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Culture and Identity

Edited by Wilfred Isak April



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Meet the editor



Dr. Wilfred Isak April is an academic scholar and a full-time youth activist in entrepreneurial education in his native country, Republic of Namibia. He believes in the Golden Circle of business, which is government, business, and community. If these latter mentioned three dimensions work closely together, we can achieve commercial justice in any community. He also cofounded a nonprofit organization Maltas Club Namibia, which fosters entrepreneurial talent among young students from all universities in Namibia. He has a strong belief that his personality must serve his soul and is very compassionate and disciplined to improve the livelihoods of those in most vulnerable communities. He holds a business undergraduate degree course from the University of Namibia, an Honors in BCom in Industrial Psychology and Human Resource Development degree from Stellenbosch University, and a master's degree in Commerce (Business Management) from Stellenbosch University with the European Business School (Frankfurt), Germany. He also holds a PhD degree (Entrepreneurship) from New Zealand.

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Preface

“Cultures produce myth, because they satisfy a deep-rooted human need: the need to make sense of life...” (Unknown)

You have read numerous academic books on the critical issue of *culture and identity*, and perhaps you are constantly looking for ways to understand others and are understood to achieve great results. Without a doubt, reading books based on similar experiences will not necessarily improve the quality of your thinking and efficiency. But, what if you had access to a book that looks at *culture and identity* from across various dimensions and international writers from across the globe? Perhaps, books of this nature can trigger more academic intellectual discourse of how culture and identity are viewed in this era of globalization. It can maybe help you solve the problems you are struggling with on a daily basis. We wanted such a book!

However, we could not find it. We could not find a book that could speak to the hearts of those interested in *culture and identity* with real-life examples. After a long search of inviting authors from around the world to submit their proposals, we did find very interesting and exhilarating stories from various nations across the world. We found brilliant articles of how *culture and identity* are viewed through the lens of others.

This book is an enthusiastic celebration of *culture and identity*, especially from the cultural lens of the various authors' nation of origin. It is a unique tribute to the many scholars who have embarked on this journey of exploring culture and how identity is defined. Other interesting elements in this book are the many historical details and the abundance of insightful illustrations.

Initially, we thought of writing all the chapters ourselves, but we quickly realized that the voice of all people around the world can give us a global perspective. We wanted real people to tell us about their culture and identity experiences and what it meant in their cultures. Each author wrote his/her chapters with passion, and as you zoom through the pages, they indeed come through spectacularly. Although the samples of authors who wrote these chapters are few, they amply illustrate the importance of the field and the way in which the field has evolved over time. We are certain that the authors can be confident that there will be many grateful readers who will get a much broader perspective on culture and identity and what it means across various nations.

We would like to congratulate all the authors on an excellent job well done, the staff of the Namibian American Cultural Center, students, and the many community members in Namibia, who helped us to come to see this book to life. We are certainly nothing without your generous support. As you glimpse through the pages of this book, please do keep an open mind about the contents discussed in each chapter as culture evolves, and the writers tried their best to craft their experiences from their vantage point.

Hopefully, you will find a lot to learn as the more you read, the more you will be inspired, educated, and empowered to help to develop an appreciation and respect for you own *culture and identity*.

Wilfred Isak April, PhD

University of Namibia and Maltas Club Namibia
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Exploring Culture and Identity

Introductory Chapter

Wilfred Isak April and Daniel Ileni Itenge

Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this book is to provide abundant and substantial information that has very important implications on the theory of culture and identity as it evolves over a period of time. In addition, this book is also essential for the diffusion of scientific knowledge. The concept of cultural identity can be used in many different ways. First, it can be used as a reference point to the collective self-awareness that a particular given group embodies and reflects. This is how the term is widely used in society. The purpose of this book is to bring forth how culture and identity shapes the socio-economic advancement of economies around the world. Due to the advancement of technological and the interconnectivity of the world, communities have to interact with each other, from Australasia to Africa, otherwise you run the risk of being excluded from trade and the opportunities of advancement coupled with it.

With these changes, people have their own culture and identity, which needs an understanding, appreciation, respect and care, if not there is also the risk of being excluded from global trade. It is all fairness to say culture and identity plays a more critical role in this twenty-first century, more than before—in short, it can be referred to as a full-fledged economic sector. In this book, various authors capture their ideas from various perspectives of how culture and identity shapes various dimensions of life from the vantage point of socio-economic development.

According to Bochner [1], cultural identity of a particular society or community is usually defined by the most prevalent or dominant group. This group is usually very distinguishable from the minority subgroups, with whom they share the physical environment; territory or neighbourhood they live in. It is important to reiterate to the readers that the concept is akin to the idea of national or in some instances, the social character, which usually encompasses a unique set of traits or qualities that members of a given society share with one another and look beyond their individual differences. These traits usually includes, but are not limited to

the constellation of values and how one views life, death, birth, children, religion and nature. In a collective sense, the concept of cultural identity includes typologies of cultural behaviour, such behaviours which are usually the appropriate or inappropriate ways of satisfying the fundamental needs of the society and how we deal with the challenges confronting us on a daily basis. Cultural identity also looks at shared premises, values, beliefs and the daily life events even those we are at times not aware about.

Another specific use of the concept revolves around identity of the individual in relation to his or her culture. Identity looks at the fundamental symbol of a person's existence. According to Erikson [2], identity is an elemental form of psychic organisation which develops in successive psychosexual phases throughout life. The primary focus of Erikson's work mostly on analytical studies related to identity conflicts, recognising the anchoring of larger ego in a much broader cultural context. Identity can take a variety of forms within an individual. This can refer to the conscious sense of an individual identity. On the other hand, it refers to an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character. In addition, as a criterion for silent doings of ego synthesis and finally, as a maintenance of inner solidarity with the ideals of the group and identity. The views of Erikson are only one of the many variations of the definitions.

A prominent world renowned scholar of "Culture" Hofstede [4] defines culture as a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. This implies that every person carries within himself or herself patterns of thinking, feeling and potential acting that we learn and acquire throughout a person's lifetime. Much of it is learned in the early childhood because it is at that point of time a person is most fragile in absorbing, learning and assimilating information. As soon as certain patterns of thinking, feeling and acting are established in a person's mind, he or she must develop the ability to unlearn these patterns before being able to learn something completely different, and certainly unlearning information is more daunting than learning it in the first place. In a brief, interview at his homestead of Velp in the Netherlands in December 2012 with the editor, Hofstede clarified to the editor that the definition does not imply that people are programmed like computers (Hofstede, personal communication, December 8, 2012). The behaviour of people is only partially predetermined by his or her mental programs: possibilities of deviation are possible to react in new ways which could be creative, destructive or, at times, unexpected. Hofstede also described culture across five dimensions namely individualism, collectivism, power distance, masculinity and femininity. Although regarded by some scholars such as McSweeney as a "triumph of faith" and a failure of analysis, Hofstede's dimensions still remain one of the most widely used in research, especially within organisations [3].

From the teachings of the above-mentioned authors, we are reminded that human beings can certainly not hold them apart from some form of cultural influence, which can then in turn shape their identity. No one is culture free. We are experiencing and being reminded daily as culture evolves on a daily basis. We also exist in a very dynamic environment compared to a few centuries ago, and we as a people should make the commitment to try and shape the

landscape by educating society on the importance of culture and identity and how it can lead to both professional and personal advancement of nations and communities globally.

This is the purpose why this book was written and we have structured it into three sections.

In Section 1, Dr. Wilfred Isak April and Mr. Daniel Itenge introduced us to the concepts of culture and identity from a global perspective. In addition the scholars set a pace from how culture and identity can lead to the socio-economic advancement of communities around the world. From Africa, Professor Reginald Monyai looked at the *proverb manong a j aka ditshika* as an embodiment of the Principle of Unity. This chapter explores the relationship between proverbs, identity and culture, and how proverbs impact one's identity. In addition, this chapter is based on the theory of Structuralism, grounded on the idea that the community producers' literature and an author is the product of a society.

In Section 2, "Space and Time Travellers Exploring Cultural Identity of the City", Professor Arzu Ispalar and Gizde Ozer looks at architectural graduate students work on exploring culture in Turkey. The authors are looking at ways of benefiting from city culture in favour of city identity. The aim of this chapter intends in addressing showing that achieving sufficient and healthy urban environments is possible with underlying the importance of culture and its benefits of culture led development with aid of architectural and urban design. Aida Huerta-Barrientos, Alma Elia Vera Morales and Tania Vazquez Fonzalet looked at the impact on socio-economic indicators in Mexican rural communities' metabolism. The authors argues that rural poverty in Mexico is mainly from a lack of access to basic services such as health, education, sanitation and housing. Other factors include land, technology, and scientific knowledge. The core objective of this study is to analyse the metabolic scaling of cultural, environmental, and economic aspects in the context of Mexican rural communities in order to predict the energy required to ensure that they remain connected and estimate the impact of socio-economic development. The outcome this study intends in achieving is ensuring that better polices are designed in improving the current living conditions of Mexicans. It is in this section that we also learn from Nigerian Catholic Sisters about the life experiences of losing one's culture as a narrative. The authors Dr. Eze Chika, Professor Lindegger and Dr. Rakozcy focusses on how identity is constructed using a cultural perspective and experience.

In section 3, Professor Botshabeng Monyai addresses 'The Significance attached to Education and Youth Development in Rural South Africa'. This study argues that education plays a significant role in improving the socio-economic conditions of individuals and communities. This chapter aims at demonstrating the essence attached to the education of young people in rural areas of South Africa and the challenges brought about by cultural and social expectations, which are usually compounded by the bottlenecks in educational resource mobilisation. Lastly from the continent of South America, Dr. Christian Parker discuss the issue of Religion in the Modern Era: Popular religions and Multiple Mordernities: A non-Western Perspective where the main argument is that religious changes towards pluralism can fully be understood in the context of multiple mordenities theory. New ways of producing sense and spiritual search in non-Western geo-cultural areas are framing specific relationships between religion and mordenities and bringing about new religion pluralism's.

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The Proverb *manong a ja ka ditshika* as an Embodiment of the Principle of Unity

Reginald B. Monyai

Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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Abstract

The proverb, *manong a ja ka ditshika* (*birds of a feather flock together*), has a unifying element among the Batswana because it contains principles that meaningfully guide, counsel and also influence their behaviour. This chapter aims to explore the relationship between proverbs, identity and culture, and how proverbs impact one's identity. It will first define three concepts – proverb, culture and identity. This will be followed by a discussion of the theory of structuralism, which best explains the use of proverbs among communities. The theory is grounded on the idea that the community produces literature and an author is a product of society. Therefore, society determines ways of survival that should be transferred to posterity to ensure social control, group thinking and continuity. The chapter will then present a catalogue of proverbs that support the notion of unity in the proverb under discussion.

Keywords: culture, identity, idiom, metaphor, proverb

1. Introduction

At the outset, the chapter intends to clarify the relationship between the Batswana as a 'volk' (nation) and their ways of applying social control as evident in their proverbs, idioms, metaphors and folktales (all part of their folklores). In short, the Setswana proverb is a collective of direct and indirect statements that cover, among others, idioms, myths and folktales, all of which form the folklore of the community. Culture, history and civilisation all belong to a community conscious of its existence and way forward. In this regard, the complementary role of proverbs, metaphors and folktales play a pivotal role of uniting the community and keeping it glued together.

The terms culture and identity will be defined, and a working definition of each will be extrapolated from the several that would have been identified. These will be defined because they are the underlying concepts around which the chapter revolves. This will be followed by an in-depth discussion of the theory of structuralism, mainly because the theory accounts for the systemic nature of discourse, written and spoken. The next section will be a discussion of the meaning of the proverb, *manong a ja ka ditshika*, its origin, as well as its role in the unification of the Batswana as a nation. There will also be a discussion of other proverbs, which serve the same purpose.

2. Definition of culture

The logical way of defining culture consists defining and representing the culture of the targeted community [1], in this case, the Batswana. Margaret Mead defines culture as a tapestry of traditional behaviour, which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation [1]. Central to this definition are development, learning and generation. Each community or era has its highest good that ensures a smooth transition of behavioural patterns that lead to sustenance and productivity. The highest good of the Romans was physical strength and power; hence, they regarded disability as the lowest form of human development. A true citizen had to be strong enough to protect his family and the state. The Greeks on the other hand believed in mental power, much in agreement with Des Cartes' famous maxim, 'I think, therefore I am' [2]. The highest good of Christians is purity that should lead to eternal life after death. Each of the above groups or philosophies had to be preserved for posterity and the young ones taught the principles of survival, which were in line with each highest good.

Culture can also be characterised as a learned activity, which is associated with groups of people and whose content embraces a wide range of phenomena, among others, norms, values, shared meanings and patterned ways of behaving [3–8]. Once again, culture is embedded in learning, which implies the ability to be taught, and therefore, the capacity to implement. What is key in the description of culture in the above definition is shared meaning. The saying 'It takes a village to raise a child' corroborates this thought. If a group does not agree on principles of survival, they will not be able to have a collective mind or group thinking, which are needed to impart the values of that group.

