boat people in West Germany identified themselves as Catholic or Buddhist when they arrived (Baumann 2000: 44), while contract workers who lived and worked in the former GDR and other Eastern European Countries considered themselves as not belonging to any "official" religion. It is important to note here that there is usually a strict line drawn in Vietnam between formal, institutionalized religions, based on scriptural traditions (*tôn giáo*) on the one hand, and folk beliefs and practices (*tín ngưỡng*) on the other (Salemink 2008:149). The communist government considered the latter as superstitious beliefs and practices (*mê tín dị đoan*), and therefore suppressed its performances for decades. On the level of everyday religious practices, however, a partial syncretism can be observed in many places in contemporary Vietnam. Spirit mediumship is performed in various temples, shrines dedicated to the Mother Goddess are decorated in Buddhist pagodas, and Buddha statues can be found on family altars, next to the images of the deceased. In Germany, Vietnamese perform ancestor veneration, visit Buddhist pagodas or convert to Christianity. However, political tensions between boat people and contract workers are still relevant today and are represented in religious congregations, such as separate Catholic and Buddhist communities in western and eastern Germany as well as in the western and eastern part of Berlin. Admittedly, Pentecostal churches may serve as places where political tensions, legal status, access to the labour market and historically different experiences, are being reconciled to a certain extent (Hüwelmeier 2011). This, however, is only one side of the coin, as over the last few years a number of boat refugees have left Vietnamese Pentecostal churches after the political "others", former contract workers, joined the churches.

*“Praise the Lord!” – Charismatic Christianity in the marketplace*

About a hundred followers of the *Holy Spirit Church* gathered in the *Asia Pacific Center* in 2006, joined by some curious visitors and traders in the bazaar. As mentioned in the vignette in the beginning of this chapter, the church had specially invited ritual experts, such as a pastor from the US with Chinese background who was in Berlin for this proselytizing event, held in the global trade centre. Attracted by the music and prayers amplified through the sound system, as is practiced in many charismatic Pentecostal churches all around the world (Oosterbaan 2009), some traders and clients in the bazaar participated in a faith healing ritual. Only few of the newcomers had ever heard about the *health and wealth gospel* so prominent in Pentecostalism.

The global explosion of Pentecostalism (Robbins 2004; Vásquez and Marquardt 2003) as well as its close connection to money and consumption (Meyer 2007) is part of a larger phenomenon that scholars have witnessed in the past two decades, namely the emergence of religious movements across borders (Hüwelmeier und Krause 2010). Notably, scholarly work on Pentecostal Vietnamese in Europe is a neglected issue, in particular when it comes to questioning how religious agents in Europe create and maintain transborder ties to Southeast Asia. As early as the 1980s, the first Vietnamese Pentecostal church emerged in West Germany. Founded by a boat refugee who had been born again in a refugee camp in Southeast Asia, the church spread through his and his co-ethnics' proselytizing activities. By the end of the 1980s, several branches and house churches had been created in Hamburg, Hannover, Stuttgart, Munich, and various small towns and villages in West Germany. I first encountered the *Holy Spirit Church* in 2006 via a Vietnamese trader in a small flower shop in Prenzlauer Berg, in the eastern part of Berlin. The trader was proselytizing in this neighbourhood by distributing flyers in his shop. After I had participated in various Sunday gatherings, the church organized an evangelization cam-

paign in the *Asia Pacific Center*, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. At the time, about one hundred vendors, a majority of them of Vietnamese background, were trading in textiles, fruit, vegetables, electronics and other goods in this marketplace. The *Holy Spirit Church* rented a hall on the grounds of the market after they had invited a preacher with Chinese background from the US, who, according to the Vietnamese pastor, was well-known for his gift of exorcism and who was also very successful in healing people from various diseases.

Among the group of people who came to participate in the religious service of the *Holy Spirit Church* in the *Asia Pacific Center*, a number of Vietnamese complained about various health problems they were suffering from. As the religious gathering had been explicitly announced as a faith healing event, the pastors, together with a group of close followers known as the apostles, listened to the stories of about 30 people who came to the front to pray and to publicly report their physical and emotional problems. The *health and wealth gospel* of Pentecostalism includes the idea that deliverance from evil spirits can be achieved by practices of exorcism, while it simultaneously promises economic success to those who believe in God. With regard to economic issues, Pentecostal Vietnamese, the majority of whom were small entrepreneurs at the time when I was carrying out ethnographic fieldwork in different churches, recounted numerous stories of how they established a shop in Berlin, found a job in a restaurant, or received money from the German welfare state – which was considered lucky by some of the poor church followers – in the course of successive religious gatherings.

Alerted to the event by the sound system in the hall of the *Asia Pacific Center*, some clients and traders arrived, curious about what was happening in the marketplace. Moreover, the rhythm of the church's loud music band greatly differed from what they were used to in Vietnam's marketplaces. At first some onlookers even thought they were witnessing a *karaoke* gathering, a

group activity that is very popular in Vietnam. *Karaoke* is an interactive entertainment whereby ordinary people sing along with recorded music using a microphone. The music typically consists of well-known popular songs without the lead vocal. The lyrics are displayed on a video screen, along with moving symbols, such as landscapes, mostly from Vietnam. However, the visitors soon realized that it was not a karaoke performance, but a Vietnamese Pentecostal Church performing a religious gathering in the bazaar which aimed at bringing "Jesus to the people". By using microphones, laptops and beamers to project the lyrics to the screen, there is a strong resemblance to the *karaoke* bars in Vietnam. Admittedly, in the Pentecostal context, noise is a crucial issue in all churches, as the sound system is an essential piece of equipment for casting out demons and thus purifying the space (Oosterbaan 2009).

In the case described here, Pentecostal Vietnamese performed a proselytizing campaign in a marketplace, which is not an empty space like abandoned post-industrial areas, considered to be spiritually neutral (Krause 2008). On the contrary, the bazaar is an ideal place for evangelizing activities, first because many people visit this locality and new followers may be attracted by the power of the Holy Spirit, as they would say. Second, new followers may be lured by the narratives recounted by church members about how they suddenly became rich in their lives. Here, in this marketplace, commodities and money circulate with amazing rapidity. Touched by the life stories of economically successful traders and church members, the bazaar is an ideal place for proselytizing activities, a place in which conspicuous consumption takes place, and where the casting out of demons may be considered by some as a "spiritual theatre", by others, however, as the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. Finally, health and wealth as well as economic risk are prominent issues in the lives of migrant entrepreneurs. The search for spiritual security in times of neoliberalism and increasing uncertainty is performed in a *karaoke*-like church gatherings, whereas *karaoke* fits very well into what many Vietnamese

know as a cultural practice in their country of origin; many even perform this with friends in their homes in Berlin. While some similarities between prosperity cults in Vietnam (Salemink 2008:152), with its focus on health and wealth and the prosperity gospel in Vietnamese Pentecostal churches are striking, there are a number of differences, in particular with regard to devils and demons, which, according to pastors and church members, are hiding in the small altars to be found in many salesrooms in Berlin's *Asiatowns*.

#### *Spirits in the global trade centre*

In the *Dong Xuan Center* in Berlin as well as in the *Asia Pacific Center*, most Vietnamese traders set up altars at the entrance of their respective salesroom to protect the business place from evil forces. Vendors told me that deities, venerated in the altar, ensure prosperity and a happy family, and that *Ông Địa* in particular would safeguard the territory of the trading place, simultaneously protecting the shop from attacks and robbery and shelter the place of business from burglary. While walking around in the Asia Pacific Center before the "crusade" started, Pentecostal pastors and church followers deemed the many small altars near the cash boxes in Berlin's *Asiatowns* as the work of the devil. One pastor told me, these altars must be considered blasphemy, as they offend the first commandment: "You shall have no other Gods beside me." Therefore, Pentecostal adherents have to destroy images and altars before they can become born-again. The destruction of altars is quite a difficult effort in proselytizing activities, as the majority of Vietnamese business owners establish these religious objects in their halls and offices, making offerings of fruit and alcohol to *the God of Wealth (Ông Thần Tài)* and the *God of the Earth (Ông Địa)* in their respective salesrooms every day (Hüwelmeier 2008:140), just as they do in shops and marketplaces in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Leshkovich 2014). In one of the offices in the *Dong Xuan Center*, I recognized an altar that had been set up next to a desktop computer. It was decorated with flowers, fruit

and cigarettes, and most interestingly, with *Rotkäppchen Sekt*, a famous sparkling wine once produced in the GDR and one of the few East German products to be very successful after the reunification of Germany. The placing of German sparkling wine on the altar illustrates how people in the diaspora appropriate local consumer products in order to give them as offerings to the spirits from their country of origin. Furthermore, due to the position of the altar next to the desktop computer, all messages being sent and received are protected by the spirits. Akin to ICT networks (Information and communications technology) used by migrants in various other cities such as London (Garbin and Vasquez 2012), the connection of technology with the spiritual realm plays a crucial role in performing religious rituals in Berlin's new bazaars. While some traders and clients purchase altars and statues as well as small cups for providing fresh water to the deities in the food section of the *Dong Xuan Center*, other traders prefer a different style of altars, religious objects, they bring along from Vietnam. Some Vietnamese businessmen buy these objects in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City when they travel there to meet relatives or business partners. A much greater variety of small altars is available in these cities. The owner of a restaurant on the grounds of one of the Berlin bazaars told me that he particularly preferred the altars (*bàn thờ*) decorated with blinking bulbs, as he was convinced that this object, charged with electricity, is more powerful than other altars. Technologies such as electricity are believed to have a strong impact on the relationship between humans and the divine and therefore play a crucial role in performing rituals, which was also analysed for European cultures (Schüttpelz 2015). As the *bàn thờ* has a prominent place in the restaurant, the visitor's attention is attracted by the object, and because of its affective powers, the owner is convinced, customers will come back and bring more clients, which in the end is very good for his business. The Vietnamese manager of the *Dong Xuan Center* decorated his altar with the most expensive whiskey and red wine from various coun-

tries. While I was present, he sprayed expensive *Armani* perfume on the altar, commenting that the deities are greatly pleased by this scent. As this example illustrates, smell and other senses are an intriguing part of popular religious practices (Meyer 2009).

Every day, before opening up for business, traders will perform rituals to please the spirits. Some people even bring the *bàn thờ* to the pagoda to be consecrated by Buddhist monks or nuns. When I attended a religious gathering at the Vietnamese Buddhist *Linh Thửu* pagoda in the western part of Berlin, I noticed a Vietnamese couple asking the Vietnamese Buddhist nun to bless the new altar they had just purchased. As Vietnamese Buddhism lacks systematized orthodox practice (Soucy 2012) and consequently many Vietnamese do not experience folk beliefs as being in conflict with other religious traditions, the blessing of the altar is part of a religious ritual in a Buddhist pagoda.

#### *Bazaar pagodas*

As previously mentioned in the vignette, the first Vietnamese Buddhist pagoda in the eastern part of Berlin was established in the gatehouse of the *Asian Pacific Center*, on the former grounds of part of the East German State Security Service (*Staatssicherheitsdienst*). The Vietnamese owner of the market provided part of her office to a lay Buddhist group as a place for performing religious practices. She felt committed to do so, as she became very rich in Germany and, according to her narratives, she wanted to give back some of her wealth to Buddha, the deities and to poor people. In addition to setting up the garden around the gatehouse with several Buddha statues in its centre, lay group members installed a kitchen to prepare meals to be shared after religious gatherings. Similar to Vietnam, the performance of religious rituals often concludes with a common meal (Soucy 2012).

An inauguration ceremony was held on the grounds of the newly established pagoda, with about two hundred Vietnamese participating in the ritual and Vietnamese monks arriving from

France specially for the event. Food was prepared by the lay group and placed on the altar and later on long tables, where a common meal was shared among the participants. In the following months a female Buddhist nun from another Vietnamese Buddhist pagoda in the western part of Germany was invited to live on the grounds of the pagoda. However, due to conflicts between the congregation and the market manager about the ownership of the money in the donation box, the nun left the bazaar pagoda and founded another pagoda (*chùa*) near the *Dong Xuan Center*, which is located just a few kilometres away. She rented space in an office building on the grounds of a former industrial area. In this pagoda, several altars were established with Buddhist statues and a separate shrine was decorated with images of the departed to honour them and to be prayed for on special occasions. Buddhist teachings and prayers were also performed on the grounds of the *Dong Xuan Center* itself, where a lay Buddhist group invited Vietnamese monks for special occasions to celebrate Buddhist festivals (Hüwelmeier 2013a).

The somewhat turbulent history of the market pagoda in the *Asia Pacific Center* went on. After the nun had left, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk came to live on the grounds of the pagoda. During our encounter he told me that he was influenced by the teachings of Thích Nhất Hạnh, a famous monk who had been exiled from Vietnam in the 1960s and who had founded a large Buddhist centre in France called 'plum village' (Chapman 2007: 305). One of the monk's missions was, according to his narrative, to practice *engaged Buddhism* in the tradition of Thích Nhất Hạnh. First and foremost, this included counselling Vietnamese in need who visited the pagoda to find relief. Many of the visitors, the monk reported, came to seek advice, in particular regarding marriage problems and difficulties with their children. A number of parents complained about a lack of respect from their kids. As children in Vietnam are expected to be obedient towards their parents due to the traditional values of Confucianism, parents in the German dias-

pora often feel they are not respected by their children, similar to intergenerational conflicts in Vietnamese families in Poland (Szymanska-Matusiewicz 2014). Vietnamese parents therefore consulted the Buddhist monk, who tried to also take into account the children's and young people's perspectives while asking the parents to carefully pay attention to and to respect their kids' needs as they grow up in a different culture. After consulting the monk, parents bring food to the altar, burn incense, pray and give some money as donation.

When I revisited the pagoda in early 2014, the monk had disappeared and another monk, this time from Vietnam, had recently arrived. The rumour goes that the former monk had founded a new pagoda in the eastern part of Berlin, with some followers. Only later people gossiped that he took the donation box before he left. The female manager of the market who provided space for the establishment of the pagoda, did not charge rent. However, since the space was provided at no cost, arrangements concerning the space were unclear and generated a number of conflicts. Issues arose, such as undetermined agreements about the rights to use the space, how to design the layout, arrangements about who is authorized to collect money, and what would eventually happen with the donations. Religious place making in the bazaar indicates that space is a contested issue and has to be negotiated between market manager, traders, believers and religious experts.

#### *Paper votive offerings in Berlin's Asian bazaars*

Besides the religious practices discussed above, Vietnamese in Berlin perform a number of folk beliefs in conjunction with Vietnamese religious everyday life in Vietnam, including trance mediumship, soul calling, and divinity. In the following, I focus on ancestor veneration, as this ritual is the most important religious practice to be fulfilled in the homeland and in the diaspora. In order to perform the rituals properly, people need certain material objects to decorate the ancestor altar at home. Food, fruit, flowers and

incense are among the offerings for the ancestors. Moreover, some Vietnamese purchase so-called spirit money and other votive paper offerings in Berlin's new *Asiatowns* and burn these items for the ancestors on Berlin's balconies and in backyards. Akin to Vietnam, paper votive offerings for the dead in Berlin include luxury products such as jewelry, glasses, lipstick, mobile phones and gold and silver (Hüwelmeier 2016). Sending sacrificial objects to the otherworld by the act of burning, spirits will be pleased and, in return, according to many traders I spoke with, contribute to the health and wealth of the ritual agent.

Votive paper offerings are part of what has been called the "re-enchantment of religion" in late socialist Vietnam (Taylor 2007). However, the growth in producing and consuming paper effigies is not unique to the Vietnamese case, but is embedded in the relationship between economic growth and prosperity cults in the greater (Southeast) Asian context (Kendall et al. 2010; Salemin 2008). In China, Singapore, and Vietnam, shops carry paper copies of luxury products such as Mercedes Benz, *Gucci* bags, villas, and TVs, together with everyday consumer goods such as cloth, rice cookers, glasses, and combs. Material objects made from paper are displayed in various marketplaces and shops in Hanoi, and some of the objects can also be purchased in Berlin's *Asiatowns*. The increasing variety of paper votive offerings in Vietnam highlights the creation and maintenance of links between religious practitioners and the spiritual realm. Most Vietnamese believe in the otherworld, which is imagined as a mirror image of this world. The duplication of the world and the objects within it in the form of paper effigies, the burning of ritual money and the production, consuming and sending modern consumer goods made from paper to the otherworld, reflect the proliferation of capitalism in the communist county, where the longing for consumer products is part of everyday discourse and practice. Gods are endowed with monetary and commercial interests and ancestor spirits are imagined as needy and sentient.

#### *Images of Amritsar and Muslim Prayers*

In salesrooms run by Sikhs in the *Dong Xuan Center*, most of whom in the textile trade, visitors and clients see images of Amritsar, the spiritual centre of Sikhism in Punjab, India. Vendors told me that the image of the Golden Temple protect their business as well as their families. By displaying the images, Sikhs also commemorate the massacre of Amritsar in 1919, when British soldiers and *gurkhas* (Nepalis in the military service of the British and Indian armed forces) killed hundreds of Indian civilians. Via these images, memories of colonial power are mediated and one trader, living far away from home, showed me a video on his smartphone about the military operation ordered by Indira Gandhi in 1984. Many Sikhs died and some months later Gandhi was assassinated by two of her Sikh bodyguards, followed by anti-Sikh pogroms where more than 3,000 Sikhs were killed. In this case, the mobile phone as a media technology generates particular affects and memories, commemorating those who died in political-religious conflicts. This use of mobile technology points to the fact that new media play a crucial role in transmitting religious messages across borders (Garbin and Vasquez 2012).

Upon hearing a Muslim prayer call in a sales hall of the *Dong Xuan Center*, I noticed one shop owner sitting at the cash desk and listening to an imam on his tablet. This kind of religious soundscape has been reported from anthropologists in various other countries (Hirschkind 2006; Larkin 2013) and interpreted as Islamic counterpublics, with its embodiments in a wide array of practices. The trader in the market was absorbed in prayer and oblivious to potential buyers who entered the room while he fulfilled his religious duties. Clients left the salesroom to wait until he had finished his prayers. Another Muslim shopkeeper in a different hall took his prayer carpet to the furthest corner of his shop in order to pray while another employee took care of the business. Recently, Muslims from various ethnic and national backgrounds inaugurated a mosque in a building only a few meters away from the bazaar,

thereby further adding to the super-diversity in Berlin's physical and religious landscapes.

### Conclusion

In this contribution I have explored migrants' religious diversity in the shared place of the bazaar. Berlin's new *Asiatowns*, part of the urban sacred (Knott et al. 2016; Lanwerd 2016), are located not in some no man's land, but were established in a peri-urban surrounding and in buildings that, due to their history, are situated in the former socialist part of Germany's capital. Over the past years, various groups have become engaged in trading in these localities while also using the bazaars for religious activities such as for performing prayers, establishing altars and building bazaar pagodas. Vietnamese, Pakistani, Indians and others venerate gods and deities in various ways in this multi-ethnic place. Characterized by a variety of status categories among migrants including ethnicity, date of arrival, gender, and legal status, I highlighted the plurality and diversity of migrant's religious practices in this particular urban space. Super-diversity accounts for the creation of an awareness about the multiplicity of languages, nationalities and ethnicities, which people have to deal with by sharing a common place, namely the bazaar. The term super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), which I do not so much consider as a concept, but as a research lens, offers new perspectives in looking not only at the variety of rituals concerning various ethnic groups in a place such as the bazaar. Moreover, it allows for considering internal religious differences within such groups, as I have illustrated in reference to various practices performed by Vietnamese. Like other ethnic groups in the bazaar, who also might be internally different, traders, clients and market managers ask supernatural powers for enhancing spiritual security in the bazaar, a place, which is characterized by uncertainties and economic risks. Due to economic crises in the past few years, a number of trad-

ers already lost their business and had to give up their salesrooms. Others strive for economic survival, considering health and wealth as crucial elements in religious practices, performing prayers and donating money to spirits and gods. Anthropological research on religious diversities among migrants requires knowledge about ritual activities in their respective homelands as well as religious-political and economic entanglements on a local, national and transnational level in order to better understand the impact of the "spirits of consumption" (Salemink 2008) in the marketplace and migrants' religious practices in general.

Bazaaris encounter each other with a kind of curiosity and create cosmopolitan sociability (Glick Schiller et al. 2011). They perform modes of openness and establish relations of commonality, including tolerance vis à vis their stall neighbours' religious performances and various other aspects of everyday life in the bazaar. The coexistence of a variety of religions in this migrant-dominated environment, a place characterized by living together on an everyday level, where women and men, documented and non-documented people, residents with long-term legal status and recently-arrived migrants live side by side, points to the willingness of people to perform practices of conviviality (Heil 2015), including respect, interaction, cooperation and the management of conflictual situations. As transnational migration has caused internal differentiations of religious traditions, it has also shaped spatial religious practices. Pentecostal's sound system, Buddhist gatherings, Muslim prayers, the establishment of altars and the veneration of spirits, burning incense, offering food, and other religious practices attract the senses in multi-ethnic bazaars and contribute to the transformation of the religious landscape in Berlin's *Asiatowns*, in Berlin's broader urban space, and in Germany more general, not least due to recent arrivals of more than one million refugees.

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# Religion, Conviviality and Complex Diversity

by DEIRDRE MEINTEL (Université de Montréal)

## Abstract

Religion is often presented as a likely cause of social division and conflict. However, research on religious groups carried out in Montreal and several other areas of Quebec shows that in religious contexts, persons from different ethnic minorities connect with each other and, importantly, with those of native-born, majority background. I focus on the affinities, solidarities and convivialities that arise in contexts of complex diversity in Montreal and in smaller regional towns and cities in the province. Conflicts and tensions arise along ethnic lines in some of the religious groups we studied in Quebec. Nevertheless, the convivialities that complex diversity has occasioned in the religious domain are much more evident in our findings. These include religious communities where ethnicity is secondary as well as interreligious collaborations involving members and leaders from different religious traditions. Such initiatives are particularly evident in regional towns and cities.

**Keywords:** conviviality, complex diversity, religion, Quebec, migration

## Introduction

Though much discussion of religious diversity is focused on immigrant religions and particularly Islam, religious diversity is by no means isomorphic with ethnic diversity. Nor is religious diversity simply the result of increased immigration or even immigration from a wider range of source countries. These simple observations bring up some interesting issues as regards how religion works into the multiple diversities that characterize much of the world today. While not denying that the multiplicity of diversities involves many possible lines of fracture, I argue that they also make for many unusual kinds of convivialities, including some that involve members of the sociocultural majority.

In this paper, I will focus on the results of research on religious groups carried out in Montreal and several other areas of Quebec. I prefer the term “complex diversity” for reasons explained in the next section; however, my focus

is not so much on how to name the diversity of our era as on its implications and potential as regards social relations: the affinities, solidarities and convivialities that it makes possible. One could easily frame the discussion in terms of the fractures and conflicts such diversity is likely to present. In a study of the Alum Rock area of central Birmingham, Karner and Parker (2011: 357) found “contradictory but coexisting tendencies towards both conflict and conviviality, both local exclusions and inter-ethnic strategies for improvement, both material and infrastructural deprivation and newly emerging political alliances.” I have chosen to focus mainly on the convivialities we observed in the religious domain because they far outnumber the cases of conflict and tensions we found.

Crul (2015) suggests that those working on super-diversity do well to take more into account the studies of intersectionality (Bilge) produced

by feminist scholars. He also finds that there has not been sufficient account given of the internal diversity of ethnic groups. I would add that, similarly, the internal diversity of religious groups has often been overlooked. Most of the religious groups in our study, including those where most members are immigrants, comprise individuals of different ethnic and national origins and sometimes, different social classes. At present, religion is often presented as a cause of social division and conflict, and understandably so, given the dangers of radicalization in the name of religion. However, I seek to show here that religion can also be a source of social bonding and solidarity across ethnic and other social divisions. This is one reason why I focus mainly the forms of conviviality that complex diversity has occasioned in the religious domain; religion provides an arena where persons from different ethnic minorities connect with each other and, importantly, with those of native-born, majority background in a particularly powerful kind of sociality. The other reason is that, in fact, new solidarities, convivialities and alliances far outweigh incidents of conflict within or between religious groups in the findings of our study on religious diversity in Quebec. I have included virtually all the cases of tension and conflict that our team observed so as to provide as balanced a picture as possible.

