MIGRANT INDIVIDUALS IN THE LIGHT OF RELIGION AND GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract: We all live, move, work and develop our identities and attachments in a globalized world. But living in this globalized world also means a kind of uncertainty, because we all need to adapt not to our local culture, religion, and traditions, but also to the global society and environment. How can the individuals, mainly the migrant individuals maintain a stable identity in this context? How can religion be a certain steady point in the context of globalization? Which are the links between globalization, migration, religion and the individuals? In my article I try to answer these key-questions, in order to place the individuals in this context in a further research. **

Keywords: Globalization, migration, religion, individuals, identity.

OUTLINE OF ARTICLE
Globalization and religion
Migration and religion
Migration and multiculturalism

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Globalization and religion

Living in a multicultural and globalized world does not only mean the experience of the process of international interchanging of products, ideas and cultures inter alia, but it also has effects on the individuals, on the migration processes and even on religions. While the Western more individualistic societies experience a slow decline of religious attitude and affinity, the migrants coming from other societies bring with them their kind of religion, creating their own Christian or non-Christian communities, and thus experiencing a more spiritual religious life than the receptive country's citizens.

In the last two decades the attention of the scholars incrementally turned toward the relation between religion and identity. The relationship between ethnicity and religion has also become a popular topic of the social, religious, and anthropological sciences. The reason of this emphasized attention given to these topics can be grasped in the attention ascribed to the investigations of migration as one of the most salient products or results of globalization.

Globalization and migration are the most dynamic socio-economic and also socio-political phenomena of nowadays.[1] Albeit the concept of globalization appeared already at the very beginning of the second half of the 20th century in an American-English dictionary, it became an ubiquitous key concept of the different disciplines in the last two-three decades. The disciplines which use globalization more frequently are: economics, policy, geography, sociology, philosophy, anthropology and theology as well.[2] According to this,

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** Article written in 2015, part of her master thesis at the PThU Groningen, The Netherlands.

[1] Nagy, Dorottya. *Migration and Theology: The Case of Chinese Christian Communities in Hungary and Romania in the Globalization Context*, Utrecht University, 2008, p. 17.

[2] Idem, p. 19.

every discipline has its own perspective and definition of the globalization, except for theology, which in many cases relies on the different other discipline's definitions of the globalization.[3]

In this article I will not try to provide an adequate theological definition of globalization. Instead I will reflect on those aspects of the process of globalization which can help us understand and interpret the links between migration and religion, more exactly how migration as the product of globalization can be defined in theological terms and what kinds of effects it has on identity formation through religion. To get an insight in this relation I have chosen as a departing point the definition of the Dutch psychologist Hubert J. M. Hermans.

Despite the fact that Hermans approaches the definition of globalization from a psychological perspective, I think that it would be an adequate starting point to establish the connection between religion and globalization. Hermans discusses globalization as the framework for the understanding of the self and identity formation of the contemporary humans, who according to Hermans experience a constant feeling of uncertainty because of living in a global world, where people need to adapt not only to their local culture but to their global society and environment as well.[4]

Hermans defines globalization as the process of 'demographic, economic, ecological, political and military interconnections on a global scale' where the 'intensive communication between diasporas and homelands illustrates that never in the history of humankind the global connections had such a broad reach and deep impact on the selves and identities of an increasing number of people.'[5] What kind of impact can the phenomena of globalization have on the identity formation of individuals? Hermans argues that on one hand globalization opens humans' horizons by the possibilities of international contacts and economical, informational and educational cooperation between the countries and cultures. But on the other hand, globalization also closes the selves of people as a product of a counter-reaction to the globalization perceived as a threat by the experience of the migration, and evidenced by the constant meeting, and for example the adaptation of new religious and cultural rituals.[6]

In Hermans' interpretation of globalization the individual is located in a central position. It is people who create the phenomena of globalization, and they are who experience both the positive as well as the negative sides of it, reacting or counter-reacting to this process. Religion also gets an important part in the understanding of globalization and the effects of it, because it is influenced by the global activities, or is used as a defensive tool against the negative effects of globalization.