The third definition of culture is that it is the total socially acquired lifeway or lifestyle of a group of people. 'It consists of the patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of a society' [9]. It does not deviate from the previous definition since it also emphasises ways of life by a group of people. The highest good of a people is protected and transmitted to young ones because a group is agreeable on how its members should behave in order to ensure prosperity.

From the three definitions above, it is safe to say that each culture or society produces images and forms which are unique and peculiar to it. This is the form that this chapter is going to follow, which is to confirm that the Batswana, as an African nation, have forms of communication

that are peculiar to them. These include their idioms and proverbs, both of which are imprinted in their culture. In the next section, the term identity is defined as a precursor to the main thesis of discussion later on.

3. Definition of identity

As with culture, identity is dependent on interaction. One of the reasons societies want to exert influence on citizens is that the raw human being is out of control. This can perhaps be better explained by the story of creation, in particular, the fall of man. The physical aspect of creation was completed and the spiritual was interrupted when man sinned. Because of this void, societies have been striving towards perfection. Religions and cultures have certain beliefs about what makes a complete man or citizen. Each feels strongly that theirs is the right one. The way of life of a society forms its culture, which gives shape to the identity of that society. This identity is imprinted in the individual identities of the citizens. Without this identity, there will not be shared meaning and therefore, no patriotism.

Identity is seen as how our sense of who we are is bound up with our membership of certain social groups. Most obviously, the term appears in the context of explorations of ethnicity or nationality and how ethnic and national group memberships are implicated in behaviour [10]. Another view is that it is how the individual understands the self as well as their interpretation of the social definition of the self within their inner group and the larger society [11]. It is further defined as 'how people understand their relationship to the outside world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future' [12].

Critical to the understanding of identity is the consideration of the different types of identity. For purposes of this chapter, cultural identity is given precedence which, if nicely nurtured, can provide an individual with a sense of belonging, purpose, social support and self-worth [13]. This type is given precedence mainly because structuralism, as shall be noted below, foregrounds society as the custodian of the idiom of that group. In other words, while each individual is entitled to their idiolect, it can only make sense when they belong. One might have developed an identity, but it is dependent on how society has come to prescribe as acceptable. A good example is the contrasting practices of religious rites of rising and sitting in the former Tswana region and the Zulu region of the Lutheran church.

In the Batswana Lutheran church, congregants would rise as an outward sign to show respect when praying and the amaZulu congregants argued that sitting down was closest to kneeling down and thus a sign of respect for one's senior. A junior may not stand before a king, what more before the Holy altar [14]? Thus, even if you have your own appreciation or respect for the Holy altar, if your actions are not synchronised with that of the congregation, you will not make sense.

Another closely related form of identity is social identity. A social group is a collection of more than two people who share the same social identity and have the same definition of who they

are, what attributes they have and how they relate to and differ from specific outgroups [15]. This is greater than cultural identity. The Batswana, for instance, comprises of different clans, which includes the **Bakwena** (whose totem is the crocodile), the **Bakgatla** (whose totem is a monkey), the **Bafurutshe** (whose totem is the baboon), among others. Each grouping has its own cultural identity but all of them have a central concept of the rites of passage. They celebrate life, observe the seasons and mourn the dead in pretty much the same way. They differ culturally and might even wage war to conquer other groupings and acculturate them. Their social identity can be seen in action during *magadi* (lobola) negotiations. They can differ on how to receive the groom's delegation, but they all agree on the worth of each cow (as a monetary unit) towards a settlement of the transaction.

At the micro level, there is personal identity, which is identity with personality attributes that are not shared with other people [15]. It is not necessarily selfish, but is a recognition of an individual as part of the greater puzzle that completes a pattern. If the individual was not important, there would not have been proverbs like *moremogolo go betlwa wa taola, wa motho o a ipetla* (loosely translated: that while masterpieces can be created by man, man alone is a master of his destiny. He has to design his own destiny in this world of ours. Basically, you are a master of your own destiny) [16]. This one is intended to teach an individual that for them to be worthy of society's attention and recognition, they have to work on their character. **Motswana** continues to say *ntšwanyana e bonwa mabotobotong* (literal translation: A doggie is to be judged by its nosing, European equivalent: a bird is known by its note, a man by his talk) [17]. Constructive competition is encouraged.

4. Structuralism

It is important to note that the theory of structuralism revolves around the system in society. It recognises the different parts and structures and accounts for social cohesion among members. It does not discount any member because if they are left out, the golden thread that binds society together will be severed and there will be chaos. The theory is important in our understanding of proverbs, in particular, *manong a ja ka ditshika*, because it promotes working together. At the centre of structuralism is the idea of coherence, completeness and a system, which is made up of constituent parts. Interference of any kind renders the system awkward and therefore makes it lose its original aspect of totality. Each constituent part is therefore meaningless and detached on its own unless connected to its system. A linguistic example in our case would be the distinction between phonetics and phonology. With the former, speech sounds are analysed individually without any reference to any other speech sound, whereas with the latter, the value of a speech sound is established with the whole sound system in mind [14].

In agreement with the above, Blankenburg et al. [18] assert that structuralist analysis advocates a focus on a system in its totality and on the interrelations between its elements rather than on individual elements in isolation. The theory of structuralism can be summarised as: individual elements (of life, beliefs or consciousness) have no value on their own but are tied to a structure and the meanings of each element can only be identified or described relative to their relationship with other elements in that structure. According to the theory of structuralism, nothing makes

sense when observed on its own and everything can only make sense when observed in relation to others. Established and popular in the mid to late 19th century as one of the earliest approach to psychology and its introduction to the laboratory setting, structuralism views perception as only a combination of different elements (sensations). This view sought a permanent structure in everything and attempted to master all ideas, perceptions and individual acts into structures and structural relationships [19].

In practice, structuralism has been applied in different fields and phenomena including language, literature, culture, mathematics and architecture among others. These fields have witnessed varying results in the application of the theory and principles of structuralism. In culture, structuralism has been claimed to 'reject the general laws of culture and society' leading to movements such as Marxism and positivism [20]. With structuralism, culture can be perceived as a system formed by the relationship between several elements such as arts, social behaviours and even human intellectual abilities and activities. These elements have no significance on their own without the relationship that exists between them. Evidence of structuralism in culture can be seen in patterns or art, religion, traditions, kinships, rites and beliefs [3]. Nature and culture, especially the opposition between them, play crucial roles in the conceptual system idealised by the theory of structuralism. According to structuralism notions, for culture to exist and thrive, a structure that organises the various individual elements of nature and binds them together in a dependent relationship needs to be idealised. In other words, structuralism in culture creates and simultaneously aims to close the gap between nature (individual existent elements) and culture (a structure that unites natural elements and relative to which their individual values can be derived) [21].

The theory of structuralism raises a few fundamental questions that challenge, apart from language and culture, many of human experiences and values, including identity. Structuralism often neglects observable and measurable elements and relies on abstractions and unobserved or unobservable structures. A structuralist approach to identity and human behaviour explains that all human experiences (conscious or not) can be broken down into simple influencing elements even if these elements are abstract and immeasurable. This raises a question of reliability, especially when viewed in the perspective of structuralism as laboratory psychology. If the elements or variables in a system cannot be observed or measured, it leaves a huge room open for observer bias – as it is in the concept of identity. The identity of individual elements can be intrinsic or contextual. Contextual elements are rooted in relationships and systems compatible with the principle of structuralism [4]. The concept of identity can be described as a combination of different individual elements (interpersonal, environmental, genetic etc.) that might not always fit into a set structure. Nevertheless, the theory of structuralism still has a place in the concept of identity and self-concept as identity more often than not focuses (and relies) on connections to and similarities between individual elements in a group. Sometimes identity focuses on differences and distinctions between different elements or groups, but the value of each element, as idealised by the theory of structuralism, still relies on relationships [22].

Structuralism theory has evolved over the years into different varieties as well as post-structuralism. Each variety has offered different perspectives, often limited by the theory's own fundamental limitations. The theory has faced many criticisms, the most critical of which is 'its

failure to grasp the proper application of its eponymous concept and structure to its own research data, and thus to realise its potential as an anthropological project' [23]. One criticism highlighted that both the actions and behaviours that form identity and culture are often made up of both deliberate and involuntary acts that sometimes cannot fit into a structure [24]. Factors such as race, socioeconomic background, genetic and environmental influences impact culture identity in unstructured patterns. The theory of structuralism, in arguing that each individual element (such as conscious, creative and non-creative actions and behaviours) can only derive their value from their relationship in and with a structure, fails to accommodate the agency (free will) that man possesses and 'considers mankind in bondage cultural and social forces consider such as norms and values, it is deterministic, but a cultural determinism' [25].

In conclusion, the theory of structuralism, as the successor of existentialism, has unified different fields such as philosophy, psychology, linguistics, economics, mathematics and anthropology and has pushed research in these fields to look beyond the surface of human behaviour and social life/order and dig deeper to find the underlying structures and elements that support and organise these norms [26]. The theory's determinist shortcomings have also been instructive and have given rise to new theories and systems such as post-structuralism, perspectivism and animism. Perhaps, most significantly, the focus of the theory of structuralism on an inner, non-observable structure to human behaviour and the notion that all conscious and creative experiences can be traced down to basic individual elements has led to instructive modern research in fields such as sensory neuroscience.

5. Characteristics of proverbs

To understand the proverb, it is important to paint a picture of the social culture of the Batswana. They were a performative society, with no records of writing to preserve their cultural wisdom. They used simple forms like folktales, riddles, idioms and proverbs [27] to train memory, as well as to adjudicate over community matters. Proverbs were used to advise, admonish and give direction, to ensure compliance. Social control, thus, was deliberately and inadvertently the bedrock of proverbs among the Batswana. The following definitions, based on the above discussion on structuralism, are aimed at shedding light on the purpose of the Setswana proverbs and *manong a ja ka ditshika*, in particular.

To highlight the social control characteristic of a proverb, it is described as a word spoken by a ruler, in addition to denoting a pithy saying, especially one condensing the wisdom of experience [28].

It is important to note that a ruler, like any accountable head of family, has the duty to see to the safety and well-being of his or her subjects. They should not only be fended for and protected, but also prepared for the future. The future of the family depends on the governance thereof. Proverbs were important tools in social control, to the extent that the Biblical book of Proverbs is referred to as a guidebook for successful living [29].

Wisdom is another very important quality of proverbs. It feeds on experience, which in turn relies on human interaction. Members of a society interact with one another, with their environment

and with themselves daily. Such interaction produces different experiences, positive and negative. As such, because man is a homo sapiens and has to relate to the world in a friendly and cost-effective manner, they learn much from experience. The ability to adapt to new situations and to be able to predict the future by invoking past experiences is a sign of wisdom. Since wisdom works for the elderly, then the young ones should develop and preserve it. The proverb thus becomes an indispensable vehicle for such a transmission [29].

Proverbs can also be described as truthful, over and above being laden with wisdom. Although truth is relative, members of a community, based on their experiences, have come to accept certain realities as their joint and social truths. For experience to have purpose, it should be covered in truth, for truth transcends untruths. It is the responsibility of the elderly, and therefore, experienced members of the society, to ensure that what they impart to their young ones is morally honest. This is important because the children are very dependent on their elders and their innocence, gullibility and vulnerability must not be taken advantage of. The truth element is thus crucial in the expression of proverbs. Truth is also wholesome. The reticence of a proverb makes it brief and to the point. The robust symbolism contained in any one proverb gives it scope [29].

For society to be dynamic, it must grow. For it to grow, fresh members need to join the fray through marriage. These new members not only help grow the social group through biological procreation, but also through intellectual procreation. They bring brand new ideas into the fold of the social group that they have joined, and in the process, help to make the culture sustain itself and grow. Without these new ideas, it would be the demise of the present culture and therefore its growth will cease. If all the men in a community could prefer to not seek partners from other places, then that community would most probably become stagnant. There would not be any cultural exchange and the economy would not flourish. There would be no multicultural understanding of other communities and children would not be encouraged to venture into new complexities. Proverbs thus should indeed be socially driven because they are the important sinews that hold society together.

6. The meaning of the proverb *manong a ja ka ditshika*

The European equivalent of the proverb, *manong a ja ka ditshika* (literal meaning: vultures eat with their blood relations) is birds of a feather flock together [17]. This proverb, as with many others which will be referred to in this chapter, emanates from the very basic proverb: *motho ke motho ka batho* (loosely translated as I am because you are). In pursuit of a good life for all citizens, the Batswana have devised a mechanism of social control, which starts with decorum. For a young one to appreciate that I am because you are, they have to start by showing respect as soon as they become conscious of their existence. The following ways of address are intended to emphasise the point being made here. In Setswana, one's paternal uncle, *rangwane* (lit. Young father) has a distinctive role to *malome* (maternal uncle) (lit. One who bites or eats). Each one of them knows and executes their duties and obligations differently albeit to the same child. They do so together with the child's biological parents who also understand fully the

importance of such reciprocal roles and duties. Both of them are significant others in the lives of their siblings' children.