### **Super-Diversity, Complex Diversity and Scale**

Though cognizant of the aspects of contemporary diversity that are very much of our era, including the availability of cheap phones in much of the world (Vertovec 2004) and other advances in telecommunications, transnationalism etc., I am somewhat more comfortable with the term “complex diversity” (Kraus 2011) rather than super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). The term “super-diversity” tends to put emphasis on the unprecedented, fundamental, transformative aspects of today’s social diversity (Blommaert 2013); likewise, Vertovec (2015) speaks of “wholly new” social formations. However, speaking from the vantage point of North America, continuities

with the past are more apparent<sup>1</sup>. Casanova (2013) for example, speaks of the “vibrant religious super-diversity” of eighteenth century American colonial towns (p. 115). In my own work on Cape Verdean transnationality (Meintel 2002), I showed how transportation and communication between Cape Verde and New England were far more developed in the sailing era than for much of the twentieth century, and that there were many Cape Verdeans who were living authentically transnational lifestyles before the restrictive American immigration policies of the early 1920s. I am in agreement, however with Vertovec’s (2007: 1043) observation that present-day transnationality is far more intense than in the past, given changes in telecommunications and the greater accessibility of air travel. My aim here is not to minimize the changes in today’s diversity as compared to that of the past, but simply to suggest that these developments appear to have had a longer history in other parts of the world such as Canada and appears less radically new and unprecedented than in continental Western Europe.

According to Crul (2015) super-diversity has not taken off as a concept in the U.S. “where the framework of assimilation still pretty much kept its dominant position in the analyses of outcomes for migrants and their children” (2015: 55). Though in agreement with Crul’s view that the concept has less traction in North America than in Western Europe, his explanation for this does not apply so well to the Canadian context, where multiculturalism as official policy dates back to 1971. There, the tradition of multiculturalism as government policy over decades seems to have normalized diversity in the national identity. The sociologist Elke Winter (2011) argues that multiculturalism has transformed the notion of “Canadian”, that Canadian now means “multicultural.” Moreover, source countries for immigration to Canada, including Quebec, have been diversifying for some time, going back to policies initiated

<sup>1</sup> See also Ingrid Piller’s (2014) interesting critique of super-diversity as a “Eurocentric” concept in regard to the historical reality of Montevideo, Uruguay.

in the postwar years (Ongley and Pearson 1995: 770). In short, the long presence of complex diversity makes “super-diversity” seem not quite so new as it appears in Europe.

Yet another factor that may play a role in making today’s diversity seem less dramatically new in Canada (and perhaps elsewhere) than in Western Europe; namely, the dominant ideology about difference. Writing about the United Kingdom, Berg and Sigona (2013: 351) note that “people are increasingly more willing to express diversity – of lifestyle, sexual orientation and so on – openly, further adding to the complexity and to the differences that make a difference...”. Arguably, this tendency manifested sooner on the societal level in North America than in Western Europe. Over 25 years ago, Kwame Anthony Appiah (1994: 62) wrote “as a gay Black man” in the United States of the individual concerns of authenticity and personal identity that were already making themselves felt in North America and the challenges this posed for conceptualizing recognition, a notion that seemed only to apply to broad categories (of gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc.) and to ignore their internal diversity.

### *Scale*

The issue of scale has become increasingly prominent in discussions of contemporary diversity. As Glick Schiller et al. (2006: 612) put it, “the scale of cities reflects their positioning within neoliberal processes of local, national, regional, and global rescaling.” The authors note (p. 613) that small-scale cities that are less well-positioned in the global context than major metropolises, “are particularly important locales in which to obtain insights to move migration research beyond the use of the ethnic group as the unit of analysis and beyond the hegemony of a single model of migrant incorporation.”

Some of our research concerns religious groups in smaller cities and their environs. It is here, in fact, that “super-diversity” bears a certain relevance, because, in general, ethnic, religious and cultural diversities are fairly new to these settings and their administrative apparatuses are

not necessarily equipped for receiving migrants who present multiple diversities. For example, Saint-Jérôme, a town about an hour from Montreal, now hosts Bhutanese refugees from Nepal who are Hindu or Evangelical Protestant, Africans from various countries and regions of Africa who may be Catholic, Muslim or Evangelical, as well as Latin Americans from several different countries, also religiously diverse. Though new mechanisms have emerged in such settings to help newcomers get established, on the whole, local administrations are still ill – prepared for long-term issues that are likely to arise after the initial settlement process; in the school system, for example.

To resume the discussion so far, the dramatic newness of contemporary diversity that is emphasized in discussions of super-diversity is less evident in Canada and the United States than in Europe, though probably for different reasons in each case. Because today’s diversity appears as the result of processes that have been going on for some decades, North American scholars such as myself are not as ease with the term as many European scholars seem to be. That said, the terminology used to describe today’s diversities is not my main concern here; rather, my focus from here on will be on the convivialities that may emerge in contemporary contexts, notably in the religious domain. Before addressing that issue, I first describe the research on which my analysis is based.

### **The Research**

Our team study<sup>2</sup> sought to document the religious diversity that has developed in Quebec

<sup>2</sup> The other researchers who collaborated in the project were Claude Gélinas, Josiane Le Gall, Khadiyatou Fall, François Gauthier and Géraldine Mossière. Raymond Lemieux, Gilles Routhier, Sylvie Fortin and John Leavitt. The research was funded by a team grant from the Fonds de recherche du Québec Société et culture (FQRSC) and by the Social Sciences and Humanity Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Publications of the team members are available at [http://www.grdu.umontreal.ca/documents/Publications\\_Religion,Modernit%C3%A9,Diversit%C3%A9\\_religieuse.pdf](http://www.grdu.umontreal.ca/documents/Publications_Religion,Modernit%C3%A9,Diversit%C3%A9_religieuse.pdf)

since the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, a period of rapid secularization and liberalization and to examine the meaning of religion in the daily lives of Quebecois today. Though the great majority identify as Catholic, regular church attendance is the lowest of all the Canadian provinces (Wilkins-Laflamme 2014). Our methodology was “experience-near” (Wikan 1991), influenced by phenomenological approaches such as those of McGuire (2008), Csordas (1994, 2001); Goulet (1993, 1998); Turner (1994, 1996). At the same time, we applied the same research tools (interview and observation formats) to all the groups, with adjustments where necessary. 132 groups in Montreal were studied, and 97 others in and around smaller cities, including Sherbrooke (pop. 154, 600), Saguenay (pop. 143, 690), Saint-Jérôme (pop. 68, 456) and Rawdon (pop. 10, 416). Of the total of 229 groups, 79 were the sites of extended ethnographic study (participant observation over several months, as well as interviews with leaders and members). In terms of religion, the groups represent: 1) currents established in Quebec since the 60s, primarily by native-born Quebecois (e.g., the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Reconstructionist Judaism, Wicca, shamanism); 2) religions brought by immigrants (Islam, Hinduism, certain forms of Buddhism); 3) congregations of long-established religions (e.g. Catholic, Presbyterian) where immigrants predominate. If any groups were neglected in our study, they were the more traditional Catholic or Protestant groups that made up mainly of those who represent the social majority (i.e., those born in Quebec of French or English background). It is possible that we missed cases of friction or exclusion arising when new immigrants join such groups; this is a theme we hope to explore in future research. However, we have studied somewhat less mainstream groups (e.g., Spiritualist, Ashtanga) that are becoming quite diverse ethnically and I have included them in the analysis here.

For the in-depth studies, research assistants<sup>3</sup> observed religious rituals and other activities, such as neighbourhood prayer groups; social activities like communal meals and picnics and educational activities sponsored by the group. The in-depth studies took at least three months, often much longer. Semi-structured interviews lasting about an hour and a half, if not more, were carried out with at least three members (usually more) and one leader. An effort was made to interview individuals varying by gender, age, matrimonial status and level of commitment to the group. Subjects covered include migration history (when relevant), the individual’s religious trajectory, the role of religion (or spirituality) in their everyday lives, and the degree of their involvement (economic, social, ritual) in the group along with any religious activities pursued outside the group’s purview. The assistants then submitted a report covering a long list of themes presented in the analytical grid common to the project; among other things, these included doctrines, beliefs and norms, governance and structure, relations with other religious groups of the same or different denomination, the place of worship, rituals, embodied practices, use of communication technologies, religious activities such as retreats or pilgrimages, healing practices, social activities, social differentiation within the group by ethnicity, gender, class, worldview (health, food, education, family relations, money, death, etc.), non-religious activities sponsored by the group (e.g. language classes for French or a heritage language), religious socialization of children, converts or new members, relations with the wider society (sectarian tendencies, integration) and with the public sphere, evolution of the group over time. For individual members, analytical themes included their religious identity/identities and trajectory, personal religious practices, conversion or change of affiliation. In the research carried out in regions outside Montreal, the same tools were used, with some adaptation

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all the research presented herein is that of the team researchers or assistants.

to the logistics of doing research in more distant places, requiring observations to be restricted to the summer months in some cases.

Field assistants were graduate students in anthropology, religious studies and other fields. Their training followed a field school model with all field notes read by several researchers. Group discussions about fieldwork were particularly important for the assistants. Doing participant observation on religion in one's own society requires considerable reflexivity (Meintel and Mossière 2012) and all the more so for neophytes. Typically, fieldworkers must situate themselves in respect to the beliefs of their informants and decide the extent of their participation and subjective involvement in the religious activities they are studying. Assistants and researchers were almost never asked to give account of their personal beliefs as a condition of doing research; for the most part, the researchers were given a cordial welcome and in some cases, their presence seemed to be taken as a form of validation. This was particularly the case for congregations made up mostly of immigrants, which have sometimes been subject to negative media coverage<sup>4</sup>.

### Religion and Diversity

It is common to link religious diversity to immigration, but in the case of Quebec, other factors also play a role, notably the increased mobility of the native-born population and the influence of the Internet. Some tens of thousands of Francophone Catholics have converted to other religions since the 1960s, such as Evangelical Protestantism and more recently, Islam, but a far greater number can be characterized as religiously mobile. One of the surprises of our study was the wide range of groups defining themselves as religious or spiritual that are frequented by the native-born. This may not appear

<sup>4</sup> Apart from concerns about radicalization in Muslim groups, there have been reports in the Quebec media of misuse of funds by African evangelical pastors. Media attention has also been focused on alleged child abuse in certain Jewish and Christian sects along with suspect healing practices in other groups.

in statistics on religious affiliation because most often the groups involved do not oblige a change of affiliation. Typically, they include nature – centred spiritualities (Druidry, shamanic currents, Neopaganism), yogic spiritualities (Kundalini Yoga, Vipassana, etc.), Spiritualism and Buddhism. Often those who frequent them continue to identify as Catholic and keep some connection with the Catholic Church. Some born-Catholics even frequent Evangelical groups without converting and consider them their “spirituality” rather than as their new religion.

Immigrants now represent 12.6 % of the Quebec population according to 2011 figures<sup>5</sup>. Of these, the majority (58.2%) are Christian, and 37.7 % are Catholic<sup>6</sup>. Many groups of the same national origin are already religiously diverse when they arrive, and this has long been the case (see Helly 1997); Haitians, for example, may be Evangelist, Catholic or Voodoo; similarly, Vietnamese may be Buddhist, Catholic or Caodaist. While some immigrants, particularly from Africa or Latin America, have converted to Evangelical or Pentecostal religions in the country of origin, others do so after arrival. Another factor contributing to religious diversity that has received little scholarly attention: the sometimes surprising number of immigrants who consider themselves “of no religion”; this is the case; for example, for 16 % of Algerian immigrants, based on 2011 statistics (Castel 2016); overall, more immigrants claim to be of no religion (14.7 %) than non-immigrants (11.6 %)<sup>7</sup>. We should add that the meaning of “no religion” is likely to vary from one group to another, as we have found for the term “spiritual but not religious”, when comparing born-Catholic Quebecois with the Americans studied by Fuller (2001).

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.veq.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/Analysis\\_Immigration-in-Quebec-2014.pdf](http://www.veq.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/Analysis_Immigration-in-Quebec-2014.pdf). p. 1. (accessed July 18, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Figures based on 2011 Household Survey (Canada) microdata provided by Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.veq.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/Analysis\\_Immigration-in-Quebec-2014.pdf](http://www.veq.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/Analysis_Immigration-in-Quebec-2014.pdf). p.6. (accessed July 18, 2016).

Several of the researchers in our team had long experience studying issues of migration and ethnicity before undertaking the study described here. In earlier work, we found that, for many immigrants, religion was a more important identification than ethnicity; moreover, in a study of migration to the outlying regions of Quebec that I directed, the research showed that immigrants were willing to travel long distances to meet with a religious group but not for ethnic association activities. Why would this be so? I believe that the answer lies in the fact that religion operates differently from ethnicity as a basis of affiliation and social ties.

As compared with ethnic affiliations, religious belonging involves a particularly powerful form of social connectedness. Apart from their ritual functions that I have described elsewhere (Meintel 2014) we found that religious collectivities often accomplish a great deal of largely unrecognized social labour that allows refugees and other migrants to resettle successfully (Meintel and G elinas 2012). Usually the mutual aid given by longer-established church members and new arrivals is complementary to government services and usually includes information on what is available, help in finding a job or lodging; sometimes help and support offered goes far beyond that offered by the State: for example, Congolese clergy (Catholic or Pentecostal) assist unaccompanied minors arriving from Condo by finding them host families; Senegalese murids offer food and shelter, sometimes for months, to new arrivals. Such assistance is often seen as part of the shift to a congregational model made by many immigrant religious groups (Yang and Ebaugh 2000). At the same time, we should remember that this kind of help is framed in the social relations of trust based on presumed moral consensus and a shared relation to sacred reality that characterize religious solidarity. We should also mention various groups composed of mainstream Quebecois seek to integrate newcomers; for example, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mennonites in and around Sherbrooke offer extensive material and moral support to recently arrived immigrants, some

of whom eventually convert. Religious groups address not only material needs but also symbolic ones are; often religious activities offer a context where members can reframe the tribulations associated with migration (unemployment, discrimination, exile) in a way that gives them value (Meintel and Mossi ere 2012).

Religious sociality is often multiethnic in character; we have found that religious sociality often bridges the divide between the social majority and ethnic minorities. In our work, almost all congregations formed mainly by immigrants usually host more than one national group and have at least a few French-speaking Quebecois members. For example, a number of Pentecostal congregations in Montreal include people from several Latin American countries as well as a handful ethnic mainstream, born-in-Quebec, members. The cultural and social dynamic is often the reverse of what immigrants find in the wider society (Meintel and Mossi ere 2012). That is, the predominant language, music and style of worship would reflect the region of the world whence most of the members originate, as well as the social life around the religious groups. As one Russian woman member of an Orthodox church in a small town about 150 km from Montreal put it, "this church is the one place where I don't feel like an immigrant."<sup>8</sup> A number of Quebec-born converts of French ancestry also frequent the church; the notion of "real orthodoxy" is tinged with cultural notions for the Russian immigrant members, whereas Quebecois converts conceive it in purely religious terms. In both cases, members seek to be buried in the cemetery adjoining the church. For the immigrants, this is partly a question of family tradition; for the converts, it symbolizes their full integration to the Orthodox religion (Moisa 2011). In Catholic charismatic groups and Evangelical churches in where most members are of Latin-American origin, liturgy, hymns and social activities involving members are carried out in Spanish. Native-born Quebe-

<sup>8</sup> Field observation, Daniela Moisa, postdoctoral researcher.

cois members (often married to an immigrant in the group) generally understand Spanish. Meals shared among the members and music that sometimes accompanies them after Mass reflect the Latin-American origins of the majority.

### Conviviality

The notion of conviviality as I am employing it here emerges from two sources; one is that of the anthropology of the Amazonian region where researchers such as Overing and Passes (2000) draw inspiration from Ivan Illich's *Tools for Conviviality* (1973) to describe a sociality among social equals, characterized by sharing, mutual aid and trust, with a propensity for the informal and performative rather than the "formal and institutional" (p. xiii-xiv) (see also Rosengren 2006). In modern religious contexts, conviviality as we have observed it entails these qualities of Amazonian conviviality and is similarly framed in a common metaphysics of "human and non-human connectedness"; that is, it entails a common relationship with a transcendent reality.

The other strain of thought I draw upon is that of Paul Gilroy who describes conviviality as

"a social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity, but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not – as the logic of ethnic absolutism suggests they must – add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication" (2006: 40).

Gilroy's notion of conviviality emerges in a modern, urban context and emphasizes the potential of going beyond racial, ethnic or religious differences in situations of multiple diversities. Conflict and racism still exist, but in conviviality he finds the potential for overcoming these.

Conviviality is similar to what Schiller *et al.* (2011) describe as a "cosmopolitan sociability"; here, religious or ethnic anchoring (Grzymala-Kazłowska 2015) coexists with openness toward others in daily social interaction. Noble (2013), who adopts Gilroy's notion of conviviality, speaks of cosmopolitan habits characterized by "pragmatic openness" as forming the convivial dimen-

sions of diversity that can often be found in urban life. Appiah's (2006) work on the ethics of everyday cosmopolitanism that is often rooted in ethnic or religious affiliations evokes a dynamic of coexistence and exchange that is quite similar to the notions of conviviality presented here as does Werbner's on "vernacular" (2006) and "working class" (1999) cosmopolitanism.

At the same time, conviviality goes further than certain forms of cosmopolitanism such as the peaceful coexistence described by Germain et Radice (2006), regarding certain neighbourhoods in Montreal. Others; e.g., Ollivier and Fridman (2004) and Shweder (2000:170, quoted by Hannerz 2007:69) present cosmopolitanism as a matter of elitism, much as it was in the era of the "Grand Tour" (Tomasi 1998, 002). Somewhat similarly, Beck (2006) approaches cosmopolitanism as an ideology that has evolved beyond nationalism and, presumably, narrower loyalties such as religion or ethnicity, leaving little place for "everyday" or "vernacular" cosmopolitanism.

### New Religious Convivialities

In what follows, I describe some of the new religious convivialities that our research in Montreal brought to light; these include interethnic socialities that are unprecedented for immigrants as well as for the host milieu. Also new is the tendency observed in a number of immigrant religious groups to build bridges with various sorts of outreach activities. Later we turn to the somewhat different dynamic that the team observed in smaller, regional localities.

"Ethnic" churches made up of members from the same country of origin are part of Montreal's past, as has also been the case in the United States (Yang and Ebaugh 2000). A few groups whose members are of the same national/ethnic background; for example, Tamil and Laotian Catholic missions. In these cases, the diocese has established nongeographical congregations to accommodate the newcomers. However, the great majority of the religious groups we found in Montreal are composed of people of different origins, even when most are immigrants.

The Spanish-speaking congregations (of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal or Evangelical churches) include immigrants from various Latin American countries and, inevitably, a few native-born French speakers who have learned Spanish in the context of marriage to one of the immigrant members. Ruiz (2014, p. 56) describes the musical scene in a Spanish-speaking Evangelical church: "The musicians are mostly in their thirties; the regular participants are a Colombian drummer, a Panamanian pianist, a bass player from Venezuela, a young Mexican violinist, a Haitian who plays the bongos. A Quebecois girl and several Latin American women form the choir ... The musicians adapt the hymns to popular Latin American music, but they prefer to perform modern tunes ... sometimes the young people organize presentations with dancing to the rhythms of rock, pop, hip-hop, rap and electronic music. »

In most of the Evangelical (including Pentecostal) groups we have studied, we find the "solidarity of belief" (Glick Schiller et al. 2011: 204) that prevails over differences of national origin and those between the majority and immigrant minorities. Beyond their ethnic affiliations, the members of such churches consider themselves brothers and sisters in Christ such that ethnic differences are considered of secondary importance. For example, in the congregation studied by Géraldine Mossière (2006), Congolese predominate, but there are members from half-a-dozen other French-speaking countries, as well as a number of Haitians and a handful of native-born French-speaking Quebecois. For some, their experience in the church has allowed them to get past experiences of racism in the wider society: "I don't see who is black, who is white, ... we are all working doing God's work" (53).

A Vietnamese pagoda observed by Detolle (2010) counts about 500 people among the regular attendees, including some forty Chinese and a number of Sri Lankans who do not understand the Vietnamese language, the predominant language in the pagoda. Smaller organized groups link people by language who help each other in case of need. At the same time, several members

speak of the "language of the heart" by which participants understand each other without words. A Chinese woman explains:

"... people are so nice, we work together, we practice together, like one family. When I see the people here I never say 'he's Chinese' or 'he's Vietnamese', I don't make difference. The most important thing for us is: do not discriminate. Like, 'be close with Chinese people and not that close with Vietnamese'. It's not the way Buddha taught us." (Detolle, unpublished field notes).

One of the Indian Hindu temples in Montreal observed by Anne-Laure Betbeder (2012) presents another case where religious solidarity overrides differences that might have been insurmountable in the home country. The temple, constructed in 1997-8 in a middle-class suburb, hosts members originating from several different regions of India. The gods venerated in the temple reflect the diverse origins of the group and the pan-Indian approach favoured since its inception.

The same temple exemplifies a tendency that seems fairly widespread among immigrant religious groups in Montreal. That is, the temple sponsors blood drives, marches for organ donations, and conferences about cultural diversity, while encouraging members to do volunteer work. We have found the same effort to foster social and political involvement in the host society in many Islamic centres and mosques, immigrant Evangelical churches and a Vietnamese Caodaist temple. Members are encouraged to vote and to participate in the wider community. For example, a number of Caodaists spent days helping flood victims in the regional town of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu in 2011 (Maillé-Poulin 2016). Various mosques in Montreal participated in a "Mosque Open Doors" event in 2012; individual mosques also hold such events from time to time.

Groups made up mainly of native-born Quebecois appear to becoming more diverse ethnically. When I began research on a Spiritualist congregation in 2000, it was made up almost exclusively of French-speaking Quebecois brought up in the

Catholic faith. Over time, it has come to include immigrants from many different national and religious origins. Catholic churches in the city are also becoming more ethnically diverse. In a Catholic parish I have observed since 2009, Congolese members have become increasingly prominent in ritual activities (giving communion, serving at the altar and reading biblical texts for the Mass from the pulpit). Similarly, a non-immigrant Buddhist group in our study (Laurent Sédillot 2009) shows signs of becoming more ethnically diverse, as East Asians, Latin Americans and a few Africans begin to attend its meditation workshops. The hundred or so members of the Ashtanga yoga *shala* (centre) reflect the makeup of the city's population; they include French- and English-speaking individuals born in Quebec, some of whom are of immigrants or ethnically mixed parentage, as well as young adult immigrants from Australia, the United States, Morocco, France, Belgium, Vietnam, Japan, China, India, Armenia Italy and Haiti (Bouchard 2013: 62). In these cases, ethnic or national origin is irrelevant in the social relations among participants.

Our observations in Montreal show almost no instances of friction along ethnic lines within religious collectivities, though the Ethiopians and Eritrean Evangelicals studied by Ferran<sup>9</sup> (2015) present something of a mixed case. In 1989 they formed the church that eventually was named Ammanuel, despite the conflicts that have opposed their home countries. It presently numbers some 150 members. Most are Ethiopian and speak Amharic; the Eritreans, who speak Amharic as well as Tigrinya, their own language, are in the minority. In 2012, some thirty Eritreans, professing their desire to worship in their own language, founded their own church; according to their minister, some still harbour ill feeling toward Ethiopians despite their common faith. We should also note two instances of inter-ethnic tension, both involving Tamil Catholics

(Bouchard 2009) in their relations with native-born Quebecois Catholics. In one case, the Tamils sought to purchase a Catholic parish church whose congregation was dwindling in numbers but were refused. Another case of minor conflict arose when Tamil Catholics from Sri Lanka made a pilgrimage to a shrine in the Montreal area. The Tamil style of pilgrimage involves inviting Hindu friends to Mass and communion there, celebrating and picnicking on the grounds, behaviour considered objectionable by the local religious authorities.