I consider that for the approach on globalization from a theological point of view humans are the key element, even if in many cases the different academic and non-academic interpretations of globalization skip the human element, arguing that globalization is only a set of processes and phenomena.[7] But the theological understanding of globalization cannot ignore that this phenomena of global sharing of values, ideas, and goods is produced by humans, who are created in the image of God and who are living in the result of their products, so in a globalized world. So I accept that globalization in theological perspectives firstly involves the human as who produces, lives and experiences the phenomena. But what other approaches exist for the theological interpretation of globalization?

Henceforward I will present some theological approaches with regard to the phenomena of globalization in order to create the framework for the process of migration as a theological process. Furthermore I shall create a framework in which religion plays an important role in the lives of the contemporary migrant individual's identity maintenance, recreation and formation. Because theological works on globalization, as I mentioned above, often rely on other disciplines' definition firstly I would like to get a brief insight into historical, political-economic and also socio-anthropological perspectives as which contribute to the understanding of globalization in theological terms.

In a historical perspective globalization cannot be considered as a new phenomenon which has appeared in the last five decades. Instead I can speak about globalization from the first appearance of humans on Earth, who already contributed to globalization through their constant migration, and thus sharing goods, ideas, cultures, and religions. This means that the historical understanding of globalization is nothing more than a set of human activities that happened through the encounters among people living on different geographical territories.[8]

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[3] Idem, p. 20.
[4] Hermans, Hubert J.M., and AgnieszkaHermans-Konopka.*The Dialogical Self: Positioning and Counter-positioning in a Globalizing World.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010. p. 27.
[5] Idem, p. 21.
[6]Idem. pp. 21-22.
[7] Nagy, p. 20.
[8] Idem, p. 23.

The political-economic perspective is the most well-known understanding of globalization nowadays in non-academic circles. This implies the flows of trade, capital, and people. So this perspective concentrates on the contemporary political and economical dynamics in the world.[9]

Finally I consider that the socio-anthropologist approach is the one that stands the closest to the theological perspectives, because its attention is turned toward the cultures, including religious and ethnic cultures as well. In this sense, scholars of social and anthropological disciplines make sense of the phenomena of globalization by investigating not only the dynamics of palpable goods, but cultures, which are is constant change due to the dynamic of migration of people.[10]

Adverting to the theological perspective of globalization, firstly I need to claim that mostly the Christian Ethics and Systematic Theology are those which deal with the undeniable presence and effects of globalization on the field of theology. These approaches mainly focus on social justice, power differentiations, ecology and gender within the frame of globalization.[11]Due to the fact that many of these perspectives are common in the attempt to conceptualize globalization from the point of view of human beings, I will discuss more in detail Robert Schreiter's theory about globalization which stands close to the abovementioned psychological perspective of Hermans.

Robert Schreiter uses a socio-anthropological approach in order to create a theological understanding of globalization. In his theological-missiological interpretation of globalization Schreiter denies the historical perspective of globalization and conceptualizes globalization as mainly the product of the second half of the 20th century, and in which theology needs to be contextualized again because of the changes that globalization brought forth among humans.He recognizes three dimensions of globalization which reshape human consciousness and also challenge it. The first is the communication technology, which changes the human existence through the easy access of information.[12] The second dimension is the economic one, which entails a positive effect mainly in the developed countries, but also as a negative effect mainly on the poorer countries.[13] And finally the third is the political dimension of globalization, which evolves the atomization of the society into individual consumers.[14]

Hermans also discusses the changes produced by globalization from a psychological point of view on the level of the individual. He introduces the above-mentioned concept of uncertainty produced by the shifting between local and global. Hermans perceives globalization, as which implies at the same time localization, because of the homogenizing aspect expressed in the global uniformity. On the level of the individual this interconnection between local and global is a dynamic process or movement between positioning (as a participant in a global discourse) and re-positioning (as a participant of a local community).[15]

In this sense localization is a defensive process of the individuals in order to defend themselves from the hegemonic phenomenon of globalization, returning to their smaller communities.[16] This process of defensive localization can be perceptible in the case of migrant people, who during their migration and during their eventual settlement and adaptation processes experience globalization in a negative way, stranger to their accustomed culture. This negative perception of the globalized world entails the feeling of uncertainty based in the fact that they need to adapt aspects of their original culture and the globalized culture. These immigrants who face the uncertainty of globalization often return to their original, mainly religious communities, where they can share their problems in their own native language, and can meet people who are placed in similar situations.