Rangwane, who carries the child's surname is, by definition, a young father to the child. In the event that his brother passes on or becomes incapacitated, he is bound to take over paternal responsibilities of the deceased or incapacitated. The aim is to ensure continuity of the genealogy, which is enshrined in the ethos of the Batswana. As explained above, because of a shared meaning, the brothers understand their roles and can execute their responsibilities diligently. In contrast, *malome*, who hails from the mother's side, is there to, among others, speak on behalf of his nephew or niece during *magadi* (**lobola**). This he does conscious of a huge responsibility of buying his niece her wedding costume. He acts like a father from another side. In cases of children born out of wedlock, he becomes a father literally and does everything that fathers do for their children.

Due to migrant labour practices of the past, among other factors, the Batswana had extended families. Biological parents had to leave their children under the guardianship of their grandparents. These children had to co-exist with their cousins from their uncles (*bo-rangwane* and *bo-malome*) and aunts (*bo-rakgadi* – paternal aunts, and *bo-mmangwane* – maternal aunts). The principle of sharing became paramount, hence the proverb: *sejo sennyega se fete molomo* (literal translation: the small piece (of food) is not so small that it will pass by the mouth; European equivalent: half a loaf is better than no bread) [17]. All of them were treated equally, whether some of their parents brought more food to the table or not. No one felt left out because of the ubuntu principle: **I am because you are**. Everything fed into the thought of togetherness. In the next section, different proverbs are discussed to show how ultimately the principle of unity is realised.

Families were constructed on a solid base where parents arranged marriages for their children. The purpose was to ensure continuity and harmony. The groom's parents would choose their son's bride from a family they knew shared the same values as theirs. To justify their choice, they would say: *mosadi ga a tswa borwa e se phefo* (literal translation: a wife never comes from the south, only winds do; European equivalent: he that goes a great way for a wife is either cheated or means to cheat) [17]. The idea of birds of a feather flocking together begins here. The family was a sacredly guarded institution, and bad starts were not encouraged. The Batswana knew that a strong family requires a diligent wife, hence: *mosadi mooka o nya le motshegare* (literal: a woman is as useful as a mimosa tree, which yields gum all day long; European equivalent: one hair of a woman draws more than a team of oxen) [17]. Women were expected to not only keep the fires of the homesteads burning, but also to teach the children proper values for sustenance. Another one complimenting this proverb is *mosadi tshwene o jewa mabogo* (literal: a woman is like a baboon, you can only eat her hands (labour); European equivalent: *all women are good, viz. for something or nothing*) [17]. Of interest is that a Motswana man would never refer to his wife as *mosadi wa me* (my wife) but as *mosadi wa etsho* (one married into my homestead).

Once the children are born into the family, responsibilities are increased, all in the name of continuity. Not only should they be fended for, but they should also be protected at all cost. The proverb: *botlhale jwa phala bo tswa phalaneng* explains the sense of purpose that a parent

develops when they have children. A father would say *korwe ga ke je, ke bapalla tsetse* or *kgakakgolo ga ke na mebala, mebala e dikgakaneng*, both intended to express his commitment to his children. He knows very well that if he does not do that, the survival and sustenance of his household will be threatened.

With this type of worldview imprinted in the DNA of the young ones, they become familiar with these and other proverbs:

- *Mafura a ngwana ke go rongwa* (the joy of childhood is performing chores) or *maoto a nong ke phofa* (literal: The feet of the vulture are its wings) [17].
- En route to adulthood, the young one will get to know that *phokoje go tshela yo o dithetsenyana* (literal: The muddy jackal alone doth eat; European equivalent: he only gets the palm who has had the dust).
- *Sedikwa ke ntšwa-pedi ga se thata* (literal: that which is seized by two dogs is never too strong; European equivalent: many hands make light work).
- *Ga ke thata ke le nosi, ke thata ka ba bangwe* (literal: 'By myself I am not strong', but I am strong in a crowd; European equivalent: Show me the man who would go to heaven alone, and I will show you one who will never be admitted).
- *Bongoe fela ke bobedi, bojosi losho* (literal: Two persons are equal to one, one is a mere nothing, European equivalent: *Two heads are better than one or why do folks marry?*).
- *Lepotlapotla le ja podi, modikologa o ja pholo ya tona* (literal: hasty actions will kill a goat, slow proceedings will win a big ox; European equivalent: slow-footed counsel is most sure to gain, rashness still brings repentance in her train).

Once again, the positional structure of the family is heightened. The parents or elders who have endeavoured to fend for and protect the children from infancy, should enjoy the fruits of their toil. As the children execute their duties, they learn diligence and the value attached to hard work. They are not only encouraged to work hard, but are taught the value of working together. The motto of the former Bantustan state, Bophuthatswana, which was *Tshwaraganang lo dire pula e ne* (working together will lead to prosperity), attests to this.

The proverb *manong a ja ka ditshika* continues to inform young adult life. At initiation school, the boys become a *mophato* (regiment). They have a sense of belonging and they know that during war, they will club together to fight for their land. They become birds of a feather and their survival depends on their being united. Other proverbs with a similar meaning include, among others, *bophokojwe ba ba nkgwe ba itsanye ka mebala* (literal: grey jackals know each other by their speckles; European equivalent: all flesh consorteth according to its kind and a man will cleave to his like) [17]; *Dinkwe go latswana tse di mebala* (literal: spotted leopards lick each other; European equivalent: birds of a feather flock together) [17]; *bana ba tadi ba itsiwe ka mereto* (literal: kittens of the wild cat are known by their mewing; European equivalent: *the Devil's children have the Devil's luck*) [17]. In all three proverbs, the fulcrum is unity. Like the vultures in the proverb *manong a ja ka ditshika*, members of a regiment must understand that society has weak and infirmed members. It is their role to protect them, look after them and value them.

The old carry wisdom from experience while the youth are endowed with lots of energy, sometimes misdirected. As youth, they are taught to look after the old who have now become dependent on their young ones.

This principle of unity is carried over into family life. Even when they have their own families, they remember that *sejo sennye ga se fete molomo* (literal: the small piece (of food) is not so small that it will pass by the mouth; European equivalent: *half a loaf is better than no bread*) [17]. In other words, no brother or sister should go to bed knowing that one of their own has slept hungry. Should that happen, the proverb *manong a ja ka ditshika* would have been flouted. They looked after their own because *goora motho go thebe phatshwa* (literal: a man's home has a white and black (fine) shield, European equivalent: *there is no sanctuary of virtue like home*) [17]. They knew that charity begins at home.

The essence of principles contained in the proverb *manong a ja ka ditshika* is to encourage collegiality among the Batswana by providing them with empowering knowledge. The other supplementary proverbs that were discussed play a complementary role to cement the concept of oneness among the people. The values embodied in the proverbs all help members to deal with attitudes and attitude change, all in the name of togetherness.

7. The role of proverbs in the process of peace and Unity

The Setswana word for peace is **kagiso**, a noun deverbative derived from the verb stem **-aga** (build) and the nominal prefix **n-** and the phonological process of nasalisation culminates into **kagiso**. The word has a special meaning in the unity among the Batswana since it promotes altruistic behaviour. When the applied extension is added to the verb stem, it becomes **-aga + -ana = agana** (*build one another*). The concept of a construction site is drawn here, where different skills are needed to complete a building. One person cannot mix concrete, carry bricks, lay them with mortar, build a roof and install the ceiling as well as perform plumbing and electrical services by himself or herself. The proverb **motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe** (*Through others I am somebody*) attests to the fact that alone one is nothing. Another supporting proverb is **motho ga a iphetse** (*man is not sufficient unto himself*).

The role that culture plays in the determination of human relations, in particular, peace-making, has fascinated many researchers [30, 31–33]. **Kagiso** (*peace*) is preceded by war. Napoleon Bonaparte is known to have coined the expression: He who wants peace must prepare for war [34]. With the fall of man, there was animosity between man and God, to the point of his son being executed. The Holy Spirit was unleashed to bring peace (**kagiso**), after the unfortunate war. In Setswana, thus, when war is over, community members come together to re-build what was ruined. This is in a way an admission that war is not wanted. It is an acknowledgement of humanity among the Batswana and other African nations that we are first and foremost humane, and thus, war can be averted and peace be attained without bloodshed. At the 5th Hans Brennkmeijer Memorial Lecture, Jonathan Jansen retorts: Until we are stripped of the arrogance of race and recognise the likeness of our brothers and sisters, we can never be truly free [35]. Again, humaneness as contained in the proverbs of the

Batswana and other African nations is a golden thread that binds the national fibre of society. In fact, according to the notion of ubuntu, each member of the community is linked to each the disputants, be they victims or perpetrators. If everybody is willing to acknowledge this (that is, to accept the principles of ubuntu), then people will either feel some sense of having been wronged or a sense of responsibility for the wrong that has been committed [36]. Conflict, where it would erupt, was suppressed through the use of proverbs and the idiom of a nation. A three part study on Yoruba Marital Conflicts to determine the power of culture and proverbs in facilitating conflict resolution [37–39].

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the author agrees with Makward [40] when he says ‘culture is no dream; it is a reality. Its roots go deep down into our being. A culture, while it is sometimes a matter of sublimation, gathers together all the creative activities of a people, its methods of producing and acquiring material wealth, the social relationships within it, the ways in which it is organized, its victories and defeats, its joys and sorrows, its sufferings, beliefs and artistic and literary creations, whether written down or handed on by word of mouth from generation to generation as in those civilizations where the oral tradition persists, the civilizations of most of the peoples of this continent’.

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Multi-Cultural Experiences from around the World

Space and Time Travelers Exploring Cultural Identity of the City

Arzu Ispalar Çahantimur and Gözde Kırılı Özer

Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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Abstract

This chapter presents the architectural graduate students' works on exploring cultural identity of a palimpsest city in Turkey, *İznik (Nicaea)*. These evaluative works, which were prepared in the context of time and space, include the interpretations of transformation of urban spaces throughout time and its effects on the identity of the city. At the end of their study, the fresh architects were conscious about the role of culture in the process of urban development. They had experienced how to investigate the ways of benefiting from city culture in favor of city identity. Putting stress on the efficient role of cultural factors composing identity of a city throughout time, the example studies and their proposals indicated in this chapter show that achieving sufficient and healthy urban environments could be possible with identifying the importance of culture and benefits of culture-led development and using it in architectural and urban design.

Keywords: space, time, culture, identity, architecture, Bursa, Turkey

1. Introduction

Why do we like one urban space and other not? Why do we feel close to the town space we reside? Why do we adversely criticize the “ungracious”? and Why do we love the “fine” we encounter in the city space?

Where do we walk, if we make the time? Perhaps, it is an architectural pattern of discussion. Where we walk, what we like, what inspires us, and what we sincerely hate as image, area, activity, or style? Where we rediscover ourselves, or we find our sources and creativity, in what setting or environment?

The included contributions' aim is to raise some questions about the signs and symbols whose presence, appearance, or disappearance delimits emotional landmarks and experiments within

the urban space. Referring to Kevin Lynch's book, "What time is this place?" [1], the works undertaken in the scope of this chapter discuss how image affects the environment, well-being, and behavior of the individual. Signs and symbols, statues and buildings—monuments—are an important part of cultural and emotional space; their appearance and disappearance often mark our present, the transition and spatial temporality, structuring the memory on the city. Many arise discussions, polemic, questions, and debates. Whether they treat victory, power, and commemoration, those are also the hypostases of emotional and urban experiment they propose to the city.

As Manuel Castells states, "space is not only expression of society, it is one of society's fundamental material dimensions that has to be discussed in terms of social relationships, because matter and consciousness are interrelated" [2]. Space and place have a crucial role in understanding the city. There is a variety of metaphors to characterize life in the city. To see social interaction as a drama unlocks a rich vein of metaphors: image, theme, plot, script, roles, back-stage, protagonist, and audience. These can all be utilized to describe and explain *social interactions*. To be more precise, these interactions are socio-spatial. They all *take place*. They occur in a spatial setting. Space is not just backdrop. Space and place are crucial to what performances are given and how they are received. We can picture the city as a variety of settings all with differences in appropriate behavior [3].

What is certain is that palimpsest cities¹ abound in urban artifacts, as Aldo Rossi [5] names them. An urban artifact can be a city itself or a building, a district, and it is hard to describe it because of its ambiguity of language and the importance of personally experiencing it. The city as a work of art is nature and culture and also imagination and collective memory. Cities can be read as multi-layered texts, a narrative of signs and symbols, which are hidden in the design of the built environment that gives expression, meaning and identity to the political, social, and cultural forces spread out throughout time [3].

In the context of these, the city is considered as a cultural phenomenon in its own right and examined both as the product of cultures and as the site for their production. The graduate course² at the architecture department, which is the subject of this chapter, approaches the city as a socio-spatial phenomenon with its temporal dimension. The discussions and evaluations are made accepting the fact that the city is a "product of time" [6], a "historical creation" [7], and the "embodiment of history" [8]. "Does the identity of a city change throughout time?" and "Are the phases of urban development influenced by different cultures?" are the research questions of the study. The graduated architects were given the following assignment.