#### *Regional Variations*

Outside Montreal, religious conviviality plays out somewhat differently than in Montreal. Because regional towns and cities are less centrally situated in the global economy, they attract fewer immigrants, despite decades of policies oriented to channel immigrants and refugees toward regions outside of Montreal, in part to compensate for the movement of regional youth toward the metropolis (Vatz Laaroussi 2011). Thus ethnic diversity is present but to a much lesser degree than in Montreal.

Immigrants (including refugees) in the regions we studied are usually not numerous enough to form their own religious groups with the exception of a few Islamic mosques and prayer centres. Moreover, Muslim groups are if anything more discreet than in Montreal in regard to their physical presence, occupying private or rented spaces with little or no signage. The leader of a centre for North African Muslims situated in a small regional town asserts that he lives among Haitians, Quebecois, Africans, not just Muslims, and does not want to live in a ghetto. He encourages members to adopt what he calls a certain "invisibility" so as to avoid hostility toward Islam, speaking critically of a man who attracted attention with his Islamic dress and beard.

Many religious groups located outside Montreal are still composed entirely of Francophones born in Quebec. Typically, as Gélinas and Vatz Laaroussi (2012) observe in Sherbrooke, immigrants join congregations (Catholic, Baha'i, Men-

<sup>9</sup> Ferran collaborated with our project but the research mentioned here was carried out separately from our work.

nonite, Evangelical and others) where the native-born predominate. Here they find a space of interethnic relations where the majority-minority dynamic does not operate in the same way as in the wider society. "They are more likely to meet the native-born on an equal footing ..." (2012: 43). In one striking, if atypical, case, a Pentecostal church in Saint-Jérôme, is made up of Bhutanese from Nepal and Africans from several countries, including Senegal and the Republic of the Congo. The pastor is Quebec-born and rituals are held in French, with bilingual Bhutanese translating for their compatriots.

A striking difference between Montreal and the regions concerns interreligious convivialities. In Montreal, impecunious congregations of different currents are likely to rent the same space at different times or share the same building with other religious groups. Closer ties and mutual aid sometimes develop, as between a small multiethnic group of Messianic Jews and the equally diverse Baptist church that shares their rented space and with whom they feel a certain religious kinship. However, interreligious collaborations are most evident in the smaller towns and cities in our research. Spatial proximity fosters contact between groups of different religious traditions in these localities, while small numbers and limited means lead to sharing resources and collaborating for civic and charitable causes. Sometimes these collaborations are organized by leaders working together; in other cases, they seem to be ad hoc affairs.

In Sherbrooke, some of the Muslims who prefer not to frequent the two existing spaces of worship for Muslims (a mosque and an association based at the local university) meet in a Catholic church basement for weekly prayers. A devoutly Catholic woman in Saint-Jérôme who wished to help immigrants obtained space in a Catholic church complex where immigrants of various religious traditions (Pentecostal, Hindu) could hold their rituals along with Catholics; the same space also hosts other services for immigrants and for the needy of the region (Boucher 2015). Weekly craft activities organized by a

Catholic lay group bring together Africans, Bhutanais and locals of different religions. In nearby Rawdon, a yearly "Sharing Gathering" (*Fête du partage*) is organized by a local NGO, *Alliance des Nations*, in collaboration with the municipal government, where different religions and spiritual currents set up displays and hold activities open to the public<sup>10</sup>.

As in Montreal, ethnic differences are rarely a source of tension in religious collectivities, but we did find one exception. An Islamic centre in the Saguenay region of Quebec has seen the rise of marked divisions between Senegalese members and more recent arrivals from North Africa regarding issues of language, ritual and politics. In recent years, sermons are downloaded from Mecca in Arabic, a language not spoken by the West Africans who originally predominated in the centre. Moreover, they transmit a more conservative version of Islam than the Senegalese espouse. Some of the West Africans have ceased attending regularly and have formed a prayer group among themselves that meets in a private home.

Another case that bears mentioning is that of a Catholic parish in Sherbrooke; this parish includes a sufficient number of Latin Americans as to hold Masses in Spanish and has a Spanish-speaking committee of parishioners along with a French-speaking one. The result is, according to the pastor, "two solitudes; they cross paths, but that is all" (Gélinas et Vatz Laaroussi 2012 : 46). Finally, we observed anti-Muslim sentiment in several Evangelical groups; in one case, an Evangelical leader said in a meeting of representatives of different religions that he wanted to exclude Muslims from an interreligious coalition in a regional town. However, this was rejected by the Catholic clergy present, who argued that the Pope recognizes Islam and receives Muslim leaders. In the end, the Muslims were included.

In the regions, local populations have long been quite homogenous and their institutions

<sup>10</sup> <http://alliancedesnations.org/fete-du-partage-sharing-party/> (accessed July 18, 2016).

historically less adapted to ethnic and religious diversity than is the case in Montreal. The differences in the convivialities that develop in such localities illustrate the importance of scale when looking at today's complex diversity. From the local point of view, a few thousand immigrants and refugees of different national and religious origins appear as a kind of super-diversity. Religious convivialities in the regions often bring migrants into social contact with native-born Quebecois and become an important mechanism for anchoring newcomers in their surroundings and strengthening the social fabric of the local community.

### Conclusion

I have argued that religion-based social ties function somewhat differently from ethnic ones and that religious sociality can offer a powerful base for social relations where ethnic differences are often secondary. We have seen that believers of different traditions can be linked by mutual aid and interreligious collaborations for civic and charitable ends. This is especially true of smaller, regional communities where proximity, small numbers and limited resources make such collaborations more likely.

On the whole, our team research found conviviality within and between religious groups to be far more evident than are conflicts. To what extent might our results be relevant beyond Quebec and Canada? Ethnic diversity within religious groups and interreligious collaborations have not received extensive attention from social scientists. Ebaugh (2003: 233-234) mentions the possible difficulties that may arise in American multiethnic religious groups; e.g., the fact that when some ritual activities are held in the language of an immigrant group, parallel congregations may develop, as was the case of Catholic church in Sherbrooke mentioned earlier. Other

challenges for creating unity in the group that Ebaugh notes concern the incorporation of ethnic customs and the participation by newcomers in the governance of the group. Glick Schiller et al. (2006), on the other hand, allow us to understand that ethnicity is far less relevant than status as a Christian in the churches they studied in Halle, located in the former East Germany, and Manchester, New Hampshire. Both of these are small-scale, non-gateway cities, which the authors contrast with the metropolises ("gateway cities") where issues of diversity are most often studied, such as Berlin and London. (In Canada, these would be Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.)

In the churches that Glick Schiller and her colleagues describe, immigrants of various origins and locals develop networks of support with their fellow born-again Christians and are incorporated as evangelists and Christians into the wider society and into transnational networks. Similarly, Hülwelmeier (2011: 450) describes a predominantly Vietnamese Pentecostal church in Germany that "embraces all newcomers without regard to their political past, class or ethnic background or identifications with their resident nation-state." Finally, Eade's (2012) work on the increasing ethnic and ritual diversity of Anglican, Methodist and Catholic congregations in Britain such as indicates that the kinds of convivialities we found in Quebec may also be the case there. Also, the strength of Interfaith networks in Britain (Baumann 1996) suggests that collaboration and mutual aid between religious groups of different traditions are also likely to be found there. In the spirit of Gilroy's (2006) work on conviviality, I would suggest that it is as important to pay attention to the new cohabitations, solidarities and alliances that today's diversity occasions as it is to examine any new lines of social fracture that it engenders.

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# Multi-Religiosity: Expanding Research on Ties to Multiple Faiths in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century\*

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## Abstract

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is not uncommon to encounter people with ties to more than one religion. Some examples of such multiple or dual religious ties (referred to as “multi-religiosity” for the purposes of this paper) include the practice of Buddhism among Christians and Jews, regular church attendance among those who say they are not religious, and the children of mixed religious couples who might be raised with some level of identification with the spiritual traditions of both parents. Yet, literature and data on the topic of multi-religiosity is scarce. Through an analysis of qualitative data gathered by the author in Brazil in 2007–2008 and data from a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life in the United States in 2009, this paper aims to draw attention to the prevalence of dual or multiple religious ties in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Western countries, and to encourage a reconsideration of traditional concepts and categories in scholarly approaches to studying religion.

**Keywords:** multi-religiosity, religious pluralism, dual religious belonging, religious super-diversity, sociology of religion

## Introduction

In the twenty-first-century Western world, it is not uncommon for individuals to draw on beliefs and practices from multiple faiths, or even to identify with more than one faith. While this phenomenon has been part of Asian religious cultures for centuries, it is relatively new in the West (Cornille 2003). Some examples of multiple religious ties in the West include the practice of Buddhism among Christians and Jews, regular church attendance among those who say they are not religious, and the children of mixed religious couples who might be raised with at least some level of exposure to the spiritual traditions of both parents.

Among the many cultural changes likely contributing to the increasing number of individuals with ties to more than one faith are the prioritization of individual freedom and choice, greater tolerance toward marriages between people from different religious backgrounds, and increased contact with other religious traditions through globalizing forces such as the spread of technology and migration (Steele 2012). In such increasingly plural societies, intersectional identities proliferate, and boundaries between religions can begin to break down. Vertovec (2007) coined the term ‘super-diversity’ to refer to such unprecedented social complexity.

Yet, literature on any form of multiple or dual religious ties in the West is scarce. In recent years, scholars have taken important steps forward in a conversation about how best to conceptualize the complex and nuanced aspects of individuals’ engagement with religion in the

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21<sup>st</sup> century (e.g., Demerath 2000, Hout and Fischer 2002; Ammerman 2003; Wuthnow 2007; Storm 2009; Voas 2009; Lim, MacGregor, and Putnam 2010; Soares 2011; Droz et al. 2016). However, this conversation has primarily, though not exclusively, focused on better understanding engagement with single faiths, or the murkiness of the “no religion” category.

Despite the many documented complexities influencing contemporary everyday religion, a major obstacle to studying multiple ties persists; most quantitative and qualitative research instruments only allow respondents to choose one religious affiliation. If the respondent says that s/he is “not religious,” questionnaire filters often prevent religious participation from being measured at all.

The present study is motivated by an incidental finding from my research on the role of religion in the lives of adolescent mothers in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Seven of the 32 young women I interviewed described participation in, or identification with multiple religions, or multiple approaches to engaging with religion that simply did not fit into traditional categories. Although understanding such ties to multiple faiths was not the motivation for that particular study, the regularity with which I encountered this phenomenon in my interviews aroused my interest in the topic.

In this paper, I present my preliminary evidence from Brazil to build a case for expanding the consideration of ties to multiple faiths. I then supplement those findings by analyzing data from a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life in the United States in 2009. The aim of this paper is to draw attention to the phenomenon of multi-religiosity in order to encourage further research in this area.

### **Ties to Multiple Faiths in Scholarly Literature**

Below, I begin by presenting a definition of multi-religiosity. Then, I explore theories of religious ties and newer approaches to measurement, including theories and findings about ambiguous

religious ties. Finally, I present theories and findings pertaining to engagement with two or more religions.

### *Definition*

For the purposes of this paper, I define “multi-religiosity” starting from the following broad definition of an individual with multiple faiths:

An individual who consciously identifies with more than one faith, regardless of beliefs or practices, would be considered to have ties to multiple faiths. However, an individual also may be considered to have ties to multiple faiths if s/he draws on beliefs and/or practices from more than one faith, regardless of whether or not s/he consciously identifies with or declares ties to more than one faith. This definition includes individuals who practice, adhere to beliefs of, or identify with more than one established denomination or subgroup of the same larger religious tradition, but excludes institutionalized group practices or identities involving the syncretism of multiple faiths (Steele 2012, 841).

To this definition, I further specify that those who say they are not religious, but who regularly attend places of worship<sup>1</sup> and/or regularly engage in religious practices, would also be considered to have multiple religious identities. Moreover, adhering to beliefs of more than one religious tradition would only qualify an individual as multiply religious if that belief were not consistent across traditions.<sup>2</sup>

### *Religious Ties*

First, I address the question of what it means to have a (single) religious tie. Wuthnow (2007) observes that the geographic mobility and general unsettledness of our contemporary society

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, “regular” religious attendance is defined as attending places of worship at least a few times per year.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the belief that there is only one God is central to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, among other faiths, but an individual who believes that would not qualify as multi-religious. On the other hand, an individual who identifies as Jewish but believes that Jesus was the messiah would be considered multi-religious.

gives opportunities to make spiritual choices that are unprecedented. Similarly, Cornille (2003) points out that traditional religions' geographical and spiritual monopolies have gradually dissolved, leaving the religious field wide open, and religious belonging increasingly a matter of choice and degree. Given such circumstances, Ammerman (2003) observes that if religious identity ever was a given, it certainly is no longer; within the everyday marketplace of modern identity narratives, people can choose how and whether to be religious. Just considering alone the fact that 56 percent of Americans are married to someone of another faith calls into question the likelihood of singular religious ties in such mixed-religious families (Sherkat 2004). Ammerman describes religious identity as a dynamic process best understood through the multiple narratives that shape social life, and contends that it is difficult to classify using a checklist of categorical questions. In fact, Ammerman (2003) finds situations where multiple identities intersect – as they are remade in new contexts (e.g., immigrants) or even where they clash with each other (e.g., gay evangelicals) – to be theoretically interesting because they are exemplars, rather than anomalies.

Goosen (2007) outlines a framework that offers one useful way to measure religious ties in more concrete terms. He examines religious involvement through three levels that he equates to the three faculties that comprise total human engagement: The intellect, linked to the cognitive level; feelings, operationalized at the affective level; and actions, represented at the conative level. When people are involved with a religion at all three levels, Goosen describes them as being totally engaged. For example, a Christian would be totally engaged if he believed certain teachings (cognitive), experienced certain feelings regarding Christianity (affective), and acted in certain ways, such as attending services with others, giving alms to the poor, caring for orphans, or demonstrating against injustices (conative). Yet, many adherents to any religion engage on only one level. For example, a per-

son might follow some teachings (cognitive), but demonstrate no feelings for her religion (affective), and never attend any services or prayer meetings (conative).

Another classification schema for the relationship between individuals, religious institutions, and primary group ties can be found in Hammond's (1988) work. He describes two contrasting views of the church in contemporary society: The "collective-expressive" view, in which involvement is largely involuntary because it emerges out of overlapping primary group ties not easily avoided; and, the "individual-expressive" view, in which involvement is largely voluntary and independent of other social ties. In terms of religion and identity, Hammond contends that most people would fall into two categories. One group would be church-affiliated people that tend toward collective-expressive involvement in the church, and whose religious identity will tend to be of the involuntary, immutable type. The other group would be church-affiliated people who tend toward individual-expressive involvement in the church, and whose religious identity will tend to be of the transient, changeable type.

A number of recent empirical studies have also aimed to better define contemporary forms of engagement with religion, particularly in regards to the "no religion" category. Demerath (2000) examines what he calls "cultural religion" in Poland, Northern Ireland, and Sweden. He concludes that substantial proportions of all three populations reap a sense of personal identity and continuity with the past from religion without partaking in specific beliefs or rituals. On the other hand, using data from the 1998 General Social Survey (GSS), Hout and Fischer (2002) find that most Americans with no expressed religious preference hold conventional religious beliefs, despite their alienation from organized religion. They find that members of this group, whom the authors refer to as "unchurched believers," made up most of the increase in the "no religion" group (from 7% to 14%) in the 1990s in the U.S.

Bridging both of these ideas, through analyses of cross-national surveys of Europeans, Voas (2009) and Storm (2009) examine what they dub “fuzzy fidelity,” a casual loyalty to tradition among individuals who are neither regular churchgoers nor self-consciously non-religious – those who believe without belonging or belong without believing. Both scholars find fuzzy fidelity to be widespread throughout Europe, with Storm pointing out that her findings highlight, “the methodological issues involved in using single-scale measures for multidimensional phenomena” (2009, 702). Finally, Lim, MacGregor, and Putnam (2010) study individuals with liminal religious identities, or “liminars” – those who fail to identify with the ‘no religion’ preference consistently in panel surveys. They find that, for liminars, religious identity is a situational, rather than a stable, trait that has the potential to vary from one context to the next, and that the assumptions of the stability of religion inherent in the theories of the scholars cited above is problematic.

#### *Multiple Religious Ties*

While the studies above have substantially enhanced our ability to conceptualize contemporary religious engagement in more nuanced ways, only a couple of scholars have explicitly addressed the issue of dual or multiple religious ties. Cornille (2002; 2003) observes that the idea of double or multiple religious belonging seems to have become an integral feature of the religious culture of our times. She points out that although this phenomenon has been part of Asian religious cultures for centuries, it is relatively new to the West, where a combination of political and religious forces have shaped religious identities around comparatively rigid and exclusive boundaries. On the other hand, Goosen (2007) points out that dual religious belonging has actually existed at least from the beginning of Christianity. He describes how the first disciples, after the death of Christ, used to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath and then come together to celebrate the Lord’s supper on

the first day of the week. Until they were thrown out of the synagogue, they saw themselves as Jews and Christians simultaneously.

Cornille (2003) describes multiple religious belonging in any combination of any number of religions, citing as examples the Jews for Jesus; Christians who have become deeply involved in Islamic (mostly Sufi) religious practices; Hindus who also consider themselves partly Christian or, more often, vice versa; and, by far the most common phenomenon in the West – Christians or Jews who also profess to be Buddhist.

Some of the examples Cornille raises might be better described as cases of religious syncretism, rather than multiple belonging. There is already a great deal of scholarship on the topic of religious syncretism, though this may be a gray area for the study of multiple religious ties. For example, Schutte (1974) wrote about dual religious belonging at a Dutch Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) Church in Meadowlands (Soweto), South Africa. He found that church members associated two sets of beliefs and practices with the private and public spheres of religion, respectively. In the private sphere, ancestor beliefs and worship were of great importance to individuals and families. However, Christianity was felt to be closely related to the public sphere, not only in terms of worship in the church, but also regarding the Christian image individuals and families wished to project to the outside world in urban life. Yet, he observed that these two systems of religious belief were not strictly compartmentalized and separated. A tendency existed among church members to fuse the belief in ancestors with the Christian notion of the Holy Spirit. Despite tension with white missionaries and ministers from other congregations regarding such practices, when Schutte concluded his study, this particular church appeared to be on the path towards integrating the popular practices of members into the normal order of worship. In this case, dual religious practice led to syncretism.

Since I am interested in the types of multiple religious ties that are not institutionalized, nor already on the path to being formalized, as sug-

gested by the definition above, I would draw the line between syncretism and multiple ties where practices have moved beyond the individual level, or a collective movement may be coalescing.

Other concepts relevant to the topic of multiple religious ties are spiritual “tinkering” and religious mobility. Wuthnow (2007) introduces the concept of spiritual tinkering. He contends that contemporary circumstances actually make it necessary for seekers to cobble together their faith from the options at hand, which may include choosing from among many potentially suitable congregations, combining teachings from different religions, and selecting innovative ways to express spiritual interests. Similarly, Soares (2011) and Droz et al. (2016) present the concept of religious mobility or “butinage.” Churchgoers engaged with multiple faiths, who combine elements from each as part of a dynamic process of individual religiosity, are compared to bees gathering pollen from plants. Soares describes butinage as a form of commuting between denominations, or “a continuous to and fro, in which the practitioner combines various religious contents into a single religious practice” (2011, 228).

Wuthnow (2007) finds spiritual tinkering to be quite common among American young adults and expects it to remain so in the future. Among adults age 21 through 45, Wuthnow finds that 42 percent say they sometimes attend multiple places of worship, and 16 percent say they do this frequently. Likewise, in the Paranaguá-mirim district on the perimeter of the town of Joinville, Brazil, Soares (2011) finds that many of the residents move seamlessly among the district’s over 70 places of worship, from which each cobbles together her own unique religion.

Wuthnow’s (2007) research shows that a large minority of American young adults are engaged in spiritual tinkering in two specific ways. The first is “church shopping,” which entails looking for a congregation to attend, presumably one in which a person will settle and become a regular member. The second, “church hopping,” involves staying in the market, or, perhaps better, tinkering

with several possible selections, rather than settling down with one. Some of the factors that increase the likelihood of church hopping include having lived at more addresses, being single, not having children, having parents with college degrees, as well as having been to college oneself. Overall, Wuthnow sees church hopping as partly a function of opportunity while being unsettled, and possibly also the kind of seeking mentality that comes with higher education.

In terms of determining when an individual is truly involved with more than one religion, the framework outlined by Goosen, discussed above, could be particularly useful. This framework emerged in the context of his study of 33 adults from the greater Sydney, Australia area who practiced dual religious belonging. He found that they all had some beliefs (cognitive level) or religious practices (affective and conative) from a second faith, though none of them had publicly declared themselves to have “dual religious belonging”; most described themselves with a mono-religious title, except for five interviewees who used a double religious title to label their religion. Thus, he concluded that dual religious belonging tends to be adherence to one main religion while having a second religion on which the individual draws, or with which the individual engages to varying degrees, on one or more of the three levels. To establish the existence of dual religious belonging, Goosen suggests determining if an individual shows any engagement with a second religion on the cognitive, affective, or conative levels. If a given person meets one or more of the above criteria (levels of functioning) regarding a second religion, she could be said to have dual religious belonging. Three out of three would indicate the top end of the scale (a maximalist stance), while only one out of three would be the minimum requirement in order to say they “belong” (minimalist).

To summarize, religious ties are increasingly mutable in Western cultures. Scholars of religion from a range of disciplines have presented theories and findings that call into question the rele-

vance for our era of traditional modes of classifying religious engagement. Yet, precisely because existing forms of measurement are so limiting, empirical evidence on multiple religious ties is scarce. Below, I present preliminary evidence from both qualitative and quantitative studies that further demonstrates the need to reconsider existing schemes of classification. I use qualitative evidence to explore narrative accounts that do not fit into traditional categories, and quantitative analysis to explore how some of the characteristics suggested above – such as age, university education, having a spouse of a different faith, and frequency of religious attendance – are related to having ties to more than one religion.

### **Study of Religion in the Lives of Adolescent Mothers in Rio de Janeiro**

#### *A Methodological Discussion*

I traveled to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil three times over the course of two years (2007-2008) to collect qualitative data on the role of religion in the lives of adolescent mothers in the favelas (Steele 2011). The goal of the study was to understand how young, unmarried mothers and mothers-to-be in the favelas of Rio had experienced religious morality as applied to themselves and other adolescents in their communities, as well as how religious leaders were grappling with the moral issue of unmarried adolescent maternity in their midst.

I completed 32 semi-structured in-depth interviews with adolescent mothers (including six teenage mothers-to-be and 11 women who were age 20 or older at the time of our interview but had first become pregnant at age 19 or younger) who were recruited through three non-governmental organizations that worked with teenage mothers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In addition to these 32 interviews, I also completed six interviews with women who were 20 or older when they first became pregnant, but who were participating in programs for adolescent mothers, and three with young women who did not have children, but were affiliated with the programs or the religious

Respondents were asked a range of questions covering their childhoods, relationships with family, life in their communities, the father(s) of their children, pregnancy, motherhood, and religious ties of themselves and members of their immediate families. Although evidence of ties to multiple faiths emerged in the narratives of seven of the women, I had not been explicitly seeking such information; this evidence arose in response to my traditional, but primarily open-ended, questions about their religious identities, attendance, and practices. My own failure to be prepared for such more complex descriptions of religious ties is the motivation for this paper.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Preliminary Evidence of Ties to Multiple Faiths*

I had not anticipated that a number of the women I interviewed for my research in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, about the role of religion in their lives would describe participation in, or identification with multiple religions, or multiple approaches to engaging with religion that simply did not fit into traditional categories.