Robert Schreiter also observes this tension between local and global coming from the fact that globalization is about extension of the effects of modernization and thus its aim is the homogenization of cultures and values. According to him, although globalization possesses positive effects such as: greater individual autonomy, liberation from many traditional constraints, increased material prosperity, expanded opportunities for education and increased personal freedom and individuality, on the other side there are negative effects also present such as: materialism, erosion or relativization of values and anomic individualism.[17]

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[9] Idem, p. 27.

[10] Idem, p. 28.

[11] Nagy, p. 31.

[12]Schreiter, Robert. "The changed Context of Mission Forty Years After the Council", *Verbum SVD* 46.1 (2005): 75-88. p. 75-77.

[13] Idem, p. 77-78.

[14] Idem, p. 78.

[15] Hermans, p. 23.

[16] Hermans, p. 23.

[17] Schreiter Robert. *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*. Maryknoll, N.Y.:Orbis Books, 2004, p. 9.

Human beings, against their will, in this context are placed in a pressuring ambivalent situation. Despite the fact that they experience the positive side of the global, at the same time on the local level they face the negative effects as well, which creates tension in the individuals and effects their identity. Schreiter sees the resolution for this tension in theology and he creates a theological framework for interpreting the tension between these two phenomena. Global theological flows such as theology of liberation, feminist theology, ecological theology, and the theology of human rights are presented by him as a counter-reaction to the process of globalization. The concept which he provides as a counter-reaction to the effects of globalization is the *new catholicity,* defined by him in the following way:

"A new catholicity, then is marked by wholeness of inclusion and fullness of faith in a pattern of intercultural exchange and communication. To the extent that this catholicity can be realized, it may provide a paradigm for what a universal theology might look like today, able to encompass both sameness and difference, rooted in an orthopraxis, providing teloi for a globalized society."[18]

According to Schreiter this concept of *new catholicity* is able to hold things together which are in tension with each other.[19] And tension in a globalized world is really frequent. Schreiter discusses the phenomena of migration in the context of globalization ascertaining that the widespread migration has created multicultural societies. Cultures, ethnicities and religion are sharing the same social spaces, which lead to conflicts and tension between the different ethnic groups.[20]

As I discussed already with regard to Hermans' theory on globalization Schreiter also argues that migrants often become more religious in their new environment than they were in their home country. The explanation for this is that religion, mainly in a migrant situation, is the one element which can provide the individual with continuity in his/her identity. This continuity would otherwise be interrupted by the process of migration and the new situation of the experience of the global.[21]

Moreover this theological interpretation of globalization can be considered as another theological manifestation of the concept of *glocalization* proposed by Robertson in 1995 in order to emphasize the interconnectedness between global and local. He drew attention to the fact that the global manifests itself in local forms and vice-versa as well.[22]

Related to the term of *glocalization* Jansen and Stoffels using as their departure point Schreiter's theory – that globalization is always contextualized, and values and ideas which circulate on a global level are relatively abstract until they are not manifesting on a local level – also promote this concept. Jansen and Stoffels assess that *glocalization* is the notion which is able to characterize the situation of the migrant churches. Speaking about Christianity they argue that Christianity engages people in increasingly similar forms of worship and organization. Therefore Christians can join a global faith community on a local level, reaching far beyond the local community.[23]

In conclusion, the main appointed aim of this section on one hand was to introduce the concept of globalization as one of the most important key concepts in the understanding of migration and religious identity formation of the individuals. On the other hand I attempted to search for links between religion and globalization. Firstly I established that the theological perspectives on globalization are rooted mostly in other disciplines, mainly in social sciences. In this way of theologically discussing globalization, human beings need to be placed at its centre. These produce and experience the phenomena of globalization, yet we have to note that simultaneously with acting as creators of goods and commodities, human beings are created in the image of God. Secondly relying on Robert Schreiter's theory intertwined with Hermans' theory I accept that globalization in a theological interpretation is not only the creator of tension, but at the same time it provides the uniformity of religion, in our case Christianity. This presupposes the global's manifestation in the local and the local's manifestation in the global.