As a space-time traveller in the city of İznik, a county in Bursa, Turkey; travel in three different unique spaces of the city each of which reflects three different time periods. Explain your impressions giving examples about;

¹The concept of palimpsest is broadly used in urban planning and heritage studies. The concept of the palimpsest explains the construction stages of the architectural monuments and the urban morphology development during the era [4].

²Mim5056 "City Culture and Architecture" is an elective graduate course at Uludağ University, Institute of Science and Technology, Program of Architecture. The works undertaken in this chapter were prepared in the scope of this course in 2015–2016 spring semester.

- Urban pattern of the city
- Unique architectural components of the city
- Natural and cultural landscape of the city

The aim was to make the fresh architects conscious about the role of culture in the process of urban development and let them to investigate the ways of benefiting from city culture in favor of city identity. They were obliged to prepare an article of about 4500–6000 words supported by photographs, drawings/sketches, and maps. In order to be able to master the case area of the course, the following section summarizes development of İznik throughout history.

2. İznik (Nicaea) as a palimpsest city in Turkey

Because of Turkey's location on important commercial routes like historical spice and silk routes and the advantage of its mild climate and rich soil, Turkey hosted many different civilizations in different times. All these civilizations made their own settlements. However, in time, because of wars and natural disasters, they were wrecked and partially disappeared and became layers that were buried underground. These buried layers of history gradually increased throughout time and turned Anatolian land into a palimpsest structure (**Figure 1**).

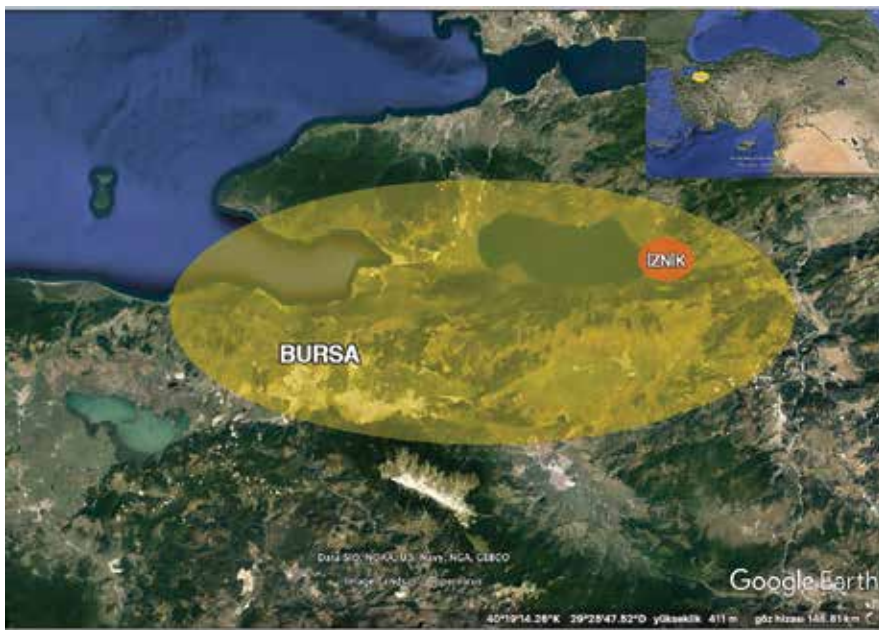


Figure 1. Location of İznik in Bursa and Turkey (adapted from Google earth in 10.10.2017).

The reasons of choosing İznik as a case field are the city's cultural, archeological, and geopolitical importance not only for Anatolian history but also for Christian theological structure and its being one of many palimpsest cities in Turkey.

According to ancient reports of famous geographer Strabon, Nicaea was founded in 316 BC by Antigonos and named after Lysimachos' (the general who took Nicaea from Antigonos) wife Nicaea [9]. During the Hellenistic period, the settlement was planned as a rectangular shaped city with four city gates (İstanbul, Lefke, Göl, and Yenişehir) and two main perpendicular axes, which can still be seen and actively used today [10]. The city had four major civilizations ruled over—Roman, Byzantine, Seljuks, and Ottoman—till it reaches to be a Turkish city. The remains dating earlier than Roman period can be seen out of the city walls but no remains left or yet found inside.

During the Byzantine period, Nicaea became an important religious center, particularly after Emperor Constantine converted the city into Christianity in 313AD. The first Christian Council called the great Council of Nicaea was held in Nicaea in 325AD with participation of more than 300 bishops coming from different regions of the Empire. The Seventh Ecumenical Council was also convened in Nicaea in 787 to deal with the iconoclastic controversy on the use of icons. This council was held in the church of Hagia Sophia, constructed by the Emperor Justinian over the ruins of the former church dating back to the fourth century [11, 12].

Anatolian Seljuks conquered Nicaea in 1081 made the city their capital and renamed it Nicaea. The Byzantines regained the city in 1097. After the Fourth Crusade captured Byzantine capital of Constantinople in 1204, Nicaea became the core of the successor Byzantine Empire after emperor Theodore Laskaris founded the Empire of Nicaea there. During this period, the city became an important political and cultural center with the construction of imperial and civic buildings such as the palace of the Patriarch, the hospitals, the charity institutions, and the churches. The city walls were also expanded and reinforced with plenty of towers. The pentagonal city walls surrounding İznik are 4970 m long. The construction of the city walls started in Hellenistic period, but they took their final shape by new additions during Roman and Byzantine periods [9] (**Figure 2**).

After having been captured by the Ottoman Army in 1331, İznik became a more active city and a center of art, culture, and trade. Many famous Muslim scholars lectured in Orhan Gazi Madrasah during this period. The first Mosque, Madrasah, and İmaret (Soup Kitchen) of Ottoman period were built in İznik. In the early years of the Ottoman Empire, İznik was the second in importance only to Bursa. However, after the capture of Constantinople in 1453, it was gradually reduced to the status of a provincial town, as many residents gravitated to the new capital.

İznik revived to a certain extent in 1514, when Selim I resettled there some Persian (probably Armenian) potters and their families whom he had taken after the conquest of Tabriz. The potters set up their kilns in İznik, and for the next century, the town was famous for the superb tiles produced there to adorn the mosque complexes and palaces of the Ottoman Empire. İznik tiles, which reached the peak of their perfection in the years 1570–1620, were used to decorate virtually all of the buildings erected by the great Ottoman architect Sinan (**Figure 3**). The quality of İznik tiles declined sharply after 1620, when the local potters seem to have lost the mastery of their art, and though the kilns continued to work on into the mid-eighteenth century, their products never again came close to the perfection of the great age [13].

By that time, İznik had been reduced to the status of a mere village, whose humble houses clustered within the imposing circuit of its ancient defense walls. In 1922, it was devastated in



Figure 2. Map of İznik (adapted from Google earth in 10.10.2017).



Figure 3. Some examples of İznik tiles.

the fighting that took place during the Turkish War of Independence, leaving its ruins as the Ottoman Empire came to an end. The town has recovered considerably since then, and the İznik Foundation has revived the lost ceramic art of the town. The workshops are turning out tiles of outstanding quality (Figure 4).

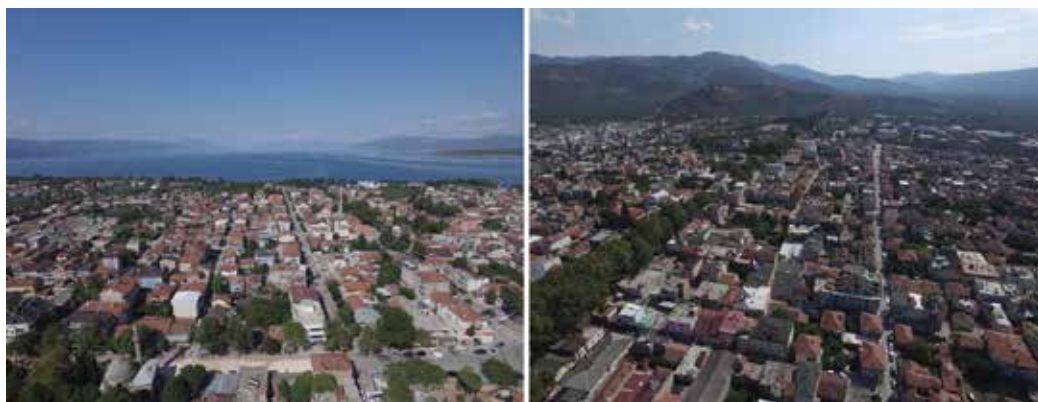


Figure 4. Some views from İznik today.

3. Space-time travelers in the city of İznik (Nicaea)

We had six space-time travelers, of which three are Erasmus exchange students coming from Romania, and the other three are Turkish graduate students. The diversity of the students was beneficial for the prosperity of the course and its outcomes at the end of the semester. Every work has been undertaken and presented individually.

Adonis Lemnaru from Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest likens the world's cultural heritage to a big puzzle in his work *"Space-Time Traveller in İznik"* (Figure 5).

He shows his consciousness about the importance of cultural heritage by indicating that, *"...We must ensure the protection of every single piece today, so that future generations may have the opportunities to enjoy the puzzle"*. After explaining a brief history of İznik, Lemnaru begins his travel and his first visit to İznik is set in Byzantine Period (787). Pretending to be a priest, Lemnaru first of all describes the natural environment of the settlement putting stress on İznik Lake, which was called as 'Askania' in the Prehistoric age, and Samanlı and Katırlı Mountains surrounding the lake. Then, he explains the importance of the city as being one of the major religious centers in the world in Byzantine period. Being the host of the First Council in 325 and the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787, İznik played an important role for formation of the Christian theological structure. The church of Hagia Sophia and the church of Dormition are the witnesses of these crucial events in the history.

Lemnaru's second visit is set in Ottoman period (sixteenth century), pretending to be a tile craftsman. He explains the development in the art of ceramic tiling in İznik. He also briefly describes the laborious process of tile making. The second emphasis of this period is the monumental buildings of Ottoman architecture, most of which are decorated with İznik tiles. Having been influenced by its story, he especially describes Imaret of Nilufer Hatun, which houses İznik Museum today. His third and the last visit is set in contemporaneity (2016) as a tourist. Description of this last visit includes his experiences and observations in İznik, beginning with an impressive sentence as: *"When you see İznik for the first time you may think that 'So,*

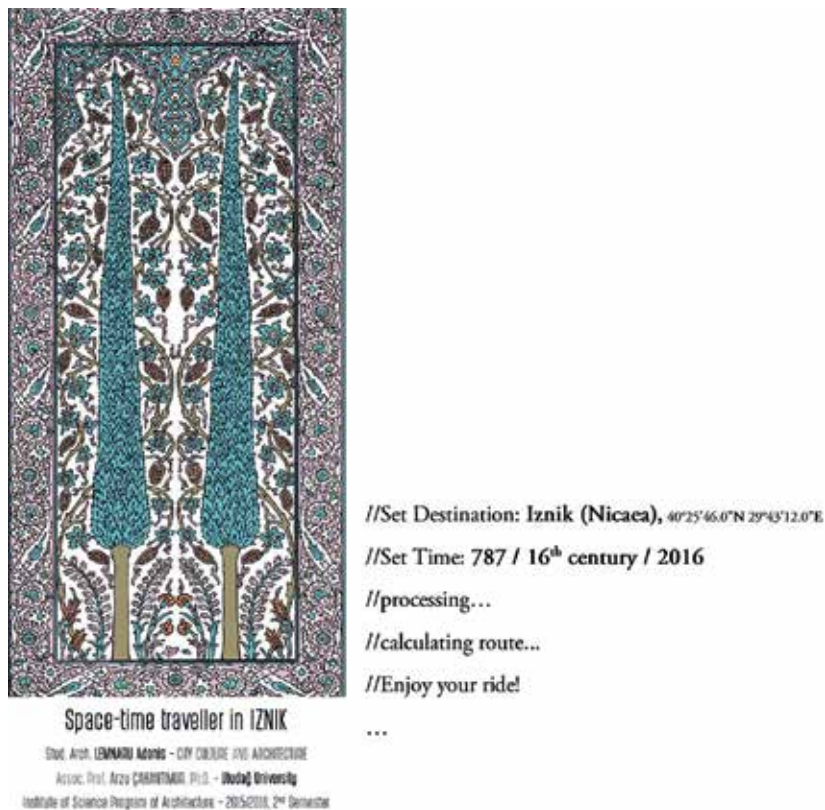


Figure 5. Cover page and the first page of Lemnaru's work.

time travel can also be made using a ferry or bus'!". And he explains İznik with the words "peace" and "tranquillity". Lemnaru's work is supported with some expressive illustrations (Figure 6).

Yasmin Asan from Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest realizes that she had been mistaken for her initial impression about İznik after spending 24 hours there. She shares her experiences as a traveler in her work "*Journal of a Space-time Traveller, The City of İznik*" (Figure 7). Different than Lemnaru, Asan has chosen three places in İznik, which reflects different time periods of the city and explains her impressions, feelings, and opinions about these places and their components.