Among the 32 young mothers I interviewed, seven could be classified as multi-religious. Among the remaining 25 young women, an additional eight had ties to multiple denominations of evangelical Pentecostalism. Below, I focus on the multi-religious women, presenting

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groups I observed. I completed 13 interviews with key informants – eight religious leaders (five Pentecostal pastors, one Episcopal priest, and two Catholic priests), four staff members of non-governmental organizations that worked with adolescent mothers, and a doctor who worked for the government at the Ministry of Health. In total, 54 interviews were completed. In addition, I conducted participant observation at 10 places of worship (four traditional Pentecostal churches, two Neo-Pentecostal churches, one Catholic church, one Catholic Charismatic Renewal youth prayer group, and two Umbanda [Afro-Brazilian] centers) located throughout the city (inside the favelas, just outside favelas, as well as in middle-class neighborhoods), and at the three non-governmental organizations mentioned above. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on the 32 interviews conducted with adolescent mothers.

<sup>4</sup> For more details about this methodology, please see Steele (2011).

illustrations of some of the ways in which they were engaging with more than one religion, or expressing their religiosity in multiple, even conflicting, ways. Since all lived in shantytowns or on the streets, they can all be said to be of lower socio-economic status. The religiosity scores represent their answers to the question: "On a scale of one to five, with one being not at all religious and five being extremely religious, about how religious would you say that you are?" I evaluate their multi-religiosity by considering their self-identification and attendance at places of worship; where relevant, I also consider religiosity scores, and family and cultural ties.

*Flávia, 5 age 16, religiosity score=4:*

Flávia lives with her family, who are Catholic. Her father is from a Spiritist family, and she attended a Spiritist center as a child, but does not anymore. She considers herself Catholic, and sometimes attends a Catholic church in her neighborhood, though she used to go more frequently – twice per week. She also attends a local Evangelical church.

While Flávia's high religiosity score is consistent with her regular attendance at places of worship, her attendance at an Evangelical church does not match her self-identification as Catholic. In the case of her Catholicism, this may fit with the definition of fuzzy fidelity, but her additional involvement with an Evangelical church qualifies her as multi-religious.

*Idolina, 18, religiosity score=did not know:*

Idolina considers herself "a little bit" religious. She says, "I'm Catholic, but sometimes I go to the Baptist church ... I'm always looking for God." Her family, with whom she lives, is Catholic, and they go to the church some Sundays. She was much more active in the Catholic Church, including participating in Bible study, when she lived with her grandmother in northeastern Brazil. About a year prior to our interview, she had been attending a Baptist church regularly for several months, and still stops by from time to time.

Idolina may be a church shopper or practitioner of religious butinage, and seems to exhibit ele-

ments of both collective-expressive and individual-expressive influences. Her identification as Catholic may be primarily a cultural one, which is not consistent with her attendance at a Baptist church. Thus, she would also be classified as multi-religious.

*Jovana, 24, religiosity score=1:*

Jovana considers herself Catholic, but says that she is not religious. Her family practiced Spiritism when she was a child. In the past, she had spent about a year attending various Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal churches (she mentioned by name the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God [IURD], Deus é Amor, Assembly of God, and Amor é Vida) around twice per week. She still attends these churches on occasion, but only for *bailes* (dances).

Jovana may have one of the most complex religious identities of any of my respondents. Her religiosity score of 1 ("not at all religious") could possibly be consistent with a family or cultural tie to Catholicism (when I first asked her if she was religious, she very clearly responded, "yes, I'm Catholic"), but her family is actually Spiritist. Moreover, her attendance in the previous year was exclusively at Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal places of worship – representing at least four different denominations of Evangelicalism. She is clearly a multi-religious individual-expressionist, but her religiosity otherwise defies existing systems of classification.

*Claudia, 19, religiosity score=2:*

Claudia does not consider herself religious. Her family, with whom she lives, is Catholic. She sometimes goes to both Catholic and Pentecostal (Deus é Amor) churches.

Although Claudia does not consider herself religious, she was attending churches from two different faiths, and held at least some religious beliefs ("there's only one God"). Thus, "belonging without believing" is not sufficiently nuanced to describe her engagement with religion. She is engaging on Goosen's cognitive and conative levels, but not as clearly on the affective level. Overall, she demonstrates at least some concurrent ties to Catholicism, Pentecostalism, and nonreligion.

<sup>5</sup> To protect the privacy of my respondents, I use pseudonyms throughout this paper.

*Isadora, 24, religiosity score=did not know:*

Isadora does not consider herself religious. She attended a Catholic church with her grandmother as a child. She says, "I go to church, to the [Spiritist] Center ... everywhere. I believe in everything. I think that this business of *crente*, Christian, Catholic ... for me it's all one God so I go everywhere – a little of everything. I'm curious and I go to these places to find out how they are."

Isadora seems to be a fairly clear case of a multi-religious church hopper or practitioner of religious butinage, in the individual-expressive vein. She believes and attends, but does not properly belong to any particular institution. She is engaging with at least three different faiths while identifying as not religious.

*Plácida, 17, religiosity score=5:*

In the past, Plácida had attended a youth group for a year at a large Neo-Pentecostal church (Sara Nossa Terra, notable for being one of the few in Rio that was attracting attendees from a wide range of class backgrounds). When asked if she was religious, Plácida said, "No. I go to church but I'm not a *crente*. I go with my mother and with my aunt. They invite me to go and I go" (the church to which she is referring is Evangelical). However, when I asked her how religious she was, she selected a religiosity score of five – "extremely religious." In addition, she was baptizing her 2-year-old son in a Catholic Church to honor the wishes of her child's father.

Plácida would also be classified as multi-religious; she has ties to at least two faiths, and nonreligion. She also appears to have a clear collective-expressive identity, whether she is doing what her mother and aunt want, or what her child's father wants. Perhaps when she says that she is not a *crente*, her own individual view is given voice, while her claim to be a "5," or extremely religious, on the religiosity scale, may be a product of how she thinks those in her primary social group would like her to be.

These religious narratives, all of which represent forms of multi-religiosity, point to a range of elements influencing how these young women understand and practice their religiosity – from alternative forms of spiritual seeking, to opportunities to socialize with or without family members, to honoring societal traditions, to fuzzy

fidelity, and all of the above. Some aspects of the religiosities described above fit well into categories outlined by Wuthnow (2007), Hammond (1988), Voas (2009), Storm (2009), and Soares (2011), and some respondents may qualify as having the liminal ties described by Lim, MacGregor, and Putnam (2010), although I cannot determine that definitively because I do not have time-varying data. Yet, many of the cases described above are impossible to classify using existing approaches to studying religiosity.

While the limitations of much of the data we have on religion prevent us from knowing just how widespread these complex multiple religious ties are, and the evidence presented above is essentially anecdotal since it was not part of a study systematically gathering data on multiple religious ties, the fact that seven out of 32 young women spontaneously provided such information is compelling in and of itself. At the least, their narratives show that ties to multiple faiths are far from unusual in the context of Rio de Janeiro's favelas.

#### **A quantitative excursus: The Pew Data**

To examine the phenomenon of multiple religious ties more systematically, I sought existing quantitative data related to it in any way. The best match was a study conducted in August 2009 by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life in which telephone interviews were completed with a nationally representative sample of 2,003 adults living in the continental United States (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2009a). Because, to the best of my knowledge, this is the only existing quantitative data set to systematically measure multiple religious ties in a Western country, I analyze it despite the low response rate (15.3 percent) typical of Pew polls. In the methodological appendix to the poll, Pew states, "Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is  $\pm 2.7$  percentage points" (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2009c). Given that a paucity of data on the topic of multi-

religiosity is a problem I aim to address herein, and that the Pew data represent an important step forward in this respect, for the purposes of this paper, I set aside my concerns about this response rate.

The other limitation is that ties to multiple faiths are not measured along every dimension. The data included a measure of attendance at multiple places of worship, but no measure of multiple forms of identification. To attempt to address other dimensions, I thus explore some reported beliefs and practices of those who say they are not religious. Again, because more comprehensive studies do not exist at this point in time, I contend that analyzing these data represent a valuable first step, despite the clear limitations.

All respondents were asked about the frequency of their attendance at any place of worship. They were asked the following: "Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services... more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never?" Only respondents who answered that they attended a few times a year or more were subsequently asked about the frequency of attending different places of worship. That question was asked in the following way: "Aside from when you're traveling and special events like weddings and funerals, do you always attend religious services at the same place, mostly attend at one place but occasionally go to different places, or do you go to different places on a regular basis?" From this item, I construct two outcome variables, a dummy for going to different places on a regular basis and a dummy for occasionally going to different places.

Given the multitude of Protestant denominations of Christianity in the U.S., I wanted to ensure that most respondents stating that they attend multiple places of worship were not referring exclusively to attendance at services of multiple Protestant denominations within their own faith. Indeed, this was not the case. Among the 553 individuals occasionally or regularly attending different places, only 83 (15%) were Protes-

tants or Christians referring exclusively to attendance at different denominations within their own faith.<sup>6</sup>

To take a different approach to examining multiple religious ties, I also examine religious affiliation ("What is your present religion, if any?"), specifically among those who identify as nonreligious (atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular"). In addition, to explore the prevalence of one of the most common religious practices among the nonreligious, I analyze their responses to a question about prayer ("People practice their religion in different ways. Outside of attending religious services, do you pray several times a day, once a day, a few times a week, once a week, a few times a month, seldom, or never?").<sup>7</sup>

Pew only asked questions about attendance at multiple places of worship among those respondents who answered that they attended religious services at least a few times a year. Thus, my analytic sample is limited to this group of 1,478 respondents (72%).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Only Protestants/Christians were asked about attendance at different denominations within their own faith (see Q282a); however, in the U.S., this is the only religious group whose members are likely to have easy access to multiple places of worship within their own faith. Otherwise, all respondents who said they attended multiple places of worship were asked about attendance at a Protestant church (if not Protestant/Christian [Q282b]), Catholic mass (if not Catholic [Q282c]), a Jewish synagogue (if not Jewish [Q282d]), a Muslim mosque (if not Muslim [Q282e]), and religious services different from the respondent's that were not mentioned by the interviewer (Q282f) (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2009b).

<sup>7</sup> Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analyses are presented in Table 1. Control variables include religious affiliation (1=Protestant or what Pew calls "just Christian"; 0=all others), gender (1=male; 0=female), age (1=age 55+; 0=younger than 55), education (1=college completed; 0=college not completed), income (1=annual household income of \$100,000+; 0=annual household income below \$100,000), race/ethnicity (1=white; 0=African-American, Hispanic, other), and spouse's religion (1=married to a spouse of the same religion; 0=all others).

<sup>8</sup> Listwise deletion of observations with missing data on one or more measures used in the analyses yields an analytic sample of 1,155 (78%). Most of the miss-

Below, I present descriptive statistics of Americans with ties to more than one faith and those who stated that they were not religious (all 2,003 respondents are included in my analysis of the no religion category), as well as results of estimating a series of logistic regression models.

*Attendance at multiple places of worship and practices of the nonreligious in the U.S.*

The Pew data offer an opportunity to explore two aspects of ties to multiple faiths – attendance at multiple places of worship in the U.S. and attendance and practice among those who say they are not religious. Indeed, these data also show that multiple religious ties are far from unusual.

There is clear evidence of multiple or conflicting ties in the Pew data. Unlike many survey organizations, Pew asked about religious attendance even among those who stated that they were “nothing in particular” (NIP), “agnostic,” or atheist,” in response to the question, “What is your present religion, if any?”<sup>9</sup> This allows us to see further evidence of conflicting claims about ties to religion. More than a third (34.0%) of respondents who said they were “nothing in particular”, and more than a quarter (27.8%) of those who said they were agnostic were attending religious services at least a few times per year. Likewise, more than half of NIPs (52.6%) and almost a third (31.5%) of agnostics reported praying at least a few times per month. In contrast, atheists were more consistent with only two (6.1%) attending at least a few times per year, more than 80 percent never attending, and none reporting

any regular prayer.<sup>10</sup> The behavior of NIPs and agnostics is consistent with research about fuzzy fidelity in that a substantial proportion of these respondents appear to belong, at least to some extent, without believing.

Moreover, among respondents who attend religious services at least a few times per year, who comprise 73.8 percent of all respondents to the survey, only 50 percent always attend religious services at the same place; 36.9 percent mostly attend at one place but occasionally go to other places, and 12.2 percent go to different places on a regular basis. In Table 2, I present odds ratios for logistic regression models, where regularly (Model 1) and occasionally (Model 2) attending more than one place of worship (among respondents who attend religious services at least a few times per year) are the dependent variables. When all else is held equal, white respondents (compared to black, Hispanic, or other) have about 60 percent lower odds of attending multiple places of worship regularly, and 36 percent lower odds of occasionally attending. Being married to a spouse of the same religion follows the same pattern; compared to having a spouse of a different faith, the odds of attending multiple places of worship regularly are 47 percent lower, and the odds of attending occasionally are 24 percent lower among those who have a spouse of the same religion. In both models, we see that the odds of attending multiple places of worship are higher among those who attend religious services less frequently, although these effects are only statistically significant in Model 2. This is not surprising if attending less frequently is taken to represent a less clear commitment to one particular faith or place of worship.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, an individual would be most likely to regularly attend multiple places of worship if she was non-white (the odds are highest among blacks) and married to a spouse of a different

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ing data can be attributed to nonresponse on the income item. Logistic regression analyses suggest that those missing are older (odds ratio=1.7), but otherwise do not differ much from the analytic sample in terms of other measures used in the analyses. Sample weights provided by Pew are applied throughout the analyses.

<sup>9</sup> In total, of the 2,003 respondents to the survey, 215 (10.7%) identified as “nothing in particular,” 33 (1.7%) identified as atheist, and 54 (2.7%) identified as agnostic. Because of the small number of responses in the atheist and agnostic categories, those results should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>10</sup> Three atheists said that they “seldom” prayed, and 30 said they never prayed.

<sup>11</sup> The effects of being male, older, college-educated, or Protestant/Christian, or having higher income are not statistically significant in either model.

faith. An individual would be most likely to occasionally attend multiple places of worship if he was non-white and attending religious services only a few times per year.

### **Summary and a call for future research**

The development of concepts such as fuzzy fidelity (Storm 2009; Voas 2009), cultural religion (Demerath 2000), unchurched believers (Hout and Fischer 2002), and liminality (Lim, MacGregor, and Putnam 2010) represent important advances in attempting to understand the nuances of contemporary religiosity, particularly among individuals who believe without belonging or belong without believing. However, what appears to be an increasingly widespread phenomenon of individuals having ties to multiple faiths – through the effects of globalization, migration, intermarriage, and greater individual freedom and mobility in super-diverse societies – is left at least partially unaddressed by these theories.

In this paper, I have aimed to encourage future research in the area of multi-religiosity through presenting preliminary evidence from two empirical studies. I presented a number of illustrations of ties to multiple faiths among young women in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which were an unanticipated product of my qualitative interview study there on the role of religion in the lives of teen mothers. This study was included because the data unexpectedly yielded some evidence of multi-religiosity. In contrast, an August 2009 study by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life was designed to deliberately gather some data about ties to multiple faiths in the U.S.

Specifically, the Pew study measured attendance at multiple places of worship among respondents attending any religious services a few times per year or more, and also measured attendance and practices among the nonreligious. The results of my analysis of the Pew data indicate that almost half of Americans who attend religious services at least a few times a year are occasionally or regularly attending mul-

multiple places of worship. Notably, less than 15 percent of those occasionally or regularly attending different places of worship were Protestants or "Christians" referring exclusively to attendance at multiple denominations within their own faith; thus, this measure does truly capture engagement with multiple faiths. Those most likely to regularly attend multiple places of worship are black or Hispanic Americans married to a spouse of a different faith. The likelihood of occasionally attending multiple places of worship is also higher among blacks and Hispanics than among whites, and increases as frequency of attendance at any services decreases. This inverse relationship may exist because attending less frequently overall may represent a less clear commitment to one particular faith or place of worship. These individuals may be, for example, the church hoppers or shoppers described by Wuthnow (2007), or those practicing what Soares (2011) and Droz et al. (2016) call religious butinage, although the data do not offer an opportunity to test those hypotheses. Gender, age, education, income, and affiliation with the majority religious group (Protestant/Christian) in the U.S. did not have statistically significant effects on either occasional or regular attendance at multiple places of worship.

My analysis of the Pew data also demonstrates the complexity of the nonreligion category. Substantial proportions of respondents whose religious affiliation was "nothing in particular" or agnostic reported attending religious services at least a few times per year, and/or praying at least a few times per month. Such individuals may fit the criteria for fuzzy fidelity (Storm 2009; Voas 2009) or being considered unchurched believers (Hout and Fischer 2002); I would also include them under the umbrella of multi-religiosity.

Although the Brazil study did not aim to gather data about ties to multiple faiths, the findings contribute to a growing body of anecdotal evidence of the prevalence of multi-religiosity. Regarding the implications of this preliminary evidence, the narratives of seven among the 32 young mothers interviewed showed multi-religiosity. Some

had more than one religious affiliation, others attended at places of worship from up to four different faiths, and, at the least, most were mixing seemingly conflicting beliefs, practices, and identities. All of these cases would be difficult or impossible to classify using traditional categories, or even using the newer approaches to understanding ambiguous religious identities. The narratives of these young women reveal a range of forms of engagement with multiple faiths, similar to the complex narratives found in Goosen's (2007) research in Sydney, Australia on dual religious belonging, and consistent with Cornille's (2002; 2003) description of double or multiple religious belonging as an integral feature of the religious culture of our times.

There are important limitations to the generalizability of the empirical findings presented in this paper. The data from Brazil are qualitative and were gathered via a convenience sample; moreover, because of the original motivation for the study, the sample was limited to adolescent mothers from favelas in Rio de Janeiro, a very specific segment of the population. Finally, the most important limitation of all is that understanding ties to multiple faiths was not part of the study's design. However, the fact that this information arose essentially spontaneously as often as it did suggests that multiple ties are likely much more prevalent in that context than my study would suggest. The generalizability of the findings from the Pew data is limited because of the survey's low response rate. In addition, while the Pew data show compelling evidence about Americans, the U.S. is often an exceptional case in the West; our knowledge of the prevalence of multiple ties in Western countries would be greatly enhanced by gathering similar data from additional countries.

Yet, together, the incidental evidence from Brazil and the more systematic evidence from the Pew survey pose a strong challenge to the validity of existing approaches to measuring and conceptualizing contemporary engagement with religion. Such traditional approaches to measurement were developed in eras when we lived

much less mobile and globally interconnected lives – in which contact with anyone of another faith was rare for many people, and the opportunity to attend places of worship of other faiths was simply not available.

I concur with Ammerman's (2003) description of religious identity as a dynamic process that is difficult to classify using a checklist of categorical questions. However, I contend that since categorical questions about religion will continue to be widely employed, the measures could, at the least, be substantially improved. Researchers conducting qualitative studies could be prepared (as I was not) for more nontraditional descriptions of religious engagement, and ask more follow-up questions to capture ties to multiple faiths. However, at this early stage, the critical contribution of qualitative research may come from simply encouraging open, uninterrupted narratives from respondents. In the area of quantitative research, religious identification questions on surveys could allow multiple selections, following the model of the recent revisions of measures of race and ethnicity (for example, see Jones and Bullock 2012). Another way quantitative instruments could be improved would be by using filters sparingly so that those who claim no religious identification or attendance would still be asked any follow up questions about religiosity. The Pew study represents some important improvements in this direction. More studies could follow their model of measuring attendance at multiple places of worship, a practice that appears to be quite widespread in the U.S.

While the limitations of much of the data we have on religion prevent us from knowing just how widespread are the complex multiple religious ties revealed by my data from Brazil and my analysis of the Pew data, the evidence presented in this paper and a growing body of scholarly literature related to this topic suggest that, at the least, multiple ties are far from unusual.

The apparent prevalence of ties to multiple faiths revealed by my research suggests a range of questions for future research. First, I call on scholars of religion to explore how measures of

religious affiliation, attendance, and practice can be improved to better capture the actual ways that individuals engage with religion in contemporary super-diverse societies. Relatedly, future inquiries might explore whether I am correct in defining as multi-religious those who say they are not religious but attend religious services or engage in behaviors like prayer. In the context of better understanding super-diverse societies, studies of ties to multiple faiths would be

enhanced by analyses of the country- or community-level factors that contribute to the prevalence of this phenomenon. At the individual level, qualitative researchers could explore how multi-religious people reconcile their attendance at multiple places of worship when one of the religions (for example, Protestantism) inherently demands exclusivity. These are just a few of the many potential research questions pertaining to ties to multiple faiths.

## Tables

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in Pew Analyses**

Variable	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Frequency of attendance at religious services <sup>a</sup> :		
More than once a week	21.8%	22.0%
Once a week	33.2%	29.5%
Once or twice a month	22.0%	23.1%
A few times a year	23.0%	25.5%
Frequency of attendance at multiple places of worship:		
Regularly attends different places of worship	11.3%	12.5%
Occasionally attends different places of worship	36.6%	36.1%
Always attends at the same place	52.1%	51.5%
Male (female) <sup>b</sup>	42.6%	47.6%
Age 55+ (younger than 55)	44.5%	30.9%
Household income \$100,000+/year (less than \$100,000)	21.0%	18.3%
College completed+ (not completed)	40.3%	29.8%
White (black, Hispanic, other)	76.2%	68.3%
Religious ID:		
Protestant/Christian (other)	61.9%	59.9%
Nothing in particular (other)	4.6%	5.2%
Atheist (other)	0.2%	0.4%
Agnostic (other)	1.0%	1.4%
Married to spouse of same religion (spouse of different religion, not married)	48.6%	48.2%

Note: N = 1,155

<sup>a</sup> Excludes respondents attending less than a few times a year.

<sup>b</sup> Reference categories are in parentheses.

**Table 2. Logistic Regression Models of Attending More Than One Place of Worship Using Pew Data**

	(1) Regularly Odds ratios	(2) Occasionally Odds ratios
Male	1.35 (0.33)	0.95 (0.15)
Age 55+	1.05 (0.25)	0.86 (0.13)
College completed	0.90 (0.23)	1.01 (0.16)
High income	1.14 (0.36)	1.02 (0.19)
Protestant/Christian	0.68 (0.17)	1.08 (0.17)
White	0.39*** (0.10)	0.64* (0.11)
Spouse same religion	0.53* (0.14)	0.76^ (0.12)
Attends 1 time/week	0.51^ (0.20)	0.98 (0.20)
Attends 1-2 times/month	1.14 (0.44)	1.76* (0.40)
Attends a few times per year	1.53 (0.57)	2.25*** (0.52)
Constant	0.34* (0.15)	1.06 (0.27)
Observations	1,155	1,155
Log pseudolikelihood	-1,710.28	-3,316.10
Wald c2(10)	43.73	37.54

*Robust standard errors in parentheses*

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , ^  $p < 0.1$

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# Mobility and Religious Diversity in Indigenousness-Seeking Movements: A Comparative Case Study between France and Mexico

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## Abstract

In this article, the authors seek to explore spiritual diversity as seen in two contemporary movements that arose in the wake of the New Age and the “2012 Phenomenon”: Mexican neo-Mayanism and French Celtic neo-shamanism. They examine the relationship between the dual mobility of leaders (geographic and spiritual) and the hybridization of symbolic references by focusing on the set of objects, accessories and ritual clothing used by adherents in spiritual practice. Their analyses are based on ethnographic research carried out in France and Mexico between 2012 and 2014. The objects are analyzed in terms of symbolic rearrangements, identity innovation and coexistence of referential systems (glocalization). The authors’ analyses reveal that despite the globalized character of the New Age, the practices and discourses of these groups are heavily influenced by the transnational life pathways of their leaders.