Religion can be considered as a global system, even if religious resurgences are not as unified as economic or science systems, however it can be a powerful and a unified force in smaller scale levels.[24] In this way, on the one hand religion at the level of the individual can be conceived as a strong handhold, a

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[18] Schreiter, p. 132-133.

[19] Nagy, p. 32.

[20] Schreiter, 2005, p. 80.

[21] Schreiter, 2005, p. 80.

[22] Hermans, p. 23

[23] Jansen, Mechteld, and HijmeStoffels, eds. *A Moving God: Immigrant Churches in the Netherlands.* Berlin, Hamburg, Münster: Lit Verlag, 2008. p. 11.

[24] Schreiter, p. 14-15.

defensive 'place' where the individual, mainly in a migrant context, can experience his/her local culture, ethnicity and religion, maintaining or reproducing a cohesive identity. On the other hand the individual through religion and religious belonging can be part of the global system of religions, in this way experiencing also a global community.

Migration and religion

The previous section focused on the theological interpretation of globalization, and I discussed how religion and globalization are in relationship with each other. In this next section I will continue with the discussion about migration and its link to religion and theology in order to understand the importance of the religious experience and belonging in a migrant context.

First of all I need to define the concept of migration. As I mentioned in the previous section globalization and migration are the most dynamic socio-economic and socio-political phenomena of nowadays.[25] I already discussed migration as a product of globalization, but the real understanding of these two phenomena can be grasped in the mutual relationship between them. On one hand migration is indeed a result of globalization, because people of the periphery move to achieve better standards of life, to work, to meet their relatives etc. On the other hand globalization can be considered as the product of migration through which ideas, values and goods can move and can be spread throughout the whole world.

Migration in this sense indeed is an important dynamic movement of people. According to the International Organization for Migration, migration is 'a process of moving, either across an international border, or within a state. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants.'[26]This definition of migration led us to the conclusion that in contemporary times in our globalized world almost every human being who left his/her homeland because of any kind of reason can be considered as a migrant.

The contemporary human is in constant movement in a world which has ever less borders due to the fact that globalization is targeting the uniformization of the world. In this sense I consider that it is more correct to speak about migration and migrants than about immigration and immigrants. Today's migration processes do not end with the act of the immigration, which entails the act of settlement. Rather, it is more relevant to speak about the phenomena of migration as an act of the global circulation. Moreover the term immigrant can be problematic because it reflects mostly one perspective, the perspective of the host society. This term can express that migrants are kept in distance from the host society, negating the international nature of their identity.[27] Therefore, henceforward I will accept and use the term migrant as which refers to immigrants.

The phenomena of migration involves different types of motivations, has different roles and implications for those societies (and for individuals as well) which are involved in this dynamic processes.[28] According to the different roles and motivations for the migration the historian Patrick Manning has a four-type categorization of migration: home-community migration, colonization, whole community migration and cross community migration.[29] Manning states that during the cross-community migration: 'individuals and groups move to join an existing community, learning its language and customs. The function of such migration is to share the experience and the labour of various communities. Such migrations are occasional rather than systematic among most non-human species. Among humans, cross-community migrants are commonly males.'[30]

Related to the cross-community or international migration Patrick Manning created another categorization. He argues that there are four types of international migrants: settlers, who move to join an existing, different form their own community, and to remain there; sojourners, who move to another community with a purpose, but who will return home; itinerants, who move from community to community, without a single home to return; and invaders, who arrive as a group in a community with the purpose to

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[25] Nagy, p. 5.
[26] IOM International Organization for Migration*, Glossary on Migration: International Migration Law,* International Organization for Migration, Geneva, 2004, p. 43.
[27] Koning, Danielle. "Importing God: The Mission of the Ghanaian Adventist Church and Other immigrant Churches in the Netherlands." VU University, 2011, p. 18.
[28] Nagy, p. 22.
[29] Manning, Patrick. "Cross-community Migration: A Distinctive Human Pattern"*, Social Evolution and History* 5. 2 (2006), p. 27 – 28.
[30] Manning, p. 28.

seize control over it, rather than to join.[31] From among these four types of international migration I am interested in the first three, namely settlers, sojourners and itinerants.