Her work is composed of four chapters and an epilogue together with explanatory photos. Chapter 1 includes her journey from Bursa to İznik, her first impressions about the city and a brief explanation about the location and urban layout of İznik. Chapter 2 describes her first place in İznik, Hagia Sophia—Orhan Mosque. Being at the junction of the two main perpendicular streets of the city—each two ends of the streets leading from four main gates of the ancient city walls—this monument is one of the landmarks of İznik. Asan observes the traces of history inside the mosque, which was built as a typical Byzantine church that hosted the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Christianity and used as a museum today. She explains her interpretation as: "... It is, not only an architecture masterpiece but also a witness of the evolution,



Figure 6. Inside cover pages of Lemnar’s work.

the downfall and the rising of İznik. And it survived and raised from the ashes like a phoenix, proclaiming its majestic importance” (Figure 8).

Asan’s second place is a public area characterized by a fifteenth century mosque, Eşrefzade Rumi Mosque, of which minaret only is dated to the fifteenth century and the remaining parts are recently built. However, centuries ago it was a part of a sacred complex including a dervish lodge and the tomb of Eşrefzade Rumi. She explains the reason of her choice as: *“The reason I wanted to discuss about this area was because in my opinion, it seemed a very festive area, with a carnival like atmosphere, and paved streets dedicated to pedestrians, trees that border the alleys and hide the sky... The community seemed very united and everybody recognized our faces- the outside-of-the community face, the tourist. And they smiled...”*. In Chapter 3, she tells the story of this mosque and explains her observations about the public life around it (Figure 9).

The third place Asan chooses is the Lake of İznik, and she begins with some lines of a poem from Nazım Hikmet Ran³:

*This lake is Lake İznik
It is stagnant
It is dark
It is deep*

Like a well water it is inward the mountains. She explains her preference with her sentences: *“This is the third place I chose as a time traveller. The lake area. Because it has the biggest potential*

³He is a famous Turkish poet lived between 1901 and 1963. There is a great plane tree in one of the villages of İznik in memoriam of him.

Journal* of a space-time traveler

The city of Iznik

stud.arch.Asan Yasmin

*Journal is defined here as a cognitive map (also: mental map or mental model) a type of mental representation which serves an individual to acquire, code, store, recall, and decode information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in their everyday or metaphorical spatial environment.



Figure 7. Cover page of Asan's work.

of development, and because it is the most contemporary place of all İznik, in constant change. It is alive at night, in antithesis with the rest of the city. Because the lake never sleeps". The location and natural and cultural environment of the lake including the underwater Byzantine basilica⁴ are described. The problems that threaten this cultural landscape are discussed briefly (Figure 10). She thinks that not enough attention is given to this city and concludes with her fears about the future of İznik.

Ayşenur Kılıç from Uludag University Architectural Program in Bursa titled her work as "Culture-Space and Time Interrelations in İznik" and gives the historical development of the city in detail. She also explains every monumental building of the city briefly. However, by describing the physical properties and explaining the historical development process in detail, she puts stress on three different monuments belonging to three different periods of time. These are the ancient city walls for Roman period, Hagia Sophia Church for Byzantine period, and Green Mosque for Ottoman period. Kılıç proposes some conservation strategies as a conclusion.

⁴It is probably built in the fourth century and collapsed during an earthquake in 740.

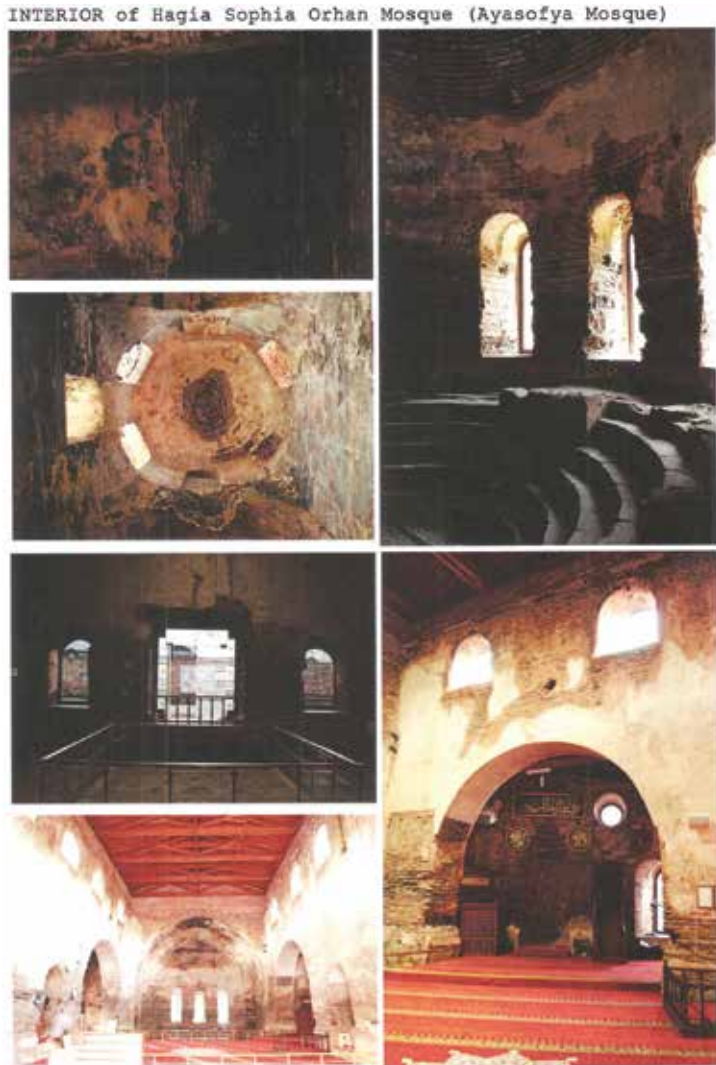


Figure 8. Some views of Hagia Sophia—Orhan Mosque from Asan’s work.

Pinar Tuğcu from Uludag University Architectural Program in Bursa discusses the interrelations of city and culture concepts in her work titled as *“Time and Space in İznik”*. She evaluates Rapoport’s ideas⁵ about the role of culture in environment and Lynch’s work⁶ on city and time. Then, she investigates time and space interrelations in İznik. She begins with analyzing her own cognitive map of İznik that she drew after her first visit (**Figure 11**).

⁵Amos Rapoport is a professor of architecture, who has been dealing with environment and behavior studies since 1960s. Rapoport [14, 15] are used in her study.

⁶Kevin Lynch was a professor of city planning who dealt with personal images of change and time in cities. Lynch [1] is used in her study.

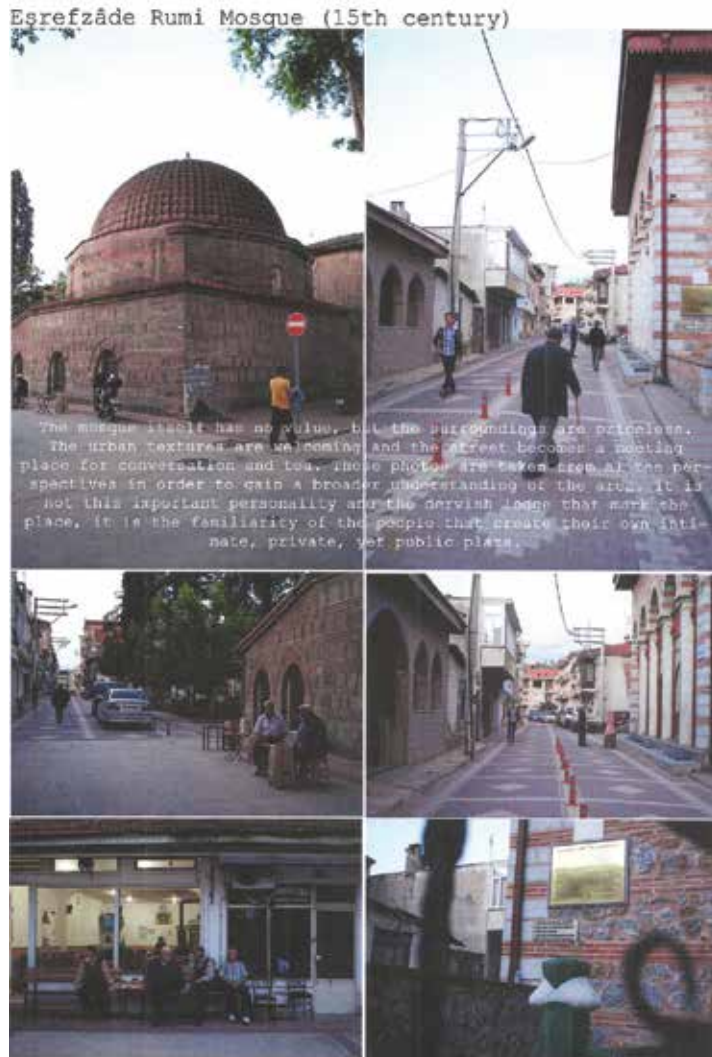


Figure 9. Some views of Esrefzade mosque from Asan's work.

As Kılıç does, Tuğcu also chooses different monuments reflecting three different periods of time. The ancient Roman Theater is the one from Roman period, and Green Mosque and Imaret of Nilüfer Hatun are from Ottoman period. Different than Kılıç, Tuğcu evaluates the city walls not as being a Roman monument but instead as the main element of city image from past to today. According to Tuğcu, the city walls had witnessed all of the civilizations in İznik throughout history without losing their importance. She examines the important buildings and public places of the city in relation with four main gates of the surrounding walls of the city and describes the walls, the water channels around the walls, and the gates in detail (**Figure 12**). She thinks that the most important and meaningful built elements of the city reflecting its palimpsest structure are these walls and gates.

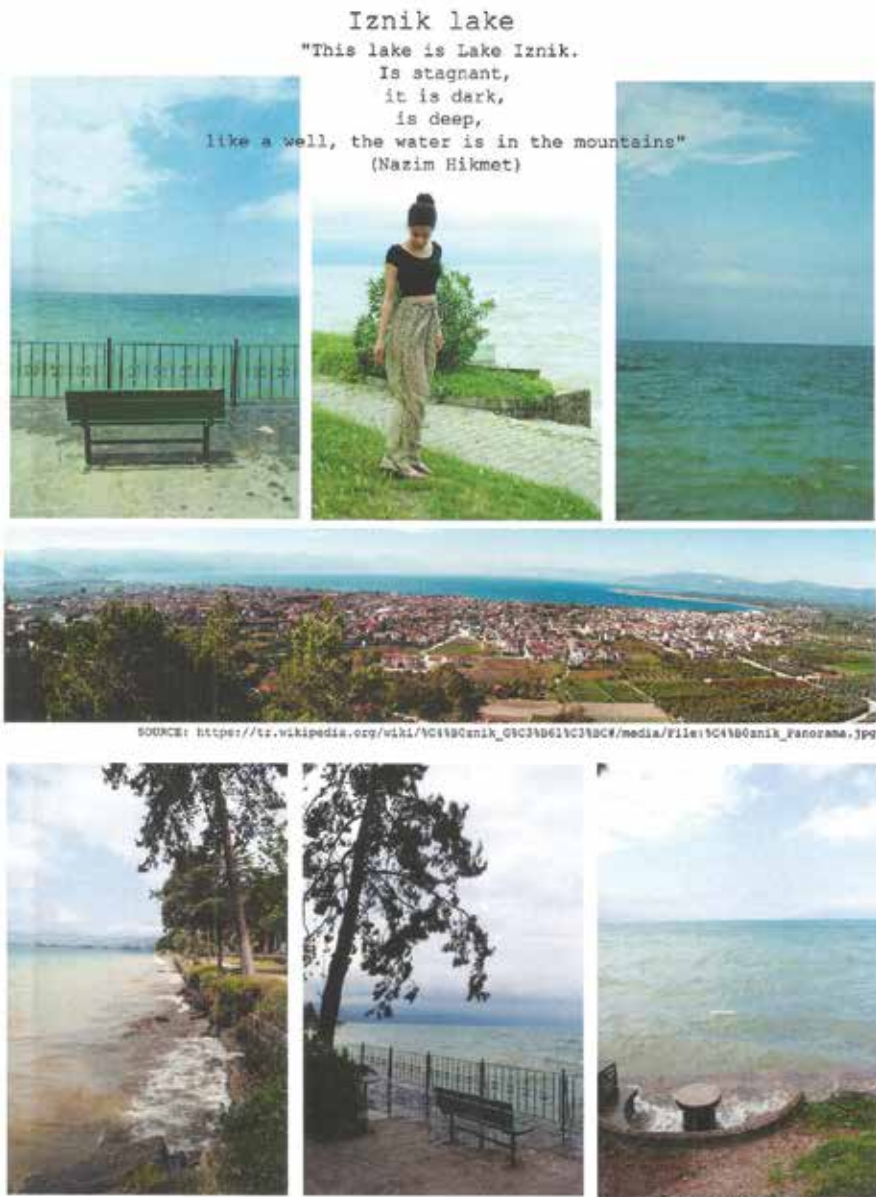


Figure 10. Some views of İznik Lake from Asan's work.