**Keywords:** indigenous-seeking movements, spiritual hybridization, transnational mobility, ritual objects, New Age, comparative ethnography, Neo-Shamanism, Neo-Mayanism

## 21.12.12: A Transnational Event

On December 21, 2012, Mother Nah Kin, founder and spiritual leader of the Maya Solar Tradition (MST), organized a spiritual planetary summit in Uxmal (Yucatán, Mexico), the ancient Mayan city<sup>1</sup>. This event marks the end of the Mayan Long Count calendar – a complex pre-Hispanic system for measuring time – and has come to represent Mayan revival movements<sup>2</sup>. Spiritual leaders from around the world offered their teachings, forged ties and encouraged future transnational exchanges, all in the name of unity.

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<sup>1</sup> For an announcement of the event, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nJ6I97bh3Q&list=PLjMn1eaYlzUXHUK6dMDhYyWdhReqG9bEY&index=8> (accessed February 11, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Mayan ritual calendar and 21.12.12 date, which corresponds with the end of a cycle, see Macleod (2013) and Tally (2012).

Among those participating were Emoto Masaru, known in Japan for his alternative research on the effect of human thought on water<sup>3</sup>; Carl Johan Calleman, a Mayanist and author of many works on the Mayan calendar<sup>4</sup>; and James Redfield, a well-known writer of the New Age<sup>5</sup>. The event provided an opportunity for leaders to recognize and legitimize each other’s efforts on the religious world stage.

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<sup>3</sup> In particular, he has published an internationally acclaimed book, *The Hidden Messages of Water*, Atria, 2005, New York.

<sup>4</sup> See especially *The Mayan Calendar and the Transformation of Consciousness*, Traditions/Bear, 2004, Rochester, VT.

<sup>5</sup> *The Celestine Prophecy* (Bantam, 1994, London) tells the story of an initiation in Peru, where a man searches for an ancient manuscript capable of creating a new humanity.

At 5:12 a.m. on the fated day, about one thousand “alternative” practitioners<sup>6</sup> prayed before the imposing Uxmal pyramid while ushering in the “Golden Age,” a time of “light, love and harmony”<sup>7</sup>. Stationed at the very source of “maximum reception” of “galactic rays”, people danced, sang, cried, embraced, and formed new alliances<sup>8</sup>. This Latin American event marked the birth of new transnational bonds, which, in turn, led to the creation of networks whose members reproduce and reinterpret these ceremonies in other settings. 2012 thus became a benchmark for non-Mayan alternative practitioners, as well, including the *Déoceltés*<sup>9</sup>, who took part in the event following the invitation extended by the MST<sup>10</sup>.

Their participation in the Planetary Summit served to express their solidarity with their “Mayan brothers and sisters.” As part of a global spiritual exchange, the celebration aimed for a communion of energies to raise human consciousness in peace, love and sharing, thus forming an immense fraternal medicine wheel. Practitioners’ interest thus served as a means for laying claim to localized identities (shamanism in the West, celtism in Europe, the Mayan tradition in Mexico) and for promoting universal goals as found in New Age movements.

The transnational dimension of the Spiritual Planetary Summit is reminiscent of events organized in Europe by the leader of the *Déoceltés*.

<sup>6</sup> These are people who have integrated different holistic *spiritual* systems of representation with the centrally important experiential dimension. See J. Stolz and M. Schneuwly Purdie (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Speech by Mother Nah Kin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nJ6I97bh3Q&list=PLjMn1eaYIzUXHUK6dMDhYyWdhReqG9bEY&index=8> (accessed February 15, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Speech by Mother Nah Kin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nK8ZUV-HLLO> (accessed February 15, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Dacquay’s website for the *Déoceltés*: [www.patrickdacquay.com](http://www.patrickdacquay.com), accessed 10 February 2016. The introductory video of the *Déoceltés* for the Spiritual Planetary Summit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZFCyOYC\\_WM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZFCyOYC_WM) (accessed February 10, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> For the invitation, see: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nK8ZUV-HLLO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nK8ZUV-HLLO) (accessed February 20, 2016).

The Shamanism Festival<sup>11</sup>, in particular, is an annual event in France, which brings together about a hundred shamans from around the world and welcomes around 2000 participants. The festival highlights different practices and rituals, such as music, dances, sweat lodges (e.g., *Temazcal*, *Celtic cauldron*), totem and artefact building, and shamanic journeys. It also features guest lectures and films. Overall, it aims to create a pan-shamanic network that unites all “the ancestral traditions attached to Mother Earth and Nature” so that humans can return to their “natural spirituality” as they look for answers and an alternative identity by reinvesting in the past (peoples living in Europe during the proto-historic period and the pre-Columbian peoples).

### Overview of Issues

This article argues that the mobility of spiritual leaders, which is at the heart of this research, is a factor of diversity within the movements studied. Interest in this internal diversity – designated here by the process of hybridization (De la Torre 2014) – derives from the fact that these movements are situated in a shared dynamic of norm construction and similar values, which draw on elements of the New Age subculture yet lay claim to their specificities. It is in this specificity that comes the diversity of references and identities. This diversity also allows for comparison between the two movements – that is, variation between groups and cultural contexts – and thus becomes a useful tool. It further enables us to grasp the process of “glocalization,” which is central to our research. We will analyze this internal diversity from two perspectives: the reinvention of traditions and national identities (Hobsbawn 2006; Thiesse 2001) and transnationalism (Bava and Capone 2010; Capone 2004; Argyriadis, Capone, De la Torre and Mary 2012). We will analyze mobility of the leaders using Edio Soares’s notion of “religious foraging” (*butinage*)

<sup>11</sup> The website for the Shamanism Festival in France: [www.festival-chamanisme.com](http://www.festival-chamanisme.com) (accessed February 10, 2016).

(2009) and its “glocalizing” effects on practices and discourses (Robertson 2012).

Throughout this article, we use the terms “New Age” and “alternative spirituality” to define the settings and networks where interviewees spent their time. Historically speaking, the “New Age” refers to the widespread spiritual movement with fuzzy boundaries that arose in California between 1970 and 1980, in the form of a network. Its purpose, themes, goals and history are laid out in Ferguson’s book (1980) – regarded as the most important text in the New Age movement. But in this article, we follow the ethnographic approach of J. Sutcliffe (2003). Sutcliffe does not consider the New Age as a movement or a homogeneous entity. Rather, he conceives it as a discursive emblem. “New Age” becomes a code-word reflecting the heterogeneity of alternative spiritualities. Sutcliffe’s book clashes with Western European sociology of the New Age while more closely resembling Latin American anthropological literature. Americanist authors including Renée de la Torre and Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga are not attached to defining the New Age by its substantive content. They consider it more a “matrix of meaning,” that is, a framework of “holistic reinterpretation.” They are thus able to do away with the issue of typologies and can perceive the New Age as a platform of perpetual meaning-making (De la Torre and Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2013:14). This approach is very useful, especially when studying recent hybridization processes between indigenous, shamanistic world-views and New Age representations.

This article provides a comparative analysis between two case studies: one of neo-Mayan groups and the other of neo-shamanic groups. The Maya Solar Tradition (MST) in Mexico is the focus of a field study carried out by Manéli Farahmand<sup>12</sup> for her PhD. The MST originated

<sup>12</sup> The data presented in this article come from fieldwork carried out by Manéli Farahmand in the Maya Solar Tradition, Mérida, Yucatán State, and southeast Mexico, conducted between April and May 2014. The research was completed in several stages: 1. discussion with a former MST follower about her experience in the movement; 2. observations of the *Casa del Sol*

in the 1970s by Mother Nah Kin is a movement that claims the return to a Mayan “Golden Age” through the founding myth of *Kinich Ahau*, a supernatural anthropomorphized entity said with superior genetic qualities. “Pure of heart” and “Atlantean” in origin<sup>13</sup>, *Kinich Ahau* would have trained many disciples to the “highest of Mayan cosmologies.” Mother Nah Kin gives herself the mission to “reactivate” this cosmology around the world. The MST movement is built on the dynamic processes of glocalization and transnationalization. Rites, myths and contents have local roots (in a revisited Yucatec Mayan tradition) and are made up of global images, symbols and uses. The leader and the initiates in this tradition enjoy significant transnational mobility. Mexican mixed-race, Western New Agers and/or *spiritual* holistic therapists take part in the activities on site and then import these teachings in their individual contexts.

The second group is the French *Déo-Celtes*, led by Patrick Dacquay and his wife Line Sturny, who were the focus of a field study carried out by Sybille Rouiller<sup>14</sup> as part of her master’s degree. This French neo-Celtic group lays claim to shamanism – “the ancient wisdom of humanity” – in its Western form. Members are motivated by the desire to return to the Celtic “Golden Age” according to a similar logic to the

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and participation in its weekly activities; 3. initiations of the *Ahaukines* lineage, first rank of “solar guide” within the tradition; 4. the MST’s annual event, *Kinich Ahau*, a ceremony in the ruins of Uxmal; 5. meeting with other Maya leaders in Mérida, working outside MST; 6. additional observations at the *Casa del Sol* and final interviews.

<sup>13</sup> Mère Nah Kin tells the story of *Kinich Ahau* in her first publication in 1997: *Kinich Ahau. Sabiduría Solar*, Editorial Kinich Ahau SCP, 2012 (1997), Mérida.

<sup>14</sup> Sybille Rouiller followed the *Déo-Celtes* and participated in their various activities. The data presented in this article were gathered in several stages: 1. Shamanism Festival in Cogolin, Var region, France, March 2013; 2. Shamanism Festival in Dole, French Jura, April 2013; 3. shamanism internship in Bugarrach, department of Aude, with the *déo-celtes* Patrick Dacquay and Line Sturny, July 2013; 4. follow-up with participants on the Internet or one-to-one meetings with them during their visit to the alternative therapy fair in Geneva and Lausanne, Switzerland.

neo-Indians described by Galinier and Molinié (2006). The Celts are regarded as the European equivalent of pre-Columbian indigenous peoples. *Déo-Celtisme* lays claim to a territory-specific identity as well as integration in a global network of spiritual exchanges. By drawing on Western representations of “what a shaman should be” and what the Celts represented, the *Déo-Celtes* devote themselves to constructing a sense of authenticity and indigenosity. They create discursive and ritual mechanisms that invoke different categories arising from specific historical and cultural processes.

We drew on a combination of socio-anthropological methods to carry out our work: multiple field sites; collaboration with photographers; in-depth biographical interviews; comprehensive, semi-directed and informal interviews; as well as participant observation during workshops, ceremonies, conferences, care and individual practices, group meditations, and talking circles. A discourse analysis of the emic literature (produced by the movements themselves, as in the case of autobiographies and doctrinal texts) and on social networks (*Facebook*) was also completed.

Our decision to conduct a comparative analysis on these two groups seemed relevant for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the neo-Mayans and *Déo-Celtes* shared many common features and several unique aspects, which reflect both the wide diversity of practices that exist in New Age settings as well as shared glocal and transnational systems of thinking. Additionally, their membership in transnational networks of “alternative spirituality”<sup>15</sup> has brought them

<sup>15</sup> In the second half of the 20th century, researchers found that the speech of people who frequented New Age circles adopted the category of “spirituality” to define their practice, as opposed to the notion of “religion.” These individuals harboured negative associations with religion in terms of its institutionalization, transcendence, external authority, dogmatism and patriarchal structure (Heelas 2002: 362). Spirituality, by contrast, is connected with the personal, the immanent, interiority and direct experience with the sacred (*ibid*). These forms of spirituality are consid-

ered “alternative” in comparison with an established religion such as Christianity.

together at different times, including the Spiritual Planetary Summit in 2012.

Our study will help us understand the effects of participants’ mobility on the processes of hybridizing spiritual discourses and practices. These will be illustrated comparatively<sup>16</sup>, using the wide range of objects, accessories and ceremonial clothing for each group. We will, moreover, trace the life pathways of the two leaders who are at the heart of this research: Mother Nah Kin for the Maya Solar Tradition and Patrick Dacquay for *Déo-Celtisme*. We will apply the notions of transnationalization and spiritual foraging (*butinage*) in our analysis, thereby emphasizing a physical and spiritual dual mobility.

In scholarly debates on the mobility of religious figures, the concepts of “glocalization” and “transnationalization” refer to different socio-historical processes, although they may be intertwined. These two concepts allow us to analyze our case studies in three phases<sup>17</sup>. The first phase involves delocalizing so-called traditional practices and symbols by disseminating them through mystic-esoteric tourism, the arrival of shamans/healers/indigenous officiants in Europe and the circulation of ethnographic literature. The second phase involves translocalization, the birth of a new movement or stream that is geographically more widespread. Shamanism or Mayanism thus comes to be understood as cosmic and universal spiritualities whose foundations rest on the subjective perception of the individual. Adherents gather together mainly

<sup>16</sup> The comparative approach adopted draws on the “differential comparison” (Mancini 2007). Nevertheless, our approach takes into account similarities that help to grasp the circulation of objects, images and ideas in transnational space. Even if diversity is very important in terms of practices, references and objects, identical forms of logic and processes can be observed in different groups, which, in the end, tend to produce highly similar outcomes, especially by using shared concepts. Among these similarities there is a common claim of indigenosity.

<sup>17</sup> On these three phases, see Renée de la Torre (2012).

on the Web or meet up under temporary and episodic conditions (e.g., internships, festivals, large-scale rituals or journeys). The third and final phase involves the relocalization of a global Shamanism or Mayanism through remodeling practices and discourses. These processes are, in turn, affected by paradoxical forms of logic (universalism and particularism) known as “translogics” (Capone and Mary 2012). These translogics govern the dynamics of receiving, appropriating and resignifying in reterritorialized cultural contexts.

### Back-to-Indigenusness Movements

Substantial anthropological literature is available on indigenusness-seeking movements that came into contact with a New Age culture in Mexico (De la Torre and Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2011 & 2013; De la Peña 1999 & 2001; Molinié and Galinier 2006). These scholars’ work highlights how widespread New Age has become in Latin America at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such that it triggered a wave of appropriation and contextual resignification in local ethnic groups attempting to revitalize their traditions. Conversely, New Agers searching for tradition, authenticity and indigenusness have also drawn on pre-Hispanic traditions offering them new meanings. The configuration of the Mexican religious field from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may be approached from the perspective of diversification. In the literature on religious diversity in Mexico, geographic mobility is considered an important factor of this diversification (De la Torre and Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2007:9). Back-to-indigenusness movements surface in the 1990s as backlash to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conquest. Those movements take root in the 1970s *mexicanidad* culture, which was based on an idealized reinterpretation of the past and the reinvention of pre-Hispanic traditions (De la Peña 2001:96). The neo-Mayanist<sup>18</sup> trend

<sup>18</sup> The prefix “neo” for “neo-Mayanism” is used mainly from a historical perspective, representing “a new form of Indianness” visible in Mexico since the 1990s (Molinié and Galinier 2006). It is also part of “new identity generations” brought about by the intersec-

of New Age indigenusness-seeking movements in Mexico revolves mainly around a rereading of the Mayan calendar in relation to the “2012 phenomenon.” Other characteristics include the dialectic between an eclecticism of references and a reclaiming of Mayan purity. The Maya Solar Tradition in Mexico stands at the epicentre of this emergent Mayanism. Its specificity is to adopt a spiritual vision of the “ethnic” heritage, close to the concept of D. Hervieu-Léger (1993) “the imagined lineage”. It is not strictly necessary to be “Mayan” to join the movement; A person need to feel a spiritual affinity to participate.

The *Déoceltés*’s claim to an indigenous identity is set against a backdrop of argumentative pluralism. First, it is a response to accusations of identity-usurping from anthropologists and American Indians (Vazeilles 2008) against Western neo-shamans. Second, it is a means of constructing a legitimate identity by locating European “shamanic” ancestors in the pre-historic ages and antiquity (Hamayon 2003), from a primitivist perspective (Amselle 2010), that looks for the future of humanity in a past “Golden Age.” This type of approach falls into the category of movements of tradition’s invention described by Hobsbawm (2006). Third, the choice to focus on the figure of the Celt or Druid follows the theories of folklorist authors in the context of developing national identities in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Thiesse 1999). Among those aspects needed to claim a national identity, we can mention the evidence of ancestors living on the territory since the dawn of time, folklore and heritage, and finally the notion of a collective identity. For France, the ancestors chosen were specifically Celts because they represent the very prototype of original inhabitants (Coye 1993).

Transnational movements seeking indigeneity develop within New Age as a platform of hybridizations. The literature on these topics highlights the upstream logic of the New Age appropriations: indigenous traditions are approached for

tion of local settings with global networks of the New Age (De la Torre and Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2013: 155).

their exoticism and their alternative model to the Western capitalism. The selective process is also based on specific logic: the mystical Indian – the Druid in the case of *Déoceltisme* – are valued for their ancestrality, their knowledge of medicinal plants, their “cultural purity,” and their rural lifestyle (De la Torre 2014). Excluded, on the other hand, are the elements deemed contrary to some ideal of harmony, like the sacrifice, authoritarianism or the caste system (Frigerio 2013).

### Mobility and Religious Diversity

#### *Transnational and Trans-Spiritual Circulation of Leaders*

The leaders of these two movements are “nodes actors” (*agentes nodales*) (De la Torre 2014; Capone and Mary 2012), who can be recognized by their transnational mobility and their role in forging ties. Nodes actors know how to use cultural codes and translate them into their religious register. They appropriate, reformulate and pass on traditions. They can be seen at key events, can reconstitute ties and help us understand how the network structure works (Capone 2014). Furthermore, in our case studies, they exercise dual mobility, both geographic (transnational) and spiritual.

#### *Mother Nah Kin*

Mother Nah Kin<sup>19</sup> was born in 1961 in the region of Veracruz, Mexico, where she earned her university degree in social psychology. Her spiritual journey began when she was very young, following in the footsteps of her shaman Olmec grandmother. She would have inherited her grandmother’s psi faculties (extrasensory perception, clairvoyance, precognition, mediumship). At the age of 14, Mother Nah Kin had her first contact with the New Age through initiation in the Great Universal

<sup>19</sup> Biographical data on Mother Nah Kin comes from two main sources: field interviews with her and two members of her family, who are highly ranked MST initiates; crossed with her autobiography, which is available at <http://venerablemadre-nahkin.com/bio-ext.html> (accessed February 22, 2016).

Fraternity<sup>20</sup> (Roberta<sup>21</sup>, interview, 24 April 2015, Mérida, Mexico). This Fraternity was one of the primary disseminators of New Age culture in Mexico during the 1970s (Gutiérrez Zúñiga and Medina Jesus 2012). While still young, she was initiated into the practices of yoga, meditation and vegetarianism. Within the Fraternity, she received the high rank of *Venerable Sat Arha*. Mother Nah Kin became *Venerable Mother Nah Kin*. Subsequently she trained in Metaphysics, influenced by the I AM theosophic doctrines of Guy Ballard, in the 1930s (Overton Fuller 2005).

Through this stream, she was introduced to the theory of the “Ascended Masters”, which she studied in greater depth in a “Miracle Course,” known throughout Mexico for bridging the Christian angelic world and the New Age. Over the next five years, she opened *El Árbol*, a vegetarian restaurant in Mérida. She later trained in methods of Eastern wisdom (in an interview she talks about Buddhist and Hindu circles), South American Shamanism, and Western esotericism which combines psycho-spiritual approaches, including psycho-astrology, Reiki, lithotherapy, rebirthing, neurolinguistics, shamanic journeys (power animal quests), regression to previous lives, and Osho dynamic meditation<sup>22</sup>.

At the end of the 1980s, Mother Nah Kin had her first contact with the symbolic universe of the Mayans. In 1993, she received *The Temple of the Sun: On the Sacred Mountain of Uxmal*, an esoteric and theosophical North American book that revolutionized her spiritual vision. This con-

<sup>20</sup> A French esoteric stream led by Raynaud de la Ferrière, which spread it throughout Latin America in the 1950s. As it developed, indigenous cosmovisions came to be integrated into GFU doctrines, breaking away from Eastern traditions. The GFU took on an ethnic identity and became the *Mancomunidad Iniciática India Solar*, a source of conflicts and later of scission in the movement (Gutiérrez Zúñiga and Medina Jesus 2012). For a new reference on this topic, see the H. Gooren’s Encyclopedia of Latin American Religion by Springer (2015).

<sup>21</sup> Pseudonyms such as this one are used to protect the anonymity of the participants.

<sup>22</sup> <http://venerableabuela.com/bio-ext.html> (accessed June 25, 2015).

tact marks an important change in her life, a kind of “biographic break,” a professional shift from therapists’ status in office to spiritual and charismatic leader of MST. She became aware of the solar figure *Kinich Ahau* for the first time and was said to have felt her calling. Afterwards she went to the temples of Uxmal and received visions encouraging her to reactivate the Mayan wisdom. At the time, Mother Nah Kin was already travelling significantly from country to country. From the 2000s, she became successful for her representations related to 2012, and her transnational mobility intensified, she used to visit four countries a month. She still travels frequently throughout the Americas, in Europe and Japan, where she offers her teachings on the “new paradigm” and meets with internationally acclaimed spiritual leaders, such as Emoto Masaru. Her travels and the international dimension of her Centre (staff translators, visits from Westerners) provide her a social pride. She acquires symbolic legitimacy within the “global religious system” (Beyer 2006).

#### Patrick Dacquay

Patrick Dacquay<sup>23</sup> was originally a businessman. Despite his commercial success, he chose to give it all up following the death of his son and a divorce from his first wife. This transitional period he experienced marked a true severing from his past. He set out on a spiritual quest, which led him on different paths of initiation. He has been active for 18 years in the trade guilds and freemasonry, and he travels regularly around the world to meet with spiritual guides and try out certain psychotropes<sup>24</sup>. In Ecuador he sampled *Ayahuasca* but did not retain its use in his shamanic practice. This experience, however, led him to

<sup>23</sup> Biographical data on Patrick Dacquay were collected in several ways: from interviews conducted in the field; from public speeches he made at festivals; from texts he wrote and made available on his website ([www.patrickdacquay.com](http://www.patrickdacquay.com)); and from his book *Paroles d'un grand-père chaman* (Éditions Vega, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Photographs of these journeys are available on Patrick Dacquay’s website: <http://www.patrickdacquay.com/#!enseignants-et-initiation/c24ml>, accessed 16 February 2016.

consider the possibility of contact with another world through altered states of consciousness. One of the meetings that left the deepest impression on him in North America was with Algonquin spiritual chief William Commanda<sup>25</sup>, a member of the *Circle of All Nations*<sup>26</sup> and an organizer of the gathering in Maniwaki. Commanda inspired Dacquay to found the Shamanism Festival in France and the Circle of Shamanic Wisdom<sup>27</sup> that he organizes. He has also travelled to California to follow the teachings of FSS members<sup>28</sup>, led by Michael Harner. Dacquay has become very attached to *Aigle Bleu*<sup>29</sup>, an Algonquin mixed-race shaman from Québec, who takes part in his festival every year. The two often visit each other and travel frequently together. In Mexico, Dacquay met *Acamapichtli*, a spokesperson for the *universal council* who invited him to take part in the Spiritual Planetary Summit in 2012. Since then, *Acamapichtli* regularly joins the Shamanism Festival in France. Dacquay has also travelled to Africa on several occasions. His most important visit has been with the *Gnaoua* brotherhood, whose master now travels every year to the Shamanism Festival with a delegation. Dacquay has also sampled *Vaudou* in Nossy-Bé, Madagascar, and has travelled to Kenya and Senegal to attend different ethnic rituals. He has even tried *Iboga* in Gabon with the Pygmies<sup>30</sup>. Last of all, Dacquay has connected with Asia. As an honorary member of a shamans’ association in Mongolia, he has organized several initiation journeys<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Commanda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Commanda) (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.circleofallnations.ca/http\\_\\_\\_circleofallnations\\_2014NEW\\_Welcome.html/Welcome.html](http://www.circleofallnations.ca/http___circleofallnations_2014NEW_Welcome.html/Welcome.html) (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> <http://chamanismeancestral.org/?page=cercle-desage> (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.shamanism.org> (accessed February 2016).