In conclusion, migration is a social phenomenon, which includes not only the physical movement of human beings, but also the movement of cultures, ideologies, values, and material manifestations in a way in which it influences economics, politics, and brings changes in societies.[32] But it is also an important factor of the process of migration that the changes affect not only the societies involved in it, but also the individuals who experience the movement, and live in multicultural societies.

After defining migration I turn my attention toward the link between religion and migration processes. Religion plays a very important role in the process of migration. The relationship between them has been very intertwined during their mutual history. On the one hand religion can be the source for migration. At this point we can think about the Jewish diaspora, who were deported to Assyria and Babylon, or we can think about all those people in history who were persecuted for their faith and forced into migration. Therefore migration in a theological interpretation can be perceived as a negative experience, "a sign of disharmony, chaos and conflicts."[33]

But on the other hand theologically migration can be understood in positive terms as well. Very simply, the spread of religions was facilitated by the phenomena of migration. People all through history took with them their cultures, ideas, values and religions everywhere they went or settled. For this reason I cannot deny the historically based relation of migration and religion. They are inseparable, having mutual influence on each other. Migration is accompanied or supported by religion and religion was disseminated through religion.[34]

In contemporary times, although the persecutions based on one's religion are a rare phenomenon, and the modern technology fosters and speed the extension of religions on a global level, the link between them remained as strong as it was through history. In a globalized world we cannot seek that link in the above mentioned two areas. Rather we have to take into account all the effects and impacts of globalization, and find the link not on the level of abstract concepts and groups of people, rather on the level of the individual.

Migration is never an easy part of human life, even if it happens out of the free will of the individual. The act of migration in this sense is always a 'traumatic event', the individual leaves behind a whole life with all his/her traditions, cultures, communities he/she was used to before. Even if migrants bring with them their own language, traditions, ideas, values, and religions, it is difficult for them to face the new environment and find the balance between their new and old way of life. Previous studies on relation of migration and religion show that people who migrate to another country and settle down there, are expected in their own or through their children to give up what they brought from their homeland. But this expectation fails almost in every case of migration, because the first generation and also the second generation migrants usually find identification in the cultural values brought from their homeland.[35]

The historian Timothy Smith argues that immigration is a 'theologizing experience', because religion after the act of migration can be more important in the life of the individual than it was before.[36] One of the reasons for this statement is that religion in a migrant context can constitute the central element to the maintenance and/or reconstruction of the ethnic identity.

The act of migration in many cases entails the favorization of religious identity over the ethnic identity.[37] This means that migrants are thinking in separate terms about the religious and ethnic aspects of their identity. They prefer their religious identity because it provides for them all those necessary aspects of their ethnicity which satisfies their need of ethnic identity. Religion also reproduces ethnicity through: architecture, ritual, language, food, dress and music.[38] But still religion and the religious values contributes to the migrants' self-identification in the most salient way. The case of the second generation migrants can be different from this. For them religion becomes more ethnically defined, it will be the only link to their ethnic and cultural roots.[39]

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[31] Manning, p. 40 – 41.
[32] Nagy, p. 36.
[33] Nagy, p. 42.
[34] Nagy, p. 57.
[35] Ebaugh, Helen Rose and Saltzman Janet Chafetz.*Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations.* New York: Altmira Press, 2000, p. 7.
[36] Smith, Timothy L. *Religion and Ethnicity in America.* American Historical Review. 1978, 83: 1115-85
[37] Koning, p. 21.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Migrant churches are those institutions for migrants which are able to provide them with the above-mentioned aspects for the development of both ethnic and religious identity. The migrant churches in this sense play a crucial role in the identity formation of the migrant individuals.

Migration and multiculturalism

When we speak about the connection between migration, religion and globalization it is inevitable to also speak about the link between migration and multiculturalism. Robert Schreiter argues that the migration of the people creates a 'cultural mélange'.[40] The monocultural societies of the West, as the targets of many of the migrants become more and more multicultural. Multiculturalism can be defined very simply as ethnic diversity or the existence of different cultures or cultural identities within a respective region or within a respective society. But in the same time we can also look at multiculturalism as which not only brings together the different ethnic and cultural aspects, but also which separates the human beings into *we* and *they* groups.[41] This separation influences the identity construction of the human beings living in a multicultural society.