Viorel Cosmin Popescu from Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest is related especially with the urban layout of the city in his work titled as *"Time Traveller in the City of İznik"*. He analyzes the social and economic factors affecting urban development of the city. He uses his observations and archival analysis together in order to understand historical background from the interrelations of city network and the buildings. He especially deals with structural systems and materials of the buildings including houses in order to

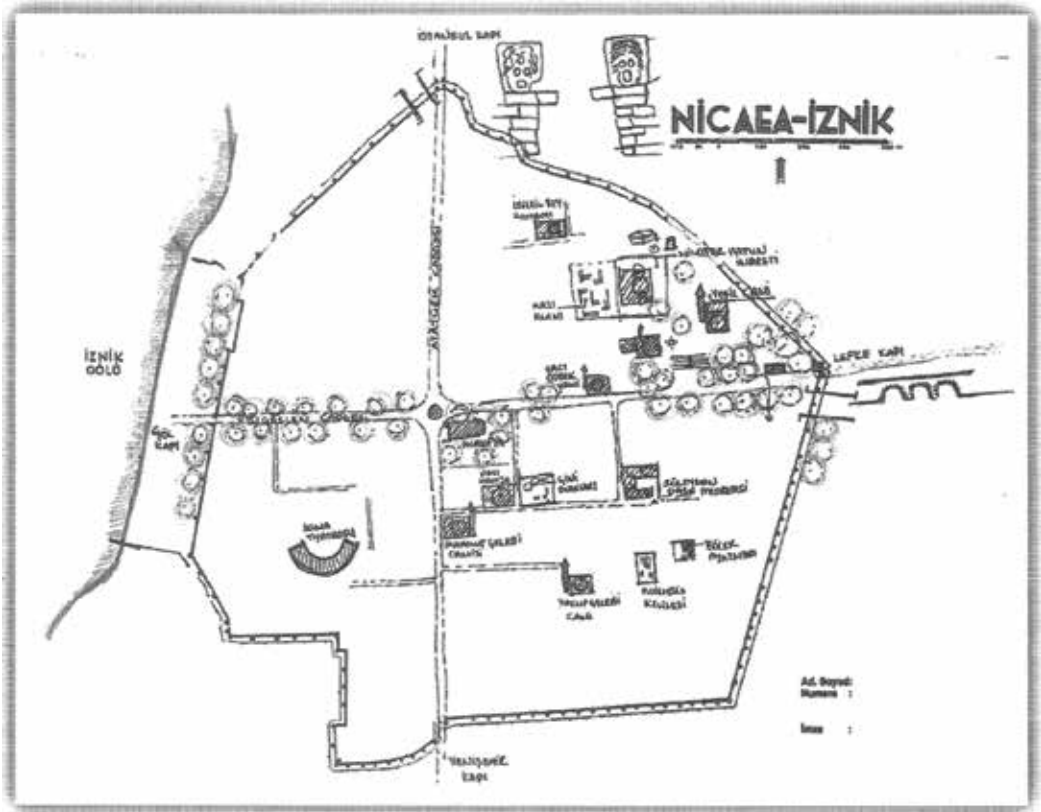


Figure 11. Tuğcu's cognitive map of İznik. İznik Gölü: İznik Lake, Göl Kapı: Göl Gate, Kılıçarslan Caddesi: Kılıçarslan Street, Atatürk Caddesi: Atatürk Street, İstanbul Kapı: İstanbul Gate, İsmail Bey Hamamı: İsmail Bey Bath, Kazı Alanı: Excavation Site, Nilüfer Hatun İmareti: Nilüfer Hatun İmaret (an inn for pilgrims), Yeşil Camii: Yeşil Mosque, Hacı Özbek Camii: Hacı Özbek Mosque, Lefke Kapı: Lefke Gate, Süleyman Paşa Medresesi: Süleyman Paşa Madrasah (an institution of higher education), Böcek Ayazması: Böcek Holy Spring, Kolmesis Kilisesi: Kolmesis Church, Yakup Çelebi Camii: Yakup Çelebi Mosque, Mahmut Çelebi Camii: Mahmut Çelebi Mosque, Hacı Hamza Camii: Hacı Hamza Mosque, Çini Ocakları: Ceramic Tile Ovens, Ayasofya : Hagia Sophia, Yenişehir Kapı: Yenişehir Gate, Roma Tiyatrosu: Rome Theatre.

determine the periods to which they belong. He thinks that when investigating any problem of a city's identity, all the related historical facts should be seen as parts making up the whole. He concludes with his sentences: "... To be able to define the identity of such an historical city, which combines positive and negative factors within itself, it would be necessary to find out its specific past and connect this with the present".

Tuğba Hümeýra Bilir from Uludağ University Architectural Program in Bursa investigates the reflection of culture on the space in her work titled as "Impact of Culture on Space (İznik)". She explains the interactions between city and cultural processes and the role of time throughout the process using the related literature. Then, she gives brief information nearly about all of the monumental buildings. However, in the following parts of her study, she puts stress on the natural environment and especially the great plane trees identifying the main two axes—thus urban layout—of the city and their effect on her emotions about the city (Figure 13).



Figure 12. Some views of the gates and water channels of İznik from Tuğcu’s work.

The common agreement of the young architects was that the city is more than just a physical entity, more than a place where people live and work. The aim of the assignment by letting them to be space-time travelers in İznik was to improve their imagination and make them to develop their own metaphors. However, only two of the students could use their imagination. Lemnaru and Asan were successful in presenting their 24-hour experience including their feelings and dreams about İznik.

Although the theoretical perspectives in environment-behavior research were discussed as a considerable part of the course throughout the semester, there were no obligations about the methodologies of the work. The only must was to spend a day in İznik. However, the final products were evaluated by means of proper preference of research methods, quality of the literary expressions, and presentation type.

At this point, Lemnaru and Asan used a phenomenological approach⁷ in their works. They were especially interested with why places are important for people and they searched for it via examining human actions, meanings, situations, and events in İznik. Kılıc and Tuğcu’s works were descriptive. They made physical and archival analysis in order to describe the existing urban layout and its elements together with the probable reasons of the urban development process. Popescu and Bilir’s works were composed mostly of a descriptive approach; however, they also included their emotions and subjective evaluations about İznik. Popescu was interested in the social and cultural life in the city. He described his observations about local people’s way of life and urban livelihood and argued about the relations between urban pattern and socio-cultural variables. And his feelings let him to think about the previous lives that took place in the city. Thus, it can be said that Popescu and Bilir made use of both phenomenological and descriptive methods. All of the students used some of the major qualitative methods for environment and behavior research. These are observation of environment and people, interviews, mapping, photography, and drawing and interpreting historical documents.

⁷Phenomenology is the interpretive study of human experience. The aim is to examine and clarify human situations, events, meanings, and experiences “as they spontaneously occur in the course of daily life” (von Eckartsberg, p. 3; from Seamon [16]).



Figure 13. A view from the perpendicular axis with the plane trees.

4. Conclusion

The way an urban space speaks about itself can be varied, but it always has an age of consecration, of architectural and artistic value, easy to detect. It gives clues to the visitors as well as to the residents about the historical, social, and cultural identity of the city. This identity is more or less subject to changes, but, in a succession of fundamentals of representation, it has defined a spirit of the place and predestination, a certain authenticity which history has managed to shape differently depending on the particular direct reaction to these. What the city expects from itself is seen in the image it offers, indicating to the residents the level of recognition they might expect as townspeople.

If we repeat our introductory questions as: *why do we like one urban space and other not? Why do we feel close to the town space we reside?* The discussion and interrogations can be multiple and diverse if we were to question the validity of the enunciated message, location, scale, and function. In a city where history wrote not only facts, great buildings, and spaces, but also essential traumas, their energy can be certainly converted into a positive message for the benefit of remembrance/memory, identity, sincerity, and meaning.

In a particular and characteristic way, İznik (Nicaea) talks about its history through architectural and urban space; through centrality, traffic axes and its specific landscape. A certain

cultural continuity is visible in the image of places, and this continuity plays a central role in the everyday life of İznik.

So as to conclude, it should be pointed out that to study the role of culture in environment and behavior interactions, one should understand the environment, including its physical and socio-cultural properties. Tracing the physical environment together with observing the social and cultural environment in a harmonious way would be a useful tool to investigate the role of culture in achieving a sufficient and healthy urban development process that provides people and communities a strong sense of identity.

This study has addressed two different issues, which are discussed in the context of environment-behavior interaction system that constitutes the great part of urban life. One is the space-time interaction affecting the culture and identity of a city and shapes everyday life. The other is the evaluations and interpretations of young architects on transformation of urban spaces throughout time and its effects on the identity of a city. As being architects, their understanding and interpretations about culture of a city are so critical because the basic aim of architecture as a discipline is to achieve sufficient and healthy urban environments for people, and this could be possible with identifying the importance of culture and benefits of culture-led development and using it in architectural and urban design.

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Mexican Rural Communities' Metabolism and Its Impact on Socioeconomic Indicators

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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Abstract

The rural poverty in Mexico is mainly due to the lack of access to basic services, resources, technology, and scientific knowledge. Despite the Mexican government's efforts to contribute on improving income levels and employment in rural communities, the challenge that faces the communities to achieve sustainable development is very significant. The principal purpose of the study is to analyze the metabolic scaling of cultural, environmental, and economic aspects in the context of Mexican rural communities in order to predict the energy necessary to maintain them connected and to estimate their impact on the improvement of socio-economic indicators. First, we used the socio-metabolic approach to the study of social complex systems in rural context. The social metabolism approach aims at the study of the material and energy exchange relationships between societies and their natural environment. Then, we analyzed the metabolic scaling of cultural, environmental, and economic aspects in the context of Mexican rural communities. Finally, the energy necessary to maintain the community connected and its impact on the socio-economic indicators was evaluated. We consider that results from this study can support the design of public policies focused on the improving the living conditions of Mexican rural communities.

Keywords: culture, socioeconomic indicators, metabolism, rural communities.

1. Introduction

In 2010, rural population in Mexico was around 25 million and 61% of people were living below the national rural poverty line [1]. The main factors that influence the state of poverty in Mexico are mainly the geographical area and proximity to urban centers, ethnicity, and gender. Following [1], the incidence of rural poverty is highest in areas that are geographically

located far from urban centers. Also, the poverty rate in indigenous communities is above compared to that in nonindigenous communities. In 2011, 75% of indigenous people in the country (5.6 million) were living below the poverty line. For instance, in Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Guerrero states, extreme poverty affects more than half of the population, 1.9, 1.7, and 1.7 million, respectively. The rural poverty in Mexico is due mainly by the poor access to basic services such as health, education, sanitation, housing, and resources such as land, technology, and scientific knowledge. The Mexican public expenditure in food is highly progressive, education expenditure is moderately progressive, expenditure on health is practically neutral, while public resources exercised in economic welfare and social security are regressive [2]. Although there are several federal states with processes of assessment, it is necessary to have a greater contribution at municipal and local governmental levels in the process of transparency on the use of public resources [2].

Despite the Mexican government's efforts to contribute on improving income levels and employment in rural communities, the challenges that face such communities to achieve sustainable development are very significant. For instance, rural women are now playing an active participation in socioeconomic and political decision-making not just in their own communities (local level) but also at the national level. One case comes from the indigenous communities called *Zapatistas*. On August 10, 2017, the barrios and tribes from Chiapas formed the National Indigenous Congress, so the *Zapatistas* by first time will subscribe the name of their partner María de Jesús Patricia Martínez in the 2018 electoral elections as candidate for the Mexican presidency [3].

On the other hand, one tangible initiative of the Mexican government to contribute on improving income levels and employment in rural communities has been the National Network for Sustainable Rural Development (RENDRUS), currently managed by the Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fishery and Food Secretariat (SAGARPA). This network was created in 1996, through the action of Colegio de Postgraduados, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Rural Development Sub-Secretariat, to promote a series of annual meetings for exchanging and evaluating of experiences between rural producers, seeking a process of self-learning, at local, regional, and national levels, which would have a specific impact on Mexican rural development [4] (**Figure 1**).