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.aiglebleu.net/fr/accueil> (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> This journey is described by Mélanie Navarro in her book, *Une occidentale initiée à l'iboga chez les pygmies* (Alphée, 2007). [http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/macadam\\_tribus/2008-2009/chronique.asp?idChronique=44917](http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/macadam_tribus/2008-2009/chronique.asp?idChronique=44917) (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.mongolie-voyage.org/voyage-a-la-decouverte-du-chamanisme-et-du-bouddhisme->

with the shamans *Har Sono* and *Tenger Huu*. Inspired by the ascetic *Sri Verabramindra Swami*, the master Balayogi<sup>32</sup> and the mythology of Ram<sup>33</sup>, Dacquay has travelled to India on many occasions for spiritual retreats. The country has influenced his workshops and training sessions on tantrism. This hybridization between Indian and Celtic influences follows its own natural logic since Dacquay defends the idea that the druids were similar in function and in social position to the Brahmin Indians.



Figure 1: Esoteric shop at *Casa del Sol*, April 2014, © O. Gschwend

### Equipment, Accessories and Objects of Power: Materiality in the Spiritual Quest

#### *Maya Solar Tradition*

In the 1990s, Mother Nah Kin founded the organization *Kinich Ahau* in the city of Mérida, the capital of the State of Yucatán. In 2008, she founded *Casa del Sol*, an annex on the outskirts of the city, which became a training and initiation centre for the Maya Solar Tradition. The *Casa* also offers holistic activities that are open to everyone.

The space is quite large. There are three large rooms, a reception area with an “esoteric” shop<sup>34</sup>, a large classroom, a garden for initiation rituals, a kitchen with local and imported products (organic and vegan), and a consulting room for individual therapies upstairs. Along with MST

[mongol-avec-patrick-dacquay](#) (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Poumi Lescaut, a friend of Dacquay who also takes part in the festival, wrote a book on this spiritual master: <http://www.poumi.com/ecritures-bio/publications/balayogi-lalchimie-du-silence> (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> This recurrent mythological character from neo-druidic movements serves as a link between Hinduism and Celtism because he travels between Europe and India to share his knowledge and thus gives rise to the druids and the Brahmins. The Indomania of the 18th century attained its full importance when it revived druidism (François 2012: 39-42). See Dacquay’s text on Ram: <http://www.patrickdacquay.com/#!druide-et-brahmans/c22tz> (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> With a variety of objects from the Western esoteric circuits as well as neo-*Mexicanidad* circles.

initiation activities, the *Casa* offers courses in tai chi, yoga, Osho dynamic meditation, “angel meditations”, readings of the Mayan calendar (*Tzolkin*), group therapy, women’s circles, and “Mayan kinesiology”<sup>35</sup> consultations. In the shop, alongside the five shelves of Mother Nah Kin’s publications, there are shelves filled with books on Esoterism, neo-Hinduism and New Age. They have been placed beside books on mediumship, the celestial hierarchy, new spiritualities, psycho-spiritual therapies, aromatic plants, lithotherapy, Hawaiian and Eastern wisdom, alternative therapies, reincarnation and “karmic” registers.

On sale are stones, Mayan *Tzolkin* calendars with a pendulum as a working tool, figurines of archangels and fairies, and key rings with symbols of the World Religions. Also available are the items needed for MST ceremonies: purification accessories (e.g., sprays, liquids, balms, essences), items for altar preparation, clothing, headbands, educational material (e.g., CDs, brochures, books, textbooks, goddess oracle cards), stickers and symbolic jewels, *copal* incense (resin traditionally used in Mayan ceremonies), *Casa del Sol* t-shirts, and pre-Hispanic musical instruments.

As Jean-François Mayer (1993) says in his analysis of esoteric shops in Switzerland, each of these items can function separately, but their

<sup>35</sup> Program of the centre, April 2014.



Figure 2: Key rings featuring the world religions, April 2014, © M. Farahmand

juxtaposition is not trivial. It shows the existence of a “cultic milieu” in Mexico, where groups like the MST continually draw on symbolic resources. J.F. Mayer uses this concept in reference to Colin Campbell’s (1972) work. It designates a network-enhanced setting, a kind of spiritual subculture, where “meaning seekers” circulate, together with themes, objects, images and symbols. The platform is constantly maintained as new products and new generations of actors arrive. Within this “spiritual marketplace”, believers are directed towards commercial items (Mayer 2006: 98). This subculture also encourages “syncretism” due to the quick circulation of actors through the great diversity of its movements (Mayer 1993: 15). In Mexico, the cultic milieu is similar to *neomexicanidad* with its New Age leanings.

Throughout the activities, the ceremonial clothing, objects and accessories play a central role. Some workshops are not accessible without the proper “solar Maya” adornment. Before the Level One Maya Solar Tradition training week, participants already have all the equipment required. Experienced participants wear pendants or earrings that feature the two main



Figure 3: *Ahaukine*, a new initiate, in front of the *Sign of New Times*, April 2014, © O. Gschwend

symbols of the Tradition: the *Sign of New Times* and the *Kinich Ahau*.

As an initiation costume, the “solar Mayans” generally wear white as a symbol of purity and light. The red band worn as a belt around the waist serves as protection against the encroachment of “negative entities” during meditations, ceremonies and therapeutic sessions. The orange headband helps to maintain an “awakened consciousness” in order to integrate information from Nah Kin (session on 30 April 2014, Mérida, Mexico). Initiates wear these bands in a specific way: with their hand, they form the *Sign of New Times* before putting the band on and then repeat this gesture before taking it off. Wearing the ceremonial outfit is a mark of respect for the Tradition.

Initiates carry their power stick hooked onto their belt. Regarded as a symbol of spiritual authority, the stick shows the rank of the initiate. The smallest one, bearing an amber stone at its head and the *Sign of New Times* engraved on its side, reveals the status of *Ahaukine*. Conversely, *Ahaukanes*, the great MST initiates and masters of the elements, carry more imposing rods

made from wood with a snake at the head and feathers indicating the spiritual level attained in different traditions (more feathers suggests more spiritual experience). The colours of the costumes also match the participants' different roles during the ceremonies. Those wearing red are the guardians of the element fire; those in yellow, the earth; those in black, the water; and those in white, the air. Only guardians of the elements – primarily the *Ahaukanes*, who have attained the highest ranks – can carry out initiations.

Along with the official MST outfit, initiates have their own personal accessories, some of which are made individually whereas others are acquired from other spiritual traditions. For example, pendulums are used openly in class. Stones may be worn as pendants; Lakota-type feathers are often worn on the ears. Initiates may have Huichol-type bracelets or homemade power sticks. MST leaders allow for this wide range of accessories. Between activities, participants rush to the shop to pick up new educational materials. They then line up at the reception desk to discuss contents and prices. They buy Nah Kin's latest publication, an important resource for following along in the workshop. They might also purchase a censer for purifying their home or stickers featuring the two MST symbols.

During the workshops, participants who receive a dose of "negative energy" or experience "heavy tiredness" spray their environment and immediately purify their table companion. Cards are used for visualization exercises, where participants contemplate them, breathe them in, and tilt their head to "allow in the image." The images vary. They may be geometric or archetypal female figures from different cultures (e.g., Mary Magdalene, Young Ixchel, Kali, Venus, Isis, Gaia).

The prices for certain accessories can be quite high, which led me to observe participants deliberating their purchases on the basis of appropriation, symbolic association or personalization. When the rituals were over, participants secretively murmured to themselves

about such things as performing initiations in their homes using less expensive resin rather than gold. For each event, a long table was set up for selling ceremonial wear, accessories and objects. The solar Maya adornment appears to aesthetically enhance initiates' experience. Mother Nah Kin herself considers it as a vector of day-to-day transformation, a way of reaching an altered state of consciousness and of negotiating entry into the space and time dimensions of the rite. After removing the ceremonial clothing, initiates can return to ordinary life, transfigured<sup>36</sup>.

The processes of accessories significations reveal a range of influences, which raises the question of how the movement articulates the local and the global. This articulation may be related to Mother Nah Kin's transnational journey. The MST symbols reflect the doctrinal elements, which may be qualified as heterogeneous. The *Kinich Ahau* symbol refers to the spirit of the sun that already exists in local Yucatec sources (Villar Maria 1989). The symbol is visually taken up by the Maya Solar Tradition by applying the theory of "2012." It represents the face of *Kinich Ahau*: its open eyes signify an "awakened consciousness" and its open mouth signify "solar respiration." The symbol also represents moving into a new era in the wake of the "2012".

The second symbol, the *Sign of New Times*, depicts a circular motion, facilitating the integration of harmony, peace, health, creativity, beauty and love – all qualities of the new era. In therapeutic terms, the symbol corresponds to a "Christ-like mudra," a specific body posture. The fusion of a Sanskrit term of Vedic origin with a Christian figure, here represented in the New Age sense of "Christ energy"<sup>37</sup> demonstrates the process of cultural hybridization. This is hardly surprising, given that Mother Nah Kin has been in contact with traditional Indian gurus such as Swami Tilak, the Tibetan Masters and Osho for

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mother Nah Kin, 13 May 2014, Mérida, Mexico.

<sup>37</sup> In reference to the qualities of the Christ without his religious frame and meanings.

some time. This kind of hybridization has a positive connotation and is viewed by the group as original and enriching.

#### *The Déo-Celtes*

During the Shamanism Festival and an internship in Bugarach (France), objects were used in healing ceremonies, a sweat lodge, a shamanic journey, and a forest vigil. The Shamanism Festival also featured a New Age shop, but one oriented more towards American Indian cultures. It sold jewels, pipes, drums, rattles, fabric, clothing, leather bags and dream-catchers. Other stands sold crystals, Tibetan bowls and a wide range of books on the history of indigenous peoples, spiritual leaders' writings and personal spiritual experiences' accounts. This space served as an excellent example of European neo-Shamanism's dual relationship with the New Age and American Indian cultures. As Danielle Vazeilles (2008) has noted, these references are not only the product of white people culturally usurping indigenous peoples. Some well-known indigenous and mixed-race leaders, such as Archie Fire Lane Deer and Ed Mc Gaa, came to Europe to promote and at times "sell" these cultures to Westerners.

Few scholars describe in detail the objects used by neo-shamans. They mention them in passing, as "a fashion item sold in a specialized shop" (Vazeille 2013) or "a new perverse form of colonialism" (The Elders Circle cited by Vazeilles 2008). To be sure, these shops exist and their relationship with American Indian cultures is indeed problematic. However, this does not prevent us from presenting a different kind of analysis (without, of course, negating the first), which highlights other forms of valuing.

While the contents of the shaman's set of tools may seem random, it does indeed reflect the dialectic of the group and the individual. Some objects are common to all adherents and are gradually acquired over the course of one's initiation training, often during a rite of passage. Taking a closer look at these objects may be fruitful for ethnographic analysis.

Much like freemasonry, *Déoceltisme* is structured around three initiation phases: Abred's Visible Circle (Discovery); Keugant's Invisible Circle (Initiation); and Gwenved's White Circle (Silence)<sup>38</sup>. In this way, the objects represent an individual's social evolution within the group, progress along the spiritual path (a sign of learning and revelation) as well as access to a new practice (a therapeutic practice for others, a relationship to specific entities). Each object is invested with a particular meaning, and the set of tools as a whole symbolizes each person's spiritual pathway.

Despite the discourse on "returning to Celtic origins", these objects also reveal a diversity of references and therefore reflect the phenomenon of mobility of actors, concepts and objects. Dacquay explains<sup>39</sup> that *Déoceltes* acquire at least five objects over the course of their training: a broom, a golden sickle, a drum, a rattle and a medicine stick. These objects are sometimes acquired while abroad in places that hold particular spiritual meaning. They may be given, received or, as is more often the case, made by the individual user.

One of Patrick Dacquay's brooms comes from the Ashram of his master Balayogi, where it was originally used to clean the place. A broom can be made from plants that are symbolically meaningful or with a given therapeutic property in mind. For instance, the *Déoceltes* use brooms made from fir tree branches, a plant typically used to help alleviate sore throats and respiratory difficulties. A broom is used to clean the energies of people before they take part in a ritual. I was able to observe its use during the Shamanism Festival, specifically before the sweat lodge ritual. I also saw it used while I was in Bugarach, dur-

<sup>38</sup> This structure is present in other neo-druidic movements, including with the Breton druid, Yan Sukellos (Open letter to readers of the *Atlantis*, *Atlantis: scientific and traditional archeology: Meeting with the eternal druidism: 1. The Trinitarian doctrine*, 272).

<sup>39</sup> These explanations were given at the presentation during the Shamanism Festival. Dacquay also discusses it in his book. I received other information during the internship in Bugarach.



Figure 4: Line Sturny's altar, Bugarach, July 2013, © S. Rouiller

ing a healing ritual. In this case, the brooms were short and held in one hand. While some had a wooden handle, others were simply branches tied together.

The sickle, one of the druid's essential tools in the European imagination, is given to *Déo-Celtes* about to complete their training. It is, first and foremost, an object that signifies a particular rank, but it can also be used in therapy to "sever ties with bad energies".

The drum is the ultimate symbol of shamanism in the Western imagination, as the success of many drum-making workshops would attest.

Different cultures may use different forms of the instrument, but the one used most often among the *Déo-Celtes* is similar in style to those of the Siberian, Mongolian and Russian shamans. It can be held in one hand and is struck with a stick. Every drum is adorned with things like ribbons, bells, feather, and leather. It may also be decorated with drawings or paintings (animal totems or symbols) that have particular significance for the owner. Drums are used to transport people into altered states of consciousness during sha-

manic journeys and healing rituals. For Dacquay, they symbolize the Earth due to their round shape and heart-beats because of the sound they emit. He owns several, some acquired overseas (in Mexico and Ecuador) and others made by himself or his wife using special wood imported from Africa and goatskins from Brittany.

The rattle is a medical instrument that can be made from hollow wood, a dried and hollowed fruit or vegetable, a shell, a sewn leather case filled with seeds, beads or minerals. Afterwards, it is decorated with leather straps, ribbons, feathers, beads and drawings. The rattle may, of course, be used to play music,



Figure 5: Drum and medicine stick, Bugarach, July 2013, © S. Rouiller

but the *Déo-Celtes* have adopted it in treatment rituals for "recentering the soul in the body," focusing a patient's attention on the present moment or inducing an altered state of consciousness through alternating bilateral stimulation, as with other hypnotic techniques.

The medicine stick is used on different occasions: during treatment rituals, where it serves to connect and direct cosmic energy and vortex; to protect oneself from heavy or harmful energy in certain places; or to channel energy

during a collective ritual. Each *Déo-Celtes* must make his own medicine stick. Dacquay places great importance on manual work for investing objects. He believes that shaping the material is in itself an act of refocusing, a form of meditation. This work prevents one from cheating and allows one to confront oneself. A poorly cut stick will be defective and therefore ineffective, just as a poorly made drum will not sound properly. A person must be fully invested in this creative activity and be fully aware of the impact of his or her daily gestures. Creating a good, solid medicine stick provides confidence in a person and in his or her creative abilities. In this way, the stick is invested with the positive energy that its creator has put into making it. Such energy will then be retransmitted during treatment rituals to future patients.

As for ceremonial clothing, the *Déo-Celtes* wear white outfits and white headbands with a “triban” in the centre. This symbol of three converging lines also appears in other neo-druidic movements. In Dacquay’s view, the triban symbolizes the sacred number three (three worlds, three circles, three shields of love, strength and wisdom). It is a sign of membership in a Celtic lineage and a protective seal. Its colour indicates the *Déo-Celte’s* rank: red stands for the circle Abred, green for Keugant and gold for Gwenved. The triban’s shape is reminiscent of a triangle, which symbolizes the links between microcosm and macrocosm, the telluric world and the cosmic world. By wearing the headband, a person signals his or her membership in the universal lineage of shamanism, since “all shamanic peoples wear them”. By securing it to the forehead, a person cut off mental activity and would be thus guided by intuition.

The neo-shaman’s set of tools also include items known as *objects of power*: stones, feathers, water, tobacco, medicinal herbs, images,



Figure 6: P. Dacquay and L. Sturny in Bugarach, July 2013, © S. Rouiller

jewels, bells, shells, crystals, representations of animal totems, and photographs of spiritual masters. These objects are generally collected by chance and selected for the energy they hold within. Sometimes they are given. Each one is associated with a certain kind of power that may be used therapeutically. They are seen as connected with the kingdoms of living things and the elements.

The *Déo-Celtes* consider stones to hold telluric energy that, in turn, enable them to draw in heavy and negative energy. Whether they are found in a river, on a sacred site or in a forest, the stones’ rates of vibration varies and can help to heal different diseases.

The *Déo-Celtes* believe that the kingdom of animals can pass their energy on in different ways: by appearing in a vision, a dream or during a shamanic journey; through an image or an object representing them or a part of their body (e.g., feathers, paws, tail, talons, teeth). If they find a part of an animal in nature, the *Déo-Celtes* interpret it as a sign that the animal offered itself up to help heal humans. Dacquay, for example, has an owl’s wing whose feathers, he says, allow him to work much like an acupuncturist using the energy of birds. The feathers free up blocked energy points and help restore fluidity and lightness.

All of these objects are used as mediation tools between different levels of representation within a “creative imagination” process. By way

of these symbolic meanderings, a person constructs his or her identity and achieves therapeutic goals. Focusing on these objects, first of all, takes us back to the countries and cultures from which these symbols and artefacts come and guides us along the life journey of the person who owns them. The “healer’s set of tools,” moreover, shows the symbolic recomposition of referents from different cultures – Siberia, Latin America, Europe, India – and provides some indication of how a shaman is represented.

### Comparative Analysis

#### *Dual Mobility and the Logic Behind Foraging*

Mother Nah Kin and Patrick Dacquay reveal a dual mobility that is both spiritual and physical.

1. Both leaders have circulated from one spiritual stream to another, following the same dynamic of “religious foraging” (*butinage*) that Soares (2009) describes. They have expanded their symbolic referents and contexts of practice. Their foraging is a mobile and creative way of looking after their symbolic universe and enlivening it by adding elements gathered from other universes (Soares 2009: 30). The forager circulates among religious streams multidirectionally and synchronically, over time and across space, always moving back and forth from one point to another (Soares 2009: 57).

In our case study, transnational mobility and leaders’ spiritual foraging<sup>40</sup> are interconnected. This spiritual mobility, in turn, generates cultural hybridizations that vary from one context to another. For Soares, the foraging is neither a cultural response nor a process ending in a specific symbolic system. A similar dynamic can be seen in Patrick Dacquay and Mother Nah Kin life pathways, except that they both show evidence of diachronic mobility that drove them to create complex, hybridized systems. Mother Nah Kin foraged in a linear fashion along her

pathway. Neighbourly relations were the social imperative guiding Soares’ foraging in the quarters of Joinville, Brazil. By contrast, the influence of families and couples initially transformed Mother Nah Kin’s foraging. It was because of her grandmother that she first explored Olmeca shamanism and then later through a family friend that she met her first master within the *Great Universal Fraternity*. Her daughter is the official MST heiress, whereas her niece is an initiate of MST higher rank. Mother Nah Kin travelled among the different streams of *neo-mexicanidad* with her first spouse. Today, her husband leads some MST activities. Her foraging is also guided by a personal sense of spiritual evolution. She has moved successively from stream to stream “inhaling the nectar” of each one along the way and feels that she has evolved over time. After arriving in the Yucatán and encountering the medium *Kinich Ahau*, she decided to settle there permanently, convinced that she had come to the end of her journey. With each successive spiritual contact, she has integrated a missing piece of herself. Having reached the universe of the Mayans, Mother Nah Kin feels “completely reintegrated.”

Dacquay’s travels around the world have made him more legitimate for his public, particularly when he talks about Universal Wisdom and oppressed peoples. He has drawn a lot of insight from these experiences, which he has incorporated in his own spiritual quest and in his developing practice, both from spiritual/symbolic (i.e., concepts, representations, cosmologies, pantheons) and physical/material (i.e., ritual practices, therapeutic techniques, objects) standpoints. Dacquay’s foraging has further led him to broaden his social network. He keeps in touch with many people he has met while abroad. He welcomes them to his festival or visits them from time to time. In December 2014, he opened an international *College of Shamanism*<sup>41</sup>, which counsels and informs those interested in receiv-

<sup>40</sup> Unlike E. Soares, we stipulate that it is a “spiritual,” not a “religious,” foraging for all the problems that the use of the notion “religion” raises in contexts outside of Europe.

<sup>41</sup> <http://chamanismeancestral.org/?page=accueil> (accessed February 16, 2016).

ing care or training. The college has become an authoritative body for practitioners and followers alike. Despite its claims of being part of an oppressed group, Dacquay, as leader of several international networks, has wound up once again assuming the role of company director, although money is not his primary motivation.

2. Both leaders have also expanded their travels and “initiation” meetings beyond the borders of their own country. Thanks to their networks, they have travelled extensively across continents and have come into contact with Indian traditions and South American forms of shamanism. The dynamic of their movement through glocal space extends not only from their own transnational mobility (movements for single events, pilgrimages, professional travel, migration) but also from national and international mobilizations (political, environmental and identity-related demands). Their mobility is asserted individually through symbolic reconstruction of their life course and personal transnational trajectories. At the same time it is asserted collectively through the formation of networks that provide a sense of permanence and attachment. This dual mobility has led to on-going rearrangements within their respective systems. Such hybridizations are notably reflected in the wide range of Maya Solar and *Déu-Celte* accessories available.

#### *Materialization of the Spiritual: Hybrid Objects and Transnationalization*

The two groups adhere to the logic of the marketplace through commodifying and publicizing their activities while developing their customer loyalty<sup>42</sup>. To accomplish this, they act on several levels. They create the need for initiates to educate themselves by asking them to do readings related to their internships. They require initiates to own certain objects in order to participate in

<sup>42</sup> For the discussion around consumerism and interculturalism in the historic evolution of the New Age movement, see Paul Heelas (2008). On the relations between symbolic merchandise, believer logic, and market logic, see Renée De la Torre and Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga (2005).

initiation activities, and the number of these objects continues to grow the further along initiates proceed on their spiritual journeys. The groups promote a kind of “humanitarian” consumption by selling objects specifically designed for militant association activities (e.g. environmental and indigenous rights movements). These spaces of commercial transaction are highly visible at large social events, such as festivals and conferences, but they are also accessible via the Internet. Neo-Mayan and neo-shamanic leaders have their own websites where they can sell their wares and can refer those interested to related organizations.

Apart from their market aspect, the objects play an important symbolic role. For both groups, owning or using these objects was essential to participating in the rituals, even during practice sessions and the Shamanism Festival. If participants come without the required objects, they must quickly find someone from whom to borrow them. Once the ritual is over, they are encouraged to buy or make their own. Initiates who frequent these settings understand the important role the objects play and typically find out in advance from the leader, other members or in books what supplies they will need to bring. Coming “properly equipped” demonstrates that one is prepared, ready to receive the teaching, the care, and the “energy” that comes from taking on an active role in the ritual. Moreover, it is a sign that one recognizes the legitimacy of the group and the rituals it performs. The experiential dimension is crucial in these settings: to find out whether a given practice or group is suitable for their purposes, prospective initiates must “have their own direct experience,” physically and spiritually. It is not possible to be a passive observer. Owning the basic set of equipment thus ensures the best possible experience for participants.