Looking at the European situation, societies are changing because of migration. The non-European migrants bring their own cultural and social values, customs and attitudes. But also the Eastern-European migrants bring changes to the West. On the one hand these changes can be seen in a positive way: migration fosters a cultural renewal, enrichment and developments of nations and cultures. On the other hand these changes can be negatively perceived as a danger to the future Europe's traditional Christian heritage.[42]

Whether perceiving them positively or negatively, changes are present in societies. And if societies are changing this presupposes that the increasing multiculturalism as the result of the encounter of the global and local, through the process of migration, emerges the issue of the identity of the individuals who experience these phenomena. Schreiter states that the migration of the human beings in search of the benefits of modernization and globalization makes the meaning of home as an ancestral place less significant.[43] This also entails that the issues of the belonging and attachment changes in a migrant context. People are not anymore as strongly attached to their homeland, but not even to the host country, where they migrate.

Moreover in a globalized and multicultural society migrants face the problem of the boundary crisscrossing. Boundaries plays an important role in the semiotics of identity, they help humans to define who they are by marking who they are not. But when boundaries are not clear enough they also lose their identity-conferring power.[44] At this point identity becomes a necessary issue in our contemporary times which is marked by the pressures of globalization, migration, and intense cultural interaction.[45]

Multiculturalism created via the process of migration brings the most salient changes on the level of societies. Europe entails not only the diversity of ethnic and cultural groups and the adaptation of new traditions on the level of societies but also a change on the level of religion. The great migration of Hindus and Muslims to Europe has its impact on Europe's Christian heritage. This means that religious diversity is an increasing ubiquitous phenomenon mainly in the Western countries of Europe where the work possibilities attracts the non-Christian migrants as well. Although Schreiter looks to this issue in a negative or dark way arguing that due to this non-Christian migrations Europe is changing from the Europe of Christendom toward an interreligious Europe,[46]Stoffels argues that while the European Christianity is involved in the process of slow decline, in the other part of the world the number of the Christians is in constant growth. This fact influences Europe, because of the large number of immigrants, who bring with them their kind of Christianity. In this way it is possible that this proportion of migration will cause changes in Western Christianity.[47]

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[40] Schreiter, p. ix.

[41] Malhi, Rebecca L.; Boon Susan D; Rogers, Timothy, B. "'Being Canadian' and 'Being Indian': Subject Positions and Discourses Used in South Asian-Canadian Women 's Talk about Ethnic Identity." *Culture Psychology* 15. 2 (2009), p. 261.

[42]Krasilnikova, Oxana, "'I've learned to fight for every opportunity tooth and nail! A gender approach to adaptation strategies for Russian speaking immigrants in Germany", TVGEND 17. 3 (2014), p. 211.

[43] Idem, p. 11.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Idem, p. 68.

[46] Schreiter, p. 91.

[47] Stoffels, H.C. "A Coat of Many Colours. New Immigrant Churches in the Netherlands."*A Moving God.Immigrant Churches in the Netherlands*. Berlin. Hamburg. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2008, p. 13.

Conclusion

The main aim of this article is to establish a context for further research on the topic of the relationship that exists between the notionsof migrant identity formation and religion. I discussed globalization and migration as mutually connected concepts, and which have their effects not merely on the level of communities but also on the level of individuals. In this way the constant sharing and changing of products, values, ideas, cultures and people influences the self-definitions of the contemporary human beings by the weakening of the clear borders between local and global

The article aims to find a theological perspective on these phenomena, assessing that in a theological approach on globalization the human beings are at the central place. Humans, created in the image of God are the ones who share and change all the elements circling in the contemporary globalized world. One of these elements is religion itself, which manifests itself both on local and global levels. I discussed religion also as a counter-reaction against the effects of globalization. This provides humans with a kind of shelter against uniformity, modernization and crisscrossing cultures, which entails the problematic self-definition and healthy identity construction of the individuals. Even if it seems that religion is disappearing due to globalization, its role is now more important than ever before from the perspective of the humans who cannot find their place or cannot own a clear image of their self.

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