The decision-making in rural communities every day face unpredictable situations that change over time, formed by complex systems of problems. Due to their inherent complexity, Mexican rural areas which are problematic cannot be studied using traditional approaches of science. Therefore, it is necessary to use modern science tools based on the complex systems approach whose methodological framework is complexity sciences that are derived from the different perspectives of the concept of complexity [5]. But what do we mean by complexity? As a background, we will begin by explaining that in the mid-40s of the last century, a group of prominent scientists from different fields such as Ross Ashby, Heinz von Foerster, Kurt Lewin, Margaret Mead, John von Neuman, Arturo Rosenblueth, Norbert Wiener, Claude Shannon, Talcott Parsons, among others, held academic meetings called Macy Conferences, taking place in New York. The purpose pursued by scientists with these lectures was to establish the foundations of a general science in the work of the human mind. This



Figure 1. Annual meeting RENDRUS 2016.

was how they carried out the first interdisciplinary studies in Systems Theory, Cybernetics, and Cognitive Sciences. This fact was the basis of what was known as the complexity sciences. At the same time, the first classification of complexity came from Warren Weaver in his article, *Science and Complexity*, which was published after World War II in 1948 [6]. From the complexity perspective, rural communities can be conceptualized as complex adaptive systems because they are composed of interrelated elements such as local people and organizations that generate information and whose interactions are based on simple rules (i.e., social norms). Rural communities as complex adaptive systems are characterized by heterogeneity, interconnectivity, scaling, circular causality, and development as follows:

- Heterogeneity: diversity of people and organizations based on cultural aspects (**Figure 2**).
- Interconnectivity: everything is connected forming social networks.
- Scaling: rural communities of different sizes have different problems.
- Circular causality: cause and effect are mixed.

- Development: rural communities as systems change in open-ended ways exchanging information, material, and energy with the complex environment (**Figure 3**).
- Adaptability: people and organizations adapt to new interrelations in order to face the complex environment and its uncertainty.

As [7] states, space, time, and infrastructure play a fundamental role in enabling social interactions in allowing them to become open-ended in terms of increased connectivity and sustainable from the point of view of energy use, such interactions imply cost of people, material, energy, and information flows through decentralized networks of infrastructure that are built gradually (in some cases slowly) as the geographical zone grows. In this direction, rural communities to achieve their full socioeconomic potential communities first need to expand their social connectivity per person.

In analogy to the metabolism of biological organisms, the term “social metabolism” was coined by claiming that any social system not only reproduces itself culturally, by communication, but also biophysically through a continuous energetic and material exchange with the natural environment and eventually with other social systems [8–11]. As Fischer-Kowalski et al. suggest, social metabolism can be quantified in terms of energetic and material flows per time period,



Figure 2. Cultural aspects of a Mixe community in Oaxaca Mexico.



Figure 3. Conceptual model of rural communities as complex adaptive systems.

usually a year, where the size of the flows required depends on the size of the biophysical structures (stocks) of the social system and on the socio-metabolic regime [11]. The key to distinguishing a socio-metabolic regimen is the source of energy used and the main technologies of energy conversion [12]. In this direction, the socio-metabolic regimes are very dynamic and are constituted by a set of opportunities and constraints within which certain dynamics take place [11].

The social metabolism recognizes that economic resource use, the material composition, and the sources of the output flows are historically variable and they are a function of the socio-economic production and consumption system [13]. It is important to note that the socio-metabolic approach shares with the complex systems approach the notion of emergence and self-organizing dynamics. At present, little is known about applying the complexity and the socio-metabolic perspectives to analyze the socioeconomic development of rural communities, specifically in the context of Mexico. The principal purpose of the study is to analyze the metabolic scaling of cultural, environmental, and economic aspects in the context of Mexican rural communities in order to predict the energy necessary to maintain them connected and estimate their impact on the improvement of socioeconomic development. We consider the results from this study can support the design of better public policies focus on the improving the living conditions of Mexican rural communities. Here, we considered that indigenous communities are geographically embedded in rural areas of Mexican territory, so they contribute to achieve the sustainable rural development.

The chapter is divided into five main sections. In Section 2, the socio-metabolic approach applied to the study of social complex systems in rural context is reviewed. In Section 3, the analysis of the metabolic scaling of cultural, environmental, and economic aspects in the context of Mexican rural communities is presented. The energy necessary to maintain the community connected and its impact on the socioeconomic development is evaluated in Section 4. The concluding remarks are drawn in Section 5.

2. The socio-metabolic approach applied to the study of social complex systems in rural environment

On the one hand, as stated in [11], half of the world's population still lives in rural areas and it relies on subsistence farming, gathering, hunting, and fishing to survive. Following [11], the dominant development model for rural areas is still the eventual industrialization of their farming, appearing to be the only chance to reduce the high rates of poverty, health problems, and illiteracy levels. On the other hand, the sustainable development (SD) is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs [14]. In this context, in September 2015, world leaders adopted the United Nations 2030 Agenda for SD, which is a universal plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity containing 17 new comprehensive, far-reaching, and people-centered SD goals: (1) end poverty, (2) end hunger, (3) ensure healthy lives, (4) ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, (5) achieve gender equality, (6) ensure sustainable management of water, (7) ensure access to energy, (8) promote sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all, (9) built resilient infrastructure, (10) reduce inequality, (11) make cities sustainable, (12) ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, (13) take urgent action to combat climate change, (14) conserve and sustainably use marine resources, (15) protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, (16) promote peace and include societies for sustainable development, and last but not the least, (17) strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

In the rural context, nowadays, traditional knowledge plays an integral role in achieving SD goals, as the practices and knowledge developed by rural communities implicitly endorse practices of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources [15]. Millions of rural communities have used their traditional knowledge over the last 10,000 years to ensure food and livelihood security in a wide range of ecosystems throughout the domestication of plants and animals and the development of agriculture [16].

Historically, the socioeconomic and ecological complex systems have been coupled through direct input and output flows (e.g., land use) and indirect effects, such as the availability and quality of other ecosystems services or the changes in atmospheric conditions. The land use intensification, for example, denotes increase in socioeconomic inputs to and/or outputs from land and thus closely refers to socioeconomic material or energy flows [17]. A theoretical approach that aims at improving our understanding of the interactions between socioeconomic and ecological complex systems in rural environment has been adopted from the biology and it is known as the *metabolism*. According to [18], the application of the biological concept of *metabolism* to complex social systems can be traced back to Marx who talks about the *metabolism* between man and nature as mediated by the labor process, such analogy grew from the observation that biological systems and complex socioeconomic systems depend on a continuous throughput of energy and materials to maintain their internal structure. The

social metabolism perspective helps us to understand the dynamic of complex social systems in terms of energy and material flows per period of time. As [11] explains, the size of the flows required depends, on the one hand, on the size of the biophysical structures (or stocks) of the complex social system (i.e., all human-made infrastructures), and on the other hand, on the socio-metabolic regime.

Associated with the concept of social metabolism, we find the notion of socio-metabolic transition to describe fundamental changes in socioeconomic energy and material use along the history. In some cases, such transitions have implied the multiplication of metabolic rates, for instance, the transition from agrarian toward an industrial society. In other cases, socio-metabolic transitions have implied the emancipation of the energy systems from land use. For instance, the transition from a solar energy system tapping into renewable flows of biomass toward a fossil-fuel-powered energy system based on the exploitation of large stocks of energy resources [19]. One interesting study about the potential use of social metabolism perspective to study the industrialization of the agriculture is presented in [20]. In this study, the information about how the socio-ecological transition took place in agriculture is analyzed.

The socioeconomic metabolism conceptualizes society as a hybrid of the complex cultural system of recursive communication and biophysical structures such as the human population, artifacts, and livestock [21] (Figure 4). Therefore, interactions between nature and culture can only proceed indirectly via the biophysical structure of society. Different socio-metabolic regimes have different metabolic profiles that can be expressed as total quantities for a complex social system and they can be referred to the number of the human populations the complex social system sustain and are calculated as metabolic rates (in terms of energy or material required per person per year) [11].

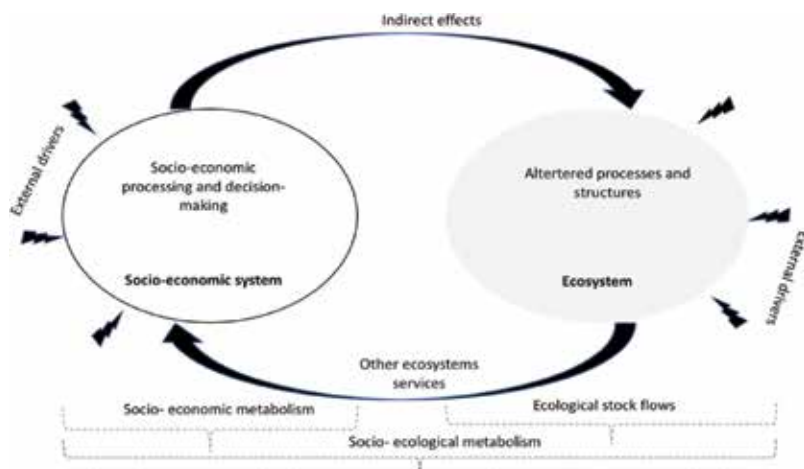


Figure 4. Socioeconomic metabolism conceptualization, adapted from [11].

3. Analysis of the metabolic scaling of cultural, environmental, and economic aspects

From the social metabolism perspective, the evolution of the linguistic families and groups, as a result of social interactions among speakers, help us to understand the dynamics of indigenous communities in Mexico in terms of energy and material flow per period of time. UNESCO has recognized languages as powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. At the global level, the linguistic diversity is not uniformly distributed. Only nine countries concentrate almost 3500 languages—Papúa, New Guinea, Indonesia, Nigeria, India, Cameroon, Australia, Mexico, Zaire, and Brazil [22]. In Mexico, the National Institute of Indigenous Languages has recognized the existence of 68 groups derived from 11 language families with 364 variants in the *Catalog of National Indigenous Languages* [23]. The linguistic families considered are: Álgica, Yuto-nahua, Cochimí-yumana, Seri, Oto-mangue, Maya, Totonaco-tepehua, Tarasca, Mixe-zoque, Chontal de Oaxaca, and Huave. The Mexican federal states that have had the largest number of linguistic groups based on historical settlements are Chiapas and Oaxaca with 14, Campeche with 12, Quintana Roo and Veracruz with 10 (Figure 5). Based on the number of speakers, only four linguistic groups concentrate the largest number of speakers: Nahuatl (1,376,000 speakers), Maya (759,000 speakers), Mixteco (400,000 speakers), and Zapoteco (400,000 speakers) [24]. In general, native languages are shaped by human cognitive abilities and process of perception, attention, learning, categorization, schematization, and memory and are used for human socio-cultural interaction. Its origins and capacities are dependent on its role in the sociocultural life of inhabitants of rural communities. As languages plays a fundamental role in society and culture, providing the central means by which cultural knowledge is transmitted over time, the biophysical structures needed for this purpose have been more favored in the cases of Nahuatl, Maya, Mixteco, and Zapoteco communities in terms of the number of speakers than in other cases. Unfortunately, the migration phenomenon has influenced people to go outside from their place of birth searching better economic conditions due to the lack of sustainable development initiatives to be implemented.

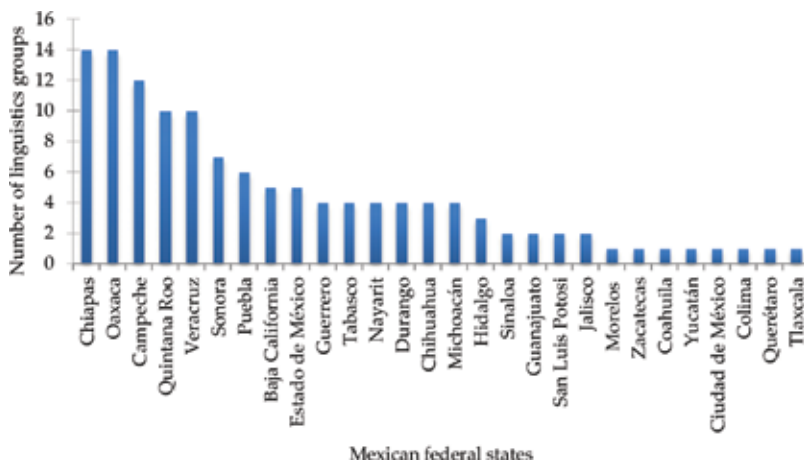


Figure 5. Number of linguistic groups in Mexican federal states.

On the one hand, in 2017, the Mexican Congress approved the General Law of Culture and Cultural Rights (LGCCR) that promotes and protects the exercise of cultural rights and establishes the coordination bases for the access of goods and services provided by the State in cultural matters [25]. Its provisions are of public order and social interest and of general observance in the national territory. The cultural manifestations referred in this law are the past and present material and immaterial elements inherent to history, art, traditions, practices, and knowledge that identify groups, peoples, and communities.

Traditional knowledge of rural communities has played an integral role in their sustainable development, since practices and knowledge have supported the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources [26]. In this way, millions of rural communities throughout the world have used their traditional knowledge to ensure livelihoods and food security in a wide range of ecosystems, taming plants and animals and developing agriculture [27]. Traditional knowledge as a cumulative body of knowledge, know-how, practices, and representations maintained and developed by peoples with extended histories of interaction with the natural environment [28] is part of a cultural complex encompassing the systems of language, nomenclature, and classification, resource use practices, ritual, spirituality, and worldview, which support decision-making at the local level on the aspects of everyday life, such as hunting, fishing, gathering, agriculture, preparation, preservation, and distribution of food, locating, collecting and storing water, dealing with diseases and injury, the interpretation of weather and climate phenomena, clothing and tool manufacture, construction and maintenance of shelters, management of the ecological relationship of society and nature, and adaptation.