The two groups wear similar ceremonial clothing: a white outfit and appropriate headbands. In both cases, white is associated with the spiritual world, cosmic light and purity. The headbands

are symbolically invested in a number of similar ways:

1. Placing the band on the forehead suggests performing work “on the consciousness,” or the “third eye”. MST and *Déó-Celte* followers often talk about “chakras.” According to this system of thought, the chakra is located in the forehead and can communicate with other worlds. Wearing the headband thus represents one way of psychologically preparing oneself to enter a given state of open consciousness.
2. The headband is also invested as a social and hierarchical marker. Its colours vary depending on the rank of a given member within the group. The headband can indicate a position of novice or authority.
3. Generally speaking, wearing a ritual costume is comparable to putting on a uniform. The clothing communicates our status to others. It is a symbolic and physical way of entering a community. The two-featured groups differ in the symbols that adorn their costumes, which serve to express aspects of their local identity. The fact that the group comes together appropriately “dressed” underlines the time and sacredness of the ritual and initiates’ journey from the “profane” to the “sacred” world.

These objects are material evidences of “spiritual foraging” and the actors’ mobility. Even becoming part of a group that has well-developed initiation practices and hierarchical structures does not prevent a person from embarking at the same time on a comparable personal “quest.” This helps to explain how those movements, even if they claim to define themselves through “clan-like” or “traditional” collective approaches are no less modern as individual lies at the centre.

In our two case studies, the protagonists acquire a variety of objects coming from around the world and from different spiritual traditions. However, we note two points of divergence concerning whether objects are industrially produced or “home-made” and how the relationship to authenticity is established. For neo-Mayans,

an object made by oneself is initially perceived as “an imitation” or an inauthentic version. The material used is very important, and it is generally expensive. Alfredo, a Mayan guide from Mérida unaffiliated with the Maya Solar Tradition, explained, for example, that the best power stick would be one given by a “grandfather” during a long initiation journey. Here, making one’s own object is one way of subverting the system while still being able to participate in all regular activities without having to spend large sums of money and thus thwarting the market logic. For *Déó-Celtes*, making one’s own object is an end in itself because it is part of spiritual and therapeutic work. Authenticity does not derive from the material of which an object is made but, rather, from the intention that the object’s maker put into it or from the status of the person who previously owned it.

### Overall Conclusion

In this article we have focused on the internal diversity of two movements that have reinvented their ethnic and cultural traditions by drawing on spirituality in their process of ritual creativity. We have sought to understand this diversity as an evolving process, or a pluralization, by looking specifically at a range of objects, accessories and ritual outfits. We justified adopting a comparative perspective due to the transnational character shared by these two movements and the central importance given to material aspects. Through this approach, we observed symbolic and functional variation and similarities around ritual objects, which led us to conclude that mobility and diversity are closely intertwined. In our study, we examined mobility through the lens of geographic and inter-spiritual movement, as evidenced by leaders’ transnational journeys and the effects of this transnationalism on diversifying points of reference.

Whereas research on cultural and religious super-diversity within urban spaces has typically focused on the intersectionality of gender, migration, social class and age, our study makes an original contribution by analyzing diversity

in terms of the intersectionality between the mobility (physical and religious) and the pluralization. Religious diversity lies at the heart of power relations, which pertain to issues of social recognition and identity. By approaching diversity and pluralization in the light of materiality and mobility, we emphasize, first of all, the relationship between local and global in the two case studies. The objects illustrate both transnationalized themes of the New Age (specifically, the pervasiveness of Hindu themes, crystals, card games and ethnic jewelry) and the desire to promote an indigenous community with its particular characteristics (sticks, Celtic and Mayan symbols, drums, pre-Hispanic instruments). Secondly, materiality serves to recognize the groups' ritual legitimacy and doctrinal specificity. Third, it constitutes a social marker and underscores the power structures inside and outside the movements, thereby acting as a factor of inclusion and exclusion. Fourth, materiality, in both cases, is a way of positioning oneself within a local and global context of diversity, since it creates borders and gives rise to issues of authenticity between different groups. Fifth, the distinction between manufactured objects and "home-made" objects reveals that materiality acts as a space for negotiating power structures, a place for continually defining one's individual position within a particular religious community.

Finally, we note that this "foraging" is not random and holds meaning for the actors involved. It is tied to their journeys that at once touch upon spirit, emotions, psychology, family, identity and geography (travel, pilgrimage, migration). When we look at the photographs of neo-Mayans and Déo-Celtes at the 2012 Spiritual Planetary Summit in Mexico, we see them wearing very similar outfits. The two groups have shown consistency in their transnational, glocalised discourses and practices through their objects. Each has found its unique spiritual path and expresses it through a growing number of objects. At the same time, shared "global" objectives and ideals are expressed through "classic" symbols of the

New Age and joint participation in community events, such as the 2012 Spiritual Planetary Summit. In this way, neo-Mayans and Déo-Celtes can identify with each other as spiritual brothers and sisters. Finally, our two examples illustrate perfectly the three-phase process of delocalization, translocalization and relocalization, described by Renée De La Torre. The ceremonial objects appear like the CV or the DNA of the movements, serving as concrete testimony for the group and its leaders.

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# When Homogeneity Calls for Super-Diversity: Rome as a Religious Global City\*

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## Abstract

This article addresses the way religious diversity is 'taking place' in Rome. In particular, it brings some religious manifestations into a broader understanding of the diversification of religious spaces in the city. Instead of seeing diversity as an unintended consequence of global flows, we trace it back to a sound religious spatial identity. Ever since globalization was set in motion, Rome has functioned as an attracting field of visibility for established religions. At the same time, the city has provided a shared grammar for inflecting diversity into religious idioms. Religious super-diversity as seen in Rome is the combination of a strong local religious identity that acts as a stage where old actors hope to be invited to give new performances and the audience itself is incessantly pushed to tread the boards. The article concludes with a tentative hypothesis that super-diversity may yield to postsecular modes of social life.

**Keywords:** religion, diversity, urban space, postsecular society, globalization, sacred places

## Introduction

Within the context of renewed attention towards the 'spatialization of religion,' the study of cities has become a privileged 'detector' for understanding religious diversity in contemporary secular societies. Although Italy has been researched very little in this context, it offers a rich laboratory in which complex religious and secular processes that are currently taking place can be analyzed.

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\* We dedicate this article to the memory of our friend and colleague Massimo Rosati (1969-2014). We had the privilege of collaborating with him on a number of occasions through the activities of the *Centre for the Study and Documentation of Religions and Political Institutions in Post-Secular Society* (CSPS), the research group he established at the University of Rome Tor Vergata. In his last work, Massimo addressed the relationship between space and religion and suggested how a Durkheimian reading of the sacred 'grammar' can help to understand the specificity of sacred places, trace their difference from social

This article addresses the way religious diversity 'takes place' in Rome. Obviously embedded – not only culturally but also 'spatially' – within Catholicism, the city also hosts a heterogeneous set of non-Catholic presences and places. This heterogeneity is located at the smaller hyper-local scale of worship, but also reveals itself at a macroscopic level, in terms of macro-places of worship whose relevance and links transcend Italian boundaries; this exposed visibility calls for interpretation. Instead of considering diversity as a mere consequence of globalization and

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spaces, and identify the sociological features of *post-secular sanctuaries* (Rosati 2012 and 2015). The idea of a CSPS research project on religious places in Rome was starting to take shape when Massimo unexpectedly passed away. This article is a partial outcome of those first theoretical and explorative steps. To him we express our gratitude and endless affection. We also thank Mariachiara Giorda for providing helpful comments on earlier drafts of the manuscript.

international migrations, we suggest reading the apparently paradoxical situation in the light of the following broad hypothesis: namely, the widely recognized status of Rome as a 'religious city,' due to its extensive Catholic legacy, which promotes ongoing religious 'appropriation' of the urban space by various groups. This appropriation occurs when the two levels (hyper-local and global) overlap on the terrain where Catholicism is historically rooted in Rome (the patron saints of the districts vs. St. Peter).

On a more theoretical level, this hypothesis elaborates on the contradiction between the *interpretation* and *use* of a given message (Eco 1990) and the bi-dimensionality of cultural identity, namely external categorization and internal identification processes (Jenkins 1994). Rome as a national brand carries the general meaning of *the Catholic City*. The city brand conveyed by its banal Catholicism is spread via the standard channels of the imaginary, namely mediascapes and tourism. Yet once this robust identification – Rome is the centre of Catholic Christendom – is liberated and disseminated via worldwide communication systems (from the big media of TV broadcasts to the small media of tourists chatting to their social circles via Instagram), it is set free from authoritative interpretations to be used and given different meanings by casual or intentional audiences. Different categorizations may prevail – like the notion that Rome is a place where religion is a shared jargon for talking about reality. Instead of being interpreted as a unique expression of its local identity, Catholicism can be seen as just a token of its type, i.e. religion, which attracts religious difference as a potential stage of expression.

Of course, the intensity with which the city attracts difference does not totally correspond to that difference's capability, or will, to manifest itself. The ways that imported difference expresses itself, becomes visible or is even aware of its public role depend on a set of complex variables. The specific localization of difference may play a central role in rendering it visible: some forms of difference may publicly thrive in

a bountiful environment, while others practically suffocate in isolation. Similarly, cultural traditions and genealogies are also relevant, since some are used to shy away from visibility while others require a stage for their public performances. Another issue is institutional acceptability, according to which differences can be perceived or described as further from or closer to the extant cultural and religious environment.

There is no contradiction, in our view, between the attractiveness of Rome to difference and the hurdles that this difference often encounters when attempting to display itself, since they are quite separate processes. One is a potential ecological pull, the other a strategic path of concrete adaptation. To expand on the same metaphor, different species may be attracted to the same area, yet they adopt utterly different strategies of visibility, and, likewise, the area itself habitually expresses its own preferences and policies of relative acceptance.

Within this broader theory of attraction and acceptance, we approach our topic by recalling that the study of the urban space needs to be handled with new narratives on the relationships between religion and modernity, above and beyond the strict idea of secularization. In this article, the *postsecular* is seen as a notion that can frame religious diversity in contemporary cities and be used to examine the case of Rome as an increasingly pluralized city. We go on to present the Eternal City as a *sui generis* case where the Italian scenario can shed light on the macro-global stage of religious non-Catholic places. A heterogeneous series of meaningful and large-scale projects – from the 'old' synagogue to the Mormon temple currently under construction – are traced and finally reconnected, in the two concluding paragraphs, with a broader understanding of Rome as a 'religious global city': a city in which non-Catholic groups, far from just being pressured to conform by the Catholic model and passively adapting to it, perform their identities not only by silently insinuating them into the narrow alleys of Rome's districts but also by playing them aloud on a brightly lit global

stage. The growing relevance of religious diversity in the space of Rome potentially exposes the city to the triggering of postsecular social practices, although cultural, political and juridical constraints still seem to limit their transformative potential.

### **Framing religious diversity in the urban space**

In the new century *the city* once again becomes 'a lens for social theory' (Sassen 2010), as it was conceptualized for urban sociologists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; the conjuncture between *space* and *religion* finds a privileged context for analysis here (Harvieu-Léger 2002, Knott 2005, Knott and Vasquez 2014). Seen from this angle, urban dimension offers a more appropriate observatory than the nation-state level for capturing and showing the space, role and changes in religion in contemporary societies (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011, Becci, Burckhardt and Casanova 2013).

What contemporary cities mainly reveal, as many scholars in recent decades have helped clarify, is an increase in *religious diversity* (Beckford 2014).

International migration and globalization, which firstly provoke the de-territorialization of religious traditions, end up implying processes of re-territorialization, by which communities appropriate new urban spaces without giving up their own religious beliefs and customs. By dint of these processes, which accompany changes specific to the religiosity of 'autochthonous' populations, 'old' and 'new' religious presences populate, in ways that are both traditional and innovative, usual and unusual spaces dislocated between the *centre* and *periphery* of our metropolises, 'mega-cities' or even small towns. Concerning the 'emplacement' (Smith 1987) of religion in urban spaces, we may add that religious diversity seems to travel in two main directions. The first is the pluralization of traditional places of worship for different religions: cathedrals, churches, synagogues and mosques, which, depending on the particular case, comply to a greater or lesser extent with the canons of the respective traditions, attract smaller or larger

communities, respond to a greater or lesser extent to their religious needs, are socially/economically connected to the surrounding area to a greater or lesser extent, and so on. The second direction is a pluralization and innovation of the ways in which the *sacred place*<sup>1</sup> is conceived and used: parallel to the establishment of canonical places of worship for different traditions, a series of alternative, more flexible and even hybrid places are increasingly being used as prayer rooms (Gilliat-Ray 2005) or multi-faith places (Crompton 2013, de Velasco 2014)<sup>2</sup> located in social spaces (parks, squares, shopping malls, etc.) and institutions (prisons, hospitals, university campuses, etc.); or even part-time sanctuaries, virtual prayer rooms in cyberspace, and so on. Religious places of this kind not only express the trend of *individualizing* and *spiritualizing* beliefs and praxis, as some scholars have pointed out (Gilliat Ray 2005, Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Becci, Burchard and Giorda 2016), but also a religious 'punctuating' of social spaces by non-conventional sacred places, which are additional to, or sometimes a substitute for, traditional ones.

Such pluralization of 'spatialized' forms of religion is also reflected in the differentiated set of strategies through which religious groups relate to the urban space. This means that the city is not merely an arena traversed by struggles among communities for the distribution of the same resources. Besides strategies of appropriation, exclusion and resistance to such domination (Chidester and Linenthal 1995), we may find diverse communities taking specific paths and following different approaches across the various city zones: i.e. the mostly dominant Christian traditions negotiate spatial regimes through *place-keeping* strategies; diaspora and migrant religions adopt *place-making* strategies, while

<sup>1</sup> We agree with the broad distinction between the terms *space* and *place* that identifies the first as a basically abstract concept and the second as more specific 'practice' space, in which the sacred is localized (Giorda and Hejazi 2013).

<sup>2</sup> See the research project 'Multi-faith Spaces – Symptoms and Agents of Religious and Social Change' - 'Religion and Society' Program, 2007-2012.

new religious movements and practitioners of contemporary spirituality are *place-seekers* (Becci, Burchard and Giorda 2016).

Taken as a whole, these tendencies may legitimize the use of the concept 'religious *super-diversity*' (Vertovec 2007), which accurately highlights the multisided spatial practices of both 'old' and 'new' religions in urban life (Becci, Burchard and Giorda 2016).

We could, however, add a further consideration. Taken as a whole, all these tendencies recount a relationship between religion and modern society which can hardly be interpreted in terms of mere secularization. To put it another way, the study of religion through the observation of contemporary pluralized cities absolutely needs to be approached through the prism of the current reframing of religion in late modernity, moving away from the theories that foresaw the automatic secularization of urbanization in modern life. We see the notion of postsecular as the most fruitful narrative that has emerged as an alternative to the failures of classical theories of secularization to address the renewed role of religion in the contemporary urban and public realm (Casanova 1994, Habermas 2006, Molendijk, Beaumont and Jedan 2010, Rosati and Stoekle 2012). We will argue briefly that *if* city is the space in which religions and the sacred appear in previously unforeseen places and ways, and *if* city is therefore the space in which the borders between the religious and the secular are constantly being redefined, *then* the postsecular probably offers a useful frame.

Some scholars are skeptical about the use of the postsecular for studying the urban space (Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr and Middell 2015, Giorda 2015) and about framing religions within institutional settings (Beckford 2010, 2012). What is apparently not often clear in these criticisms is that the concept does not – or should not rigorously – mean an overcoming of secularization – or *multiple secularizations* (Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr and Middell 2015) – or even a sort of re-sacralization of the public sphere. A recent attempt to deconstruct the postsecular into its

main 'sociological conditions' (Rosati and Stoekle 2012, Rosati 2015) suggests that the following features should be present in society: 1. The role and 'voice' of religions – especially those that Jakelić called *collectivistic religions* (2010) – in social and public life not just as a residual but as a persistent and mutating element; 2. In parallel, the sacred that inhabits our time not only as an immanent, but also a transcendent and heteronomous force; 3. An overcoming of religious monopolies and a plurality of individual and collective religious beliefs and practices; 4. The secular and the religious without rigidly separated borders: constant, reciprocally induced adjustments and transformations as a result of their presence in and use of a common space (urban, political, institutional, virtual, etc.). Arising from the aforementioned factors, another key feature of a postsecular society is: 5. Secular and religious beliefs and practices interacting in a way that can sometimes move and reshape the dividing lines between them, which also gives rise to the possibility of new configurations – *interpenetrations*, in Góle's terms (2005) – of both secular and religious viewpoints and practices (see Day, Vincett and Cotter 2013). It is assumed that in situations of co-presence, such dialectic relationships are fostered by *reflexivity*, as a modern competence attributable not only to secular (Habermas 2006) but also religious forms of life (Seligman 2004). Finally, Rosati (2015) also suggests that only in the presence of these five sociological conditions does the proper normative statement of the postsecular – pluralism as an orientation towards mutual exchange or, in Habermas's well-known expression (2006), *complementary learning* – make sense. Postsecular means a change in content of a society's central value system: from a secular self-understanding, in which the secular and the religious are perceived as two antagonistic camps, to a postsecular one, in which they are part of the same field.

The features of the postsecular are mostly, but not solely, characteristic of late capitalist cities in the West. However, we refer to them as something 'in the making' and highly dependent on

context: individual cases may display a number of features, whose combined effect may trigger processes of complementary learning, or these features may be absent or ineffective. The usefulness of the notion of postsecular in social research is precisely the possibility of detecting through this lens elements and dynamics in urban life that might well be hidden to a differently oriented view (Baker and Beaumont 2011).

In this contribution we limit the analysis to a preliminary interpretation of the situation in Rome, where some of the listed features of the postsecular are displayed. In particular, the visibility of different religious groups, demands, places and strategies of territorialization, which is growing in Italian public and social spheres, is particularly expressed in Rome. As we argue in the following paragraphs, diversity in this city is represented both at hyper-local level and at a macroscopically large-scale one. As an (apparent) paradox, we emphasize that in Rome pluralization does not exist *despite* but *as a result of* the mainly Catholic legacy and the moulding effect of this specific religion on the city. Such super-diversity signals a condition that ideally enriches the city ecologies that are characterized by hybridization, change and mutual learning characteristic of a postsecular urban space. At the same time, the transformative potential deriving from 'postsecular interactions and practices' – in a word, the creation of potentially conflictual but also cooperative relationships between different religious and secular actors and groups – is constrained by a broader scenario still hesitant, from a cultural and juridical and political point of view, to fully embrace pluralism. As we stress in the next paragraph, this can be considered one of the main reasons for the difficult emergence of religious places and practices at the very local level in Rome.

In this sense, a further, more detailed stage of our research work that will be carried out in upcoming months, will require focusing on specific areas in Rome and expanding on the conditions under which conflict and struggles arise – e.g., in relation to building permits, public dis-

plays of religious symbols and rituals (Oosterbaan 2014) – or rather the possibilities for dialectic relationships and complementary learning that arise during the processes of territorialization of religions.

### **The Changing Scenario in Italy**

Although Italy is still perceived to be mainly and persistently 'Catholic,' despite secularization (Garelli 2011, Marzano 2012), the religious composition of the population has clearly been changing over the past few decades, as is also the case in other European countries. This is a result of different drivers: on the one hand, the diversification in Christian affiliations of Italians (primarily, the huge increase in Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostal congregations) and the growth of individual forms of spirituality; on the other hand, it is the outcome of the growing presence of 'other religions.' Italy's huge involvement in international migrations has led to the presence of people from almost 190 countries around the world: a 'diversity within a diversity', consisting of Muslims from different traditions; different Orthodox groups (Romanians, Ukrainians, Serbians, Moldovans, Greeks, and Russians), with their specific traditions; Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Tamils from India; different versions of Pentecostals (Africans, Latin-Americans and Chinese) and so on (Pace 2014: 94). In broad terms and in the absence of specific data which are still not systematically collected in our country, an estimated 7.6% of people living in Italy belong to religions other than Roman Catholicism, many of which practice Islam, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and a robust Protestantism (Pentecostalism and Baptism) from Asia and Africa (Pace 2013 and 2014).

Similarly, the socio-religious geography of Italy and the religious 'punctuating' of social spaces in our cities are also changing, making diversity more and more visible. However, some of this diversity still seems to be hidden from the eyes of Italians. Furthermore, we gauge a sort of 'mutual invisibility,' a relative fragmentation (each segment of religious difference knows very

little about the others) and a lack of purposeful public discourse that could bring the issue to the fore. Religious super-diversity is thus a growing and permeating phenomenon with a side still-hidden: the specific case study we will be discussing clearly exemplifies the theoretical connections between invisibility and pervasiveness. As we anticipated, the hidden side of religious super-diversity is probably related to cultural and political-institutional unpreparedness regarding recognition of pluralism. This is more than evident in the complex and ambiguous set of regulations on places of worship and the absence of an overall law of religious freedom and even specific agreements between the State and many religious communities, first and foremost of which, certainly in terms of size, are the Islamic organizations.

However, social and public awareness is only recently starting to grow with the appearance of a series of religious and social sciences studies that map the presence of places of worship across the national territory and in a number of local areas (Allievi 2010, Pace 2013, Angelucci, Bombardieri *et al.* 2014, Giorda 2015). These studies permit a gradual shift from vague estimates to a more accurate, although still far from complete, cartography.

According to the most detailed study carried out on a national level (Pace 2013), the places of worship related to the 'new presences' in Italy are mainly Islamic, Orthodox, African neo-Pentecostal and Buddhist. But 36 Sikh temples (*Gurudwara*) have also been counted. The spatial situations of these places vary to a large degree. Islamic places of worship – over 600 scattered across the national territory, mostly in urban areas in the North where the economy has attracted immigrants from Muslim-majority countries – are mostly *musallayat* organized in very precarious and inappropriate spaces. Conversely, the emplacement of Orthodox churches from 2000 onwards, appears much more stable, partly as a result of Roman-Catholic bishops facilitating the use of small formerly Catholic churches or chapels, often located in urban peripheries.

Of particular relevance is the distribution of the different denominations of Pentecostal churches, largely dominated by Ghanaian and Nigerian Pentecostals and mainly concentrated in southern Italy. Finally, Sikh organizations are undergoing a gradual process of institutionalization involving apparently smooth negotiations with local authorities leading to the appropriation of spaces such as former industrial sheds for worship.

This multitude of different religious and differently sacralized places throughout the national territory is rapidly changing and extremely difficult to map for social research (Pace 2013:11).

### The 'Eternal City' as a *sui generis* case

Against the backdrop of the scenario just discussed, we argue that Rome constitutes a *sui generis* case. In the world capital of Catholicism, in a country where the political and religious spheres have always overlapped to a certain extent, Rome has rapidly become religiously superdiverse at a microscopic, but also macroscopic level.

It is certainly true for Rome, as for other European and Italian urban areas, that the process of re-territorialization of religions, intended as a necessary consequence of the de-territorialization caused by globalization and international migrations, has resolved itself into a dislocation of different communities at a hyper-local scale. Rome is near the top of the list of cities most concerned by migrations, both in terms of stable communities and people in transit, and it is clearly an excellent social laboratory, in which not only cultural but also urban-spatial features are constantly being redefined. As a number of studies and ethnographies covering the city as a whole and certain districts in particular have shown in the past few years (Macioti 2013)<sup>3</sup>, the city and

<sup>3</sup> Other precious sources of data on religious diversity and places in Rome include various yearly reports, *Immigrati a Roma e Provincia. Luoghi di incontro e di preghiera*, edited by the 'Caritas Diocesana di Roma' and 'Migrantes Roma e Lazio' associations; the publication from the *Osservatorio Romano sulle Migrazioni* by the IDOS research centre, and the *Luoghi comuni*,

its province are dotted with a multitude of small religious places. These places may be Catholic, Islamic, Orthodox, Protestant or Buddhist, and are often side by side and embedded within highly multicultural zones. The specific history of urban development – i.e., the chaotic expansion of the city limits with no regulations other than those imposed by housing needs and economic exploitation of land (Cellamare 2014) – has not yet allowed for the insurgence of spatial sectarianism or other clear-cut territorial divisions. Even though in recent years a slow process of ethnic territorialization has gained relative momentum, so far this only shows as an extremely fragmented patchwork on the map and in no way matches the level of complexity and refinement of the now highly specialized ethnic division of labour. As a consequence, religious difference is scattered across the map without any apparent pattern and we are forced to include this evident lack of design in our representation of the situation that focuses on small case studies.

As we mentioned, within the tightness of the urban structure at this hyper-local level, the invisibility of non-Catholic religious places is certainly related, as it is for the country as a whole, to the legal and political governance of religious diversity and the constraints imposed on religious communities in terms of manifesting their presence through architectures that are ‘coherent’ with their traditions and conceptions of the sacred place (Pace 2013: 245).

However, Rome’s original role also involves representing religious diversity on a macroscopically large scale. With its two ‘record places of worship’ – the largest mosque in the West and the largest Buddhist temple in Europe – and a number of other relevant old and new religious establishments, Rome constitutes a sort of ‘brightly lit religious stage’ on which different traditions and organizations play their institutionalized and international role.

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*luoghi in comune* report documenting the research project carried out by the ‘Centro Astalli’ association in 2015.

### **From the Synagogue to the Mormon Temple: Old and New Macro-Religious Places in Rome**

It is a little-known fact that Rome hosts a third Jewish tradition alongside the much better known Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions, namely the Roman tradition, which has its own rites and local variants. The very existence of this tradition shows the long historical continuity of the Jewish presence in Rome – there is even a saying to the effect that if you are looking for Romans who can trace their ancestry back seven generations, you’ll find them in the ghetto. Exponential urban growth<sup>4</sup> has been multiplying non-Roman strands of the city since the 1870s. This demographic explosion has made Roman-ness an extremely scarce resource, bringing about the moral irony that – for historical, ideological and political reasons barely discernible in the original meaning of the word ‘ghetto’ – it is best preserved by a racialized religious minority. The last preserve of genuine local identity, Roman Jews embody the paradox of representing Otherness in the name of Self: while Rome stereotypically embodies a uniform and potentially universal (‘Catholic’) Christianity, its cultural identity and specificity seem to be preserved at its best by a population that, from the 15th century if not before, was systematically targeted as a moral culprit and a literal scapegoat.

Jews in Rome can boast a 2000-year-old presence (Cappelletti 2006) and that alone grants the city a sort of splendour by proxy and, conversely, a very specific sense of locality to Roman Jews, steeped, willingly or not, in the archaeological grandeur of Rome. In a postsecular exercise of ‘cultural intimacy’ (Herzfeld 1997) their existence can be publicly derided and disdained (anti-Semitism is still very much alive in Rome) and simultaneously intimately recognised and praised as the best evidence of true local identity. While the rest of the city seems to be falling apart under the pressure of global economic forces and gentrification (Herzfeld 2009), the Jewish ‘ghetto’ –

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<sup>4</sup> A population of 200,000 at the time of Italian unification (1871) had already increased to one million sixty years later, which almost doubled by 1961.

although entirely demolished at the time of the Italian emancipation (Scott Lerner 2002) – still represents a bastion of Roman-ness. This fact attests the existence and relevance of a non-Catholic foundation of Roman identity.

In other cases, the intertwining of religious and civic identity tended to be imposed on the Catholic Church by the religious minority rather than the other way round, expressing once again the strong attractiveness of the Catholic mainstream, which, however, lacks the power to homogenise. Until 1870, when Rome was first ruled by a religious authority, reformed Christian churches were not allowed to officiate in specialised religious buildings (i.e. ‘churches’ and ‘temples’) within the Aurelian walls. This restriction was subsequently extended to the city limits and then to the border with the Ager Romanus wilderness. Once papal Rome fell into the hands of the Italian Army and became Italian, the new constitution allowed freedom of worship on national territory, including Rome. Less than two weeks after this was sanctioned, Episcopalians in Rome resolved to ask for funds to build a church ‘within the walls’<sup>5</sup>. Two years later, they were able to purchase land on the newly planned, then incomplete, via Nazionale. In November 1872, the ground was broken for the foundations of the new church, to be dedicated to Saint Paul, ‘Apostle of the Gentiles.’ Since Rome already had a basilica called San Paolo outside the walls, the new church was spontaneously, yet symbolically no less relevant and confrontational, named St. Paul’s Within the Walls. St. Peter and St. Paul, who had always represented two rather distant conceptions of Christianity that eventually came to epitomise Catholic and Protestant views respectively, were now sharing the same place, the city of Rome. The pattern seems clear: the presence and public manifestation of religious diversity is triggered by the image of compact homogeneity the city is keen to present to the unaware visitor. Far from levelling out alternate religious beliefs and practises, a strong unified political centrality

organised around a single belief attracts diversity as a field of potential religious wealth.

The process we are attempting to highlight has a long history and can be traced back to at least the Middle Ages. However, it became visible in all its dimensions in the early 1980s with the arrival of non-Judeo-Christian and non-European cultural traditions of global migrations from the post-colonial world.

The biggest mosque in Western Europe is a prominent sign of this social transformation in Rome. It is located in the northern sector of the city, and its construction exposes the conjunction of economic, political and entirely symbolic drivers of social life.

In the early 1970s, Italy was still a country of emigrants (positive net migration was reached in the mid-1970s) and there were few Muslims in Rome or Italy as a whole, with the exception of the staff in the embassies and consulates of Muslim countries and a few scattered historical communities in Sicily. One cannot help but wonder exactly why “the Islamic Cultural Centre and the ambassadors of all the Muslim countries assigned to Italy and the Vatican” (Salama 2001: 3) informally requested the Italian President to give them a place on which to build a mosque in Rome. Nor is it self-evident from purely demographic data why the then King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, in the same period, expressed his desire to make a generous contribution towards the building of a new place for Muslims to pray in Rome. Understanding how this external desire of a tiny presence led to the construction of the huge Roman Mosque and Islamic Centre is a complex matter and involves untangling a particularly Roman strand of local political life.

The growing economic and political relevance of Muslim countries from the 1970s onwards brought about a newly constructed representation of Islam as a sign of difference from ‘the West’. The Muslim faith was seeking renewed visibility, and ended up becoming the pivotal element of a multiplied, multifarious notion of modernity where religion acquired an utterly different meaning from that of standard modernity

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.stpaulsrome.it/visit-us/history/> (Accessed 2 March 2016).

theories (Hefner 1998). While this global flow of Islamic revival was taking shape across the world, Rome was attempting a new approach to religion in the public sphere, via the transformation of local politics.

In 1975 the famous art historian Carlo Giulio Argan was elected to the city council in the lists of the Communist Party and appointed Mayor of Rome. This was a significant transformation for a city where the secular authorities had always paid formal respect to the Vatican with a long list of Christian Democrat mayors since 1946. Shortly after the new start heralded by his appointment, Argan made the 'post-secular move' of fostering a brand new form of dialogue with religion. Instead of taking the modern layman's approach of disregarding the role of Catholic power as a naturally declining relic from the past that was yielding to the secular, Argan opened the door to dialogue with religious difference, donating 30,000 m<sup>2</sup> of land to the Muslims in Rome for building a mosque. An international contest was announced for the following year and the construction project was launched. Notwithstanding major difficulties, delays and the opposition of Italian residents in Rome, the premises were inaugurated in 1995 and now house an important library of Islamic books, a conference hall and a stunning mosque that opens its doors to a truly international Muslim community for meetings and prayers every Friday.

The point we are seeking to make here is quite simple but nevertheless central to any theory of religious diversity: Rome would not host the biggest mosque in Western Europe were it not for the moral and spiritual dimensions of St. Peter's Square. Nor would it have St. Paul's *within* the Walls without St. Paul's *outside*, and the city's strong identity and cultural ethos would be less clear without the Jewish bastion of Roman purity, however paradoxical that might seem. A pure image of uniform belonging calls for religious diversity, and once globalization sets in motion religions as ideoscapes (Appadurai 1996), i.e., ideological frameworks necessary to the

cultural maintenance of ethnoscaapes, the push and pull of migration creates the conditions for a highly likely confrontation with religious diversity. 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do' should be read differently from its usual interpretation. The saying does not necessarily imply social pressure to conform or a passive adaptation to the law of the land. Rather, it could be read as 'when confronted with a local context, learn local forms of communication and adapt to them.' Since Rome is commonly seen as a religious centre, once diversity enters, it starts communicating *sub specie religionis*, namely expressing itself according to a religious language, whatever that may be. Conversely, for those seeking to emphasize their religious specificity, there could be no better stage than Rome, where every religious detail is highlighted by the *genius loci*. There is positive feedback here on two levels: Rome tends to ask difference for a translation into a religious jargon in order to make this difference understandable to the local inflection; and the city attracts religious difference like a magnet in its quest for visibility and recognition. We argue that this speaks volumes about why there are other 'record-breaking' religious premises in Rome, such as the Buddhist Temple, or the Mormon Temple currently under construction.

The first, *Hua Yi Si*, run by the eponymous association in collaboration with the 'Unione Buddhista Italiana' (UBI), is the biggest Chinese Zen Temple in Europe and opened a year after an agreement was signed in 2013 between the UBI and the Italian State. It was built with funds donated by the Chinese population in Italy and Taiwan. It is located in the eastern suburbs of the city, in the Chinese community's wholesale business district, which moved to the area in 2000. The pagoda-style temple stands out among the warehouses and containers. Initially designed as a branch of another smaller temple in the Esquilino district, *Hua Yi Si* has become more important due to its size and value as perceived by the community. It particularly represents immi-

grants' communities – its inauguration in Rome was attended by Chinese communities from cities such as Naples, Pisa, Brescia – while its bonds with Italian Buddhist communities are quite weak (Scialdone 2013).

If we now consider the Mormon Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, we again witness an extraordinary process of emplacement by a non-Catholic religious group in a mainly Catholic city. The Temple, which will be completed in late 2017 (although no official opening dates have been announced), will be the twelfth temple of its kind in Europe and the first in Italy as a further step in the international expansion of one of the most opulent religious organisations in the world. According to the presentation given by the community, the temple is a grandiose religious, cultural and architectural project, designed to measure 'up to' the Eternal City. The vast construction site stands on an elevated 15-acre site in northeast Rome, and will become a magnificent temple with a centerpiece consisting of a complex of buildings with a meeting house, a visitor center with exhibitions about the Mormons, a family history library providing facilities and equipment for genealogical research<sup>6</sup>, and an accommodation centre. For the Mormons, as for the Buddhists, the process of seeking a concordat with the Italian State, which occurred in parallel with the rapid growth of the Mormon Church in Italy (around 30,000 members, with over 2,000 in Rome alone)<sup>7</sup>, was relatively quick and was finalized by 2012. The relative rapidity of this legal recognition, compared to other religious groups that have been present for much longer in Italy, indicates the remarkable efficiency of this community, supported by its close bonds with the United States, a cultural context which was (is) – if not fully hostile – rife with prejudice toward the Mormons (Naso 2013).

<sup>6</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints practices 'Baptism for the Dead' which requires genealogical research for the 'salvation of ancestors' souls'.

<sup>7</sup> See the presences counted by the CESNUR research group ([www.cesnur.com](http://www.cesnur.com)).

The five examples we have discussed so far, although they are different, nonetheless share a common generative matrix, namely the relation between urban space, religious diversity and identity processes. Were there a rule, it would probably read: no matter what your historical or geographical distance from Rome, once you settle in Rome you should establish your own architectural expression of your religious specificity. When in Rome, build as the Romans do; in other words, use the language of public building design to display your specific identity. In this way, the emancipated Jews accordingly accepted the total destruction of the ghetto, which was replaced with a grandiose synagogue with unusual 'Oriental' décor in one of the city's districts; the Episcopalians wanted to have their non-Catholic church as close as possible to the city center; the Muslims created a place far too big for their numbers; the Chinese de-ethnicized and re-spiritualized their presence in Rome, and the Mormons are still attempting to avoid local prejudice by erecting their magnificent temple.

There are, of course, differences among these stances and they most likely attest the inner heterogeneity of spatial strategies within the analytical category of *place making* (Becci, Burchard and Giorda 2016). The Jews and the Chinese present a statement of their religious identity against the background of what could otherwise be perceived as an ethnic or even a racial character. The Muslims and the Mormons wield their grandiloquent architectures as guarantors of their religious relevance, while the Episcopalians are more interested in promoting a defiant image of non-submissive Christians. They all seem to have "expressed their inner identity" by embedding it in the ethos of their places: The Jews have accepted modernity, the Episcopalians have once again denied Papal authority, the Muslims have humbly raised their heads, the Chinese have superseded materialism and the Mormons continue wearing their usual ties and badges.

Difference (old and new, social or racial, consolidated or fragile) in Rome expresses itself in a religious form through the identification of spe-

cific places that entail dialogue or confrontation with 'traditional' (namely, Catholic) places of religiosity.

### **Rome and Diversity: The Local and the Global**

We have seen how the homogenous image of Rome attracts self-aware religious diversity like a brightly lit stage, inciting those who come for other reasons to express themselves in a religious jargon. As we approach the conclusion, we need to explain how Catholicism has worked in a double sense, both as a producer of locality and as a public projector of its Roman image on the transnational stage, in order to understand how it intensifies both the local and the global dimensions of religious diversity.

In the last fifty years, as a participant in the mediatization of social life, Rome has emphatically offered itself as a perfect representative of 'urban religiosity,' and a 'religious brand' to the world (Usunier and Stolz 2014). At the same time, locals and newcomers alike must translate their cultural diversity into a religious discourse, thus transforming foreigners into residents at the very local level of literally parochial identity. In a nutshell, while a pious Muslim (or Orthodox Christian, or Buddhist, or other) comes to Rome because s/he recognizes the Eternal City as a successful brand of global religiosity, s/he is of course aware of that quality before coming, and s/he will retain this idea, which will become heightened in his/her further movements; a non-pious Muslim (or other) may re-discover the faith of his/her ancestors when confronted with the intrusive religious discourse that permeates Rome at a very local dimension, and relate that reborn religious identity to ongoing local practices.

From a socio-anthropological point of view, we note first of all the apparently flamboyant diversity of popular Catholicism practiced by ordinary Italians, in which Rome creates various and well delimited senses of locality and contributes to the emergence of an overall urban dimension in the form of a patchwork of popular pieties. Together they then flow into a 'subter-

anean river' of diffuse (Cipriani 1988) or implicit (Nesti 1994) religiosity, while keeping their specificity and respective distance. Even if they do not attend church, locals tend to participate in parish activities like processions and patron saints' festivals and, more importantly, they participate in 'their own' patron saint's festivals, and not others. This is related to the fragmentation of the urban fabric, which conjures up the image of many pockets of Roman-ness half-heartedly fighting one another. Like all village processions in the Catholic world, each parish procession winds its way around its borders and delimits the participants' sense of belonging. In the summer in particular (although there are also processions in winter), different parts of the city, from the center to the periphery, are decorated for the 'Feast of the Saint.' A few roads are closed to traffic and stands are installed for the fair, while the committee prepares the inevitable lottery and lucky dip, enlists the brass band to lead the procession and organizes the fireworks. From *Madonna dei Monti* to the *Immacolata* of San Lorenzo, to the lesser-known parishes outside the walls, there are dozens of processions in Rome, all performing their role of reinforcing the territorial boundaries of the parish – as the notion of 'parochial package' indicates (Nelson and Gorsky 2014). The pervasive presence of small urban shrines, tiny chapels and kiosks fortifies this foundational role of religion at a local level, but in Rome it takes a particular twist with the inclusion of a pilgrimage. While processions confirm the participants' territorial ownership, pilgrimages place the pilgrims outside their known world and challenge them to reach to the sacred place by crossing the unknown. In this respect, pilgrimage is structurally linked to tourism (Badone and Roseman 2004) and migration because, out of necessity, it offers the opportunity of inclusion to the stranger. The pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Divino Amore (Divine Love) is a good example of the way pilgrimages can be incorporated into the city structure as well as generate a sense of locality. The story of this pilgrimage recounts that, in 1740, a traveler got lost on his way to St. Peter's

Church in Rome and was attacked by a pack of stray dogs in the wilderness. In great distress, he saw an icon of the Holy Virgin and cried out for help to the Mother of God. The dogs calmed down and the man was rescued by some shepherds who gave him directions to Rome. The story of the miracle quickly spread, and a sanctuary was built on the site of the icon, becoming a devotional pilgrimage destination. During the Second World War the Pope consecrated the city of Rome to the Virgin of the Sanctuary of Divine Love as protection against the bombardments (Canta 2004: 198). Once the war was over, the Romans paid their debt to the Virgin and began building a new sanctuary, which was inaugurated by John Paul II in 1999.

The key point we want to make is this: what was originally a pilgrimage that brought Romans 'fuori porta' (outside the walls), became, with urban expansion, a movement of and within the city itself, transforming the pilgrimage into a meta-procession that established the overarching city limits. Instead of setting Romans in motion, the Divino Amore pilgrimage produced Roman citizenship, expanding the geographical and social dimensions of belonging. What used to be a journey to the sacred for Roman popular piety and the lower classes, steadily turned into a rite of passage towards a fully-fledged Roman identity for the multitudes of immigrants from central and southern Italy that were striving to find their place in the metropolis in the second half of the 20th century. Just as Romans went to Divino Amore (when it still was a pilgrimage crossing the unknown to the sacred), immigrants from southern Italy – who came from villages where the sense of participating in the patron saint's procession was strong – became Romans by participating in the Divino Amore meta-procession. This discourse of belonging through a local rhetoric of piety has been employed by foreigners as well, as is shown by the many foreigners from Catholic, Christian Orthodox and even Muslim backgrounds who go to Divino Amore (Canta 2004: 123-134). Visual evidence of this can be seen in the profusion of votive offerings

(*ex-voto*), notes jotted in many scripts and languages and left by non-Roman, non-Italian citizens on the sanctuary walls, as well as around the city. *Ex-voto* are very important in popular Catholicism because they connect people to a saint and to a specific place through the saint's image. There are many small shrines in Rome (at least 23, according to our investigation) with replicas of the Divino Amore. These shrines are the object of an intense movement of people from all over the world that engenders a sense of locality, i.e., it enables those who participate in this aspect of popular piety to feel they 'own' the city.

However, this is only half the story. While the Catholic Church has become a source of localization by offering a discourse of piety in which religious difference has been able to carve up its role and space in the city, it has also been able to exploit its universal role to propose a truly global dimension of its image by accepting and taking its stereotypical image as the heart of Christendom seriously. The principal advocate of this globalized approach to the Catholic religion was John Paul II, the Polish Pope who revolutionized the relationship between Catholicism and the media (Mazza 2006). He was fully aware that the media not only represented social reality but also worked to create it (Fazio 1997), and from the outset of his papacy, he travelled the world, establishing a global Pope-scape that made him one of the most influential political leaders of the 20th century by intersecting the mythical and mystical dimensions of the papacy (Melady 1999). He organized media events like the World Youth Days, which have had a lasting effect on the overall communication system of Catholicism and other religions. For our purposes, suffice to say that his papacy signaled the entry of Catholicism into the global mediascape, a growing intersection of images and words that circulate across the globe and arrive in specific territories to be read according to local knowledge. This is the opposite movement to the one described in the Divino Amore procession, namely an explosion of local identity onto the

global scene. The 'Roman means of religious production' became morally available to the rest of the world, which has reacted by refracting the model into its multifarious local forms. Once again, though, diversity takes off and is enhanced by the compactness of the model to which it responds.

### **Conclusion: Rome as a Religious Global City**

We maintain that super-diversity is developing on a global scale by means of the same two-fold path (hyper-local and global) that we have described for the Catholic tradition in the urban space of Rome. More generally, the more a place has a recognizable religious dimension, the more it may become a producer, a place of exchange and consumer of religious diversity. The widely recognized status of Rome as a 'religious city' due to its historical conjunction with the Catholic Church is precisely what appears to contribute to the ongoing and growing macro-appropriation of the urban space by diverse religious groups.

We have striven to provide evidence that this paradox is only apparent. A handy way to clarify the point one last time is by using the theory of the *global city* formulated in the 1980s. According to this theoretical perspective on the economic process of globalization in an urban context, the headquarters of big transnational corporations began to concentrate in post-industrial cities such as London, New York, San Francisco and Tokyo at a time when the availability of basic service infrastructures for banking, accounting and legal support transformed these cities into global attractors (Cohen 1981, Friedmann and Wolf 1982, Sassen 1991). Whatever their business, if firms wanted to 'go global,' they had to rely on complex service networks, only available and fully efficient in very few 'global cities.' This made those spaces even more 'global' in a snowball effect where an initial nucleus of services catered to the needs of the precursors while simultaneously attracting new competitors. Conversely, corporate groups historically present in the global cities tended to adapt to the new economic environment by converting their core

business into the global form for which the particular city had developed a specific expertise. In our hypothesis, the increase in religious diversity in Rome works on a similar double development path. The strong social representation of Rome as a religiously marked area attracts assorted self-aware religious presences at the same time as pushing other forms of diversity to express themselves in a religious configuration: attracted religious diversity plus diversity uttered in a religious inflection equals religious super-diversity.

Looking back at what we have collected in the form of stories and narratives of the places of worship we have discussed, there seems to be a persistent coherence between these – albeit global – spatial projects with the inner grammars of their specific religious traditions and cultures. As far as developing research allows us to generalize, we would not refer to this as a standardization, or in Roy's terms 'formatting' (Roy 2010: 187-91), effect of globalization on religions, if the notion entails a disentanglement of religions from their local frameworks to circulate more freely worldwide and intersect with other 'floating cultural markers'. Nor does it seem possible to claim that the Catholic model has been working as a pressurizing element, inducing 'other religions' to somehow reproduce this model, e.g. in the design of architectures, spatial organization of the sacred or chaplaincy services and so on. However, in cases when this pressure is applied – we guess more at the hyper-local than the macroscopic level – it is more likely the lack of resources and unequal distribution of power that force the 'less equipped' into certain social, cultural and spatial constraints.

Our reconstruction also moves away from conservative theses that claim the Christian-Catholic tradition and *civitas* are the 'core' of religiosity, the guardian of sacredness *per se* and the necessary controller of the 'traffic' of pluralism (Pabst and Milbank 2012). Instead of being a center around which religious diversity revolves for good and for bad, Catholicism in Rome seems to work more as a glittering stage, enticing old players that are still seeking fame and fortune and

even attracting those who had never thought of treading the boards before.

The global city effect does not resolve itself into absorbing diversity into a monolithic model. On the contrary, only a few cities have developed into distinct global cities and have allowed, if not facilitated, a tremendous growth of difference within their confines. We should not forget that both the global city standard theory (Sassen 1991) and the super-diversity theory (Vertovec 2007) were elaborated with a central model based on a very restricted set of cities, one or two in particular, namely London and New York. Keeping this paradigm in mind, we are now able to accept once and for all that economic globalization does not always mean cultural homogenization, and quite often, it means the opposite. If we take religions as a specific case of cultural difference, there is no apparent contradiction in combining the moulding effect of one specific religion for a city (Catholicism for Rome) with the burgeoning of religious diversity in the same place.

Finally, super-diversity in Rome, from a spatial point of view, refers to an articulated and complex stratification and partial overlapping of layers from hyper-local to global. If super-diversity were able to open up new opportunities for multifaceted identities to meet and exchange, as we hypothesize, this condition potentially seems to configure Rome as an overexposed space for post-secularism. The postsecular condition that this article explores involves a complex interaction of communicative spheres that may be synthetically represented as two spaces: the first space is composed of secularism and religiosity, while the second space involves different religions. In these two spaces, actors confront, debate and communicate in the public sphere. The fact that religious communities and social places both strive to keep their own identities alive and well – locating them, of course, in the Italian cultural, social and geographical context – guarantees the common will to make that space of diversity survive in Rome, while possibly triggering virtuous – and not necessarily hostile – relationships and mutual reconfiguration between the secular and

the variously religious and spiritual. According to our data and analysis, Rome is definitely a clear case of religious super-diversity. To what extent that diversity is a precursor of postsecular social life in terms of values and deeds is something that remains to be further explored in future research.

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