Since the 1990s, a number of international agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) and international protocols, such as the Nagoya Protocol (2010), have begun to assess the capacity of traditional knowledge to contribute to progress socioeconomic and environmental protection [18]. With regard to the United Nations General Assembly [29], it recognized in 2007 that respect for traditional knowledge, cultures, and practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and to the proper management of the environment (61/295—United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). In fact, Article 31 provides that indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions, as well as manifestations of their sciences, technologies, and cultures, including human resources and genetics, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, traditional sports and games, and visual and performing arts. Indigenous peoples also have the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their intellectual property of such cultural heritage, their traditional knowledge, and their traditional cultural expressions. However, in Mexico, the crucial role of traditional knowledge in indigenous rural communities has been ignored over the past few centuries, and they are not passed on to the new generations because they have been devalued and discriminated against since the time of the colonization of the village. There are no initiatives for promotion or dissemination by current governments due to a limited federal budget for these activities, but above all, the right to maintain indigenous intellectual property is continuously violated [30].

As [31] states, Mexico is one of the few countries in the world with mega biodiversity. It has about 10% of all species known in the world (see **Table 1**). Following [31], Mexico has

Country	Vascular plants	Mammals	Birds	Reptiles
Brazil	56,215	648	1712	630
Colombia	48,000	456	1815	520
China	32,200	502	1221	387
Indonesia	29,375	670	1604	511
Mexico	23,424	564	1150	864
Venezuela	21,073	353	1392	293
Ecuador	21,000	271	1559	374
Peru	17,144	441	1781	298
Australia	15,683	376	851	880
Madagascar	9505	165	262	300

Table 1. Mexico biodiversity, adapted from [33].

abundant natural resources: forest, soil, water, and fish resources. Oaxaca is the federal state with the highest biodiversity in Mexico, with 8405 vascular plants, 190 mammals, 736 birds, 245 species reptiles, and 1103 butterfly species [32]. However, during many decades, pressures from economic activities on natural resources have been mounting and most major ecosystems have suffered serious degradation such as biodiversity loss and increased CO₂ emissions.

From the social metabolism perspective, rural communities are not just large collections of people instead they are agglomerations of social links. Space, time, and infrastructure play a fundamental role enabling social interactions in allowing them to become sustainable from the point of view of energy use. In general, social interactions imply cost of people, material, energy, and information flows through networks of infrastructure, but in some cases, the infrastructure does not exist, so citizens do not interact and in consequence, the level of poverty is very high. Here, we show some statistics from Oaxaca [34] (**Figure 6**), Chiapas [35] (**Figure 7**), and Guerrero [36] (**Figure 8**).

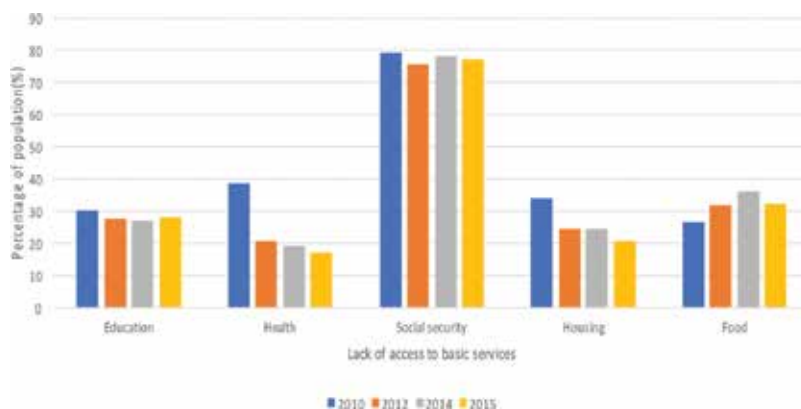


Figure 6. Statistics about the lack of access to basic services in Oaxaca, from 2010 to 2015, adapted from [34].

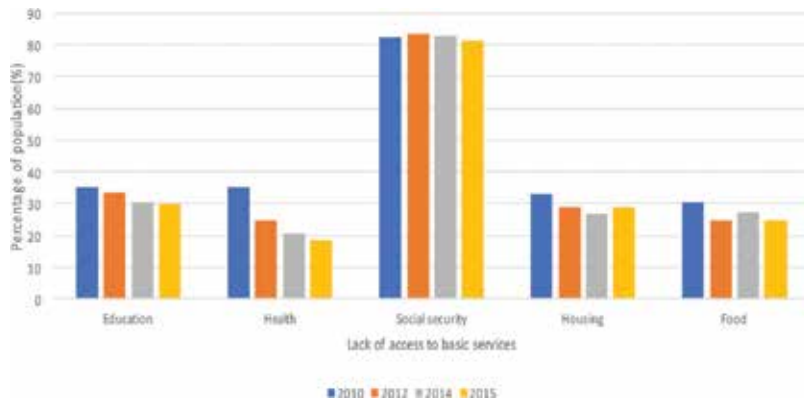


Figure 7. Statistics about the lack of access to basic services in Chiapas, from 2010 to 2015, adapted from [35].

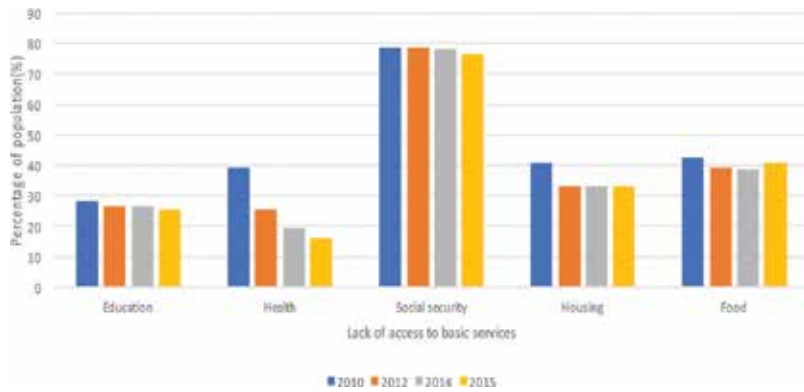


Figure 8. Statistics about the lack of access to basic services in Guerrero, from 2010 to 2015, adapted from [36].

4. Evaluation of the energy necessary to maintain rural communities connected

In this section, we evaluate the energy necessary to maintain rural communities connected. The importance of that is based on the assumption, from the social metabolism approach, that Mexican rural communities to realize their full socioeconomic potential need to expand connectivity per person and of social inclusion because they reproduce in two directions: culturally and biophysically. To quantify the social metabolism of rural communities in terms of energetic and material flows, we need, first, to specify the socio-metabolic regime of Mexican rural communities based on the source of energy used and the main technologies of energy conversion, and second, to calculate the energy flow per capita required that depends on the biophysical structures of Mexican rural communities.

On the one hand, in Mexico, less than three million people live without access to electricity, which are concentrated mainly in rural communities located in southern parts of Mexico [37]. According to the World Bank [38], the level of poverty, the distance from the existing grid, and the small size and dispersion of Mexican rural communities, all preclude efficient grid connection. Following [37], within the next decade, the Mexican government plans to provide electricity to 40–50% of rural communities that lack access to electricity at the moment, where at least 8% of this will come from renewable energy. On the other hand, Mexico's population which lives in the rural areas with access to electricity consumes on an average of 250 kWh per capita per year, while in indigenous communities, geographically embedded in rural areas, the electricity consumption is less than 100 kWh per capita per year. In contrast, population which lives in the urban areas consumes more than 470 kWh per capita per year. Wood and sugarcane bagasse are the basis for thermal biomass applications in the end-user sectors. In rural areas, located in central and southern Mexico, households are the main users of wood fuel for cooking and heating [37].

Nowadays, solar resources in Mexico are barely exploited on any small-scale or commercial basis. However, Northwestern Mexico shows bigger potential for solar power generation where daily average solar irradiation in the region can exceed 8 kWh/m² in spring and summer. But the energetic demand is concentrated on the central and the southern zones. The advantage of solar photovoltaic (PV) rural electrification systems is that it can provide electricity to households, agricultural pumping, and mobile phone infrastructure, without access to grid power [37]. In this context, the access to mobile phone infrastructure can contribute to the living

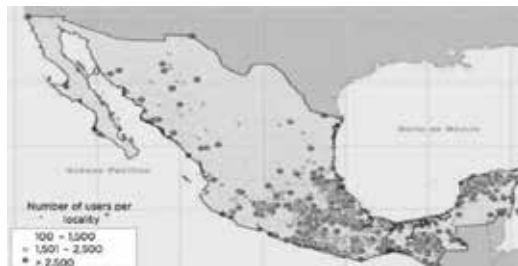


Figure 9. Users of wood fuel per locality, adapted from [36].



Figure 10. Installation of a mini solar PV system for telecommunications purposes, a rural community in Oaxaca Mexico.

conditions improvement of rural communities because it let to expand connectivity per person favoring social interactions that imply cost, material, energy, and information flows through networks of telecommunications that will need to be built gradually (**Figures 9 and 10**).

5. Concluding remarks

The principal purpose of the study is the analysis of the metabolic scaling of cultural, environmental, and economic aspects in the context of Mexican rural communities in order to predict the energy necessary to maintain them connected and estimate their impact on the improvement of socioeconomic development. Social metabolism claims that any social system not only reproduces itself culturally, by communication but also biophysically through a continuous energetic and material exchange with the natural environment and eventually with other social systems. From the ecological perspective, Mexico is one of the few countries in the world with mega biodiversity. It has about 10% of all species known in the world. But, during many decades, pressures from economic activities on natural resources have been mounting and most major ecosystems have suffered serious degradation such as biodiversity loss and increased CO₂ emissions. From the cultural perspective, the National Institute of Indigenous Languages has recognized the existence of 68 groups derived from 11 language families with 364 variants in the *Catalog of National Indigenous Languages*. However, federal states as Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Guerrero present extreme poverty that affects more than half of the population. The rural poverty in Mexico arises mainly from a lack of access to basic services. Also, in Mexico, less than three million people live without access to electricity, which are concentrated mainly in rural communities located in southern parts of Mexico. Poverty, distance from the existing grid, and the small size and dispersion of Mexican rural communities, all preclude efficient grid connection in rural communities where wood and sugarcane bagasse are the basis for thermal biomass applications in the end-user sectors. Unfortunately, solar resources in Mexico are barely exploited on any large-scale or commercial basis mainly due to the distance between supply and demand which means that planning is needed for transmission infrastructure in coordination with solutions for grid integration of renewables. It is important to note that infrastructure plays a fundamental role in enabling social interactions in allowing them to become open-ended in terms of increased connectivity and sustainable from the point of view of energy use. Finally, as the land use intensification denotes increase in socioeconomic inputs and/or outputs from land and thus closely refers to socioeconomic material or energy flows; we consider that it needs to be based on traditional knowledge of communities locally as it implicitly endorses practices of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources.

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Losing One's Culture: The Narrative Identity of Nigerian Catholic Religious Sisters

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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Abstract

This chapter reports on part of the findings of a doctoral research focused on identity construction of Catholic religious sisters in the Church and in the wider Nigerian society. Primarily, the chapter interrogates how Catholic religious sisters negotiate their culture identity within the context of living religious life. Data were collected from 18 sister participants, who were purposefully recruited from two religious congregations across the different states of Nigeria. These included six temporary professed, six final professed and six leaders (including superiors/formators) representing the different categories of sisters that live religious life. The data were thematically analysed using the Dialogical Self Theory I-positions. The second sentence revealed tendencies for the participants to lose their cultural identity in terms of their struggles and sometimes compromises in identifying Western culture as the dominate culture of religious life. In this regard, the participants reported that their Nigerian communitarian culture of love, care and hospitality is regulated to the background. In response, this chapter calls for further research towards exploring the impact of culture on Catholic religious sisters' expression of identity.

Keywords: Catholic religious sisters, socialization, cultural identity, I-positions, struggles, compromises

1. Introduction

This chapter as part of a doctoral thesis, which explores Catholic religious sisters' identity construction within the context of living religious life in the Church and the wider Nigerian society, presents the sisters' cultural identity portraying their struggles not to lose their culture identity. As Africans, these Nigerian religious sisters have a cultural identity, which is what this paper primarily explores in an attempt to understand how they negotiate their culture identity within the context of living religious life in the Church and the wider Nigerian

society. Customarily, the Catholic religious sisters are a cohort of women, who commit their entire lives to the service of humanity under the auspices of the Church and in God's name. Hence, they live communal life through which they are socialized to acquire their religious culture identity. The 18 sisters, whose narratives are presented in this paper, present conflicted cultural I-positions, indicating their struggles and compromises in their bid not to lose their Nigerian cultural I-positions. These I-positions indicated that the sisters' sense of identity is partly intertwined with collective values and norms reflecting their cultural-shared voices and positions [1–5]. These conflicted I-positions that the participants presented reflect the contradiction between Nigerian communal interdependence and Western culture of individualism. On the one hand, the participants maintained that Western culture is the dominant culture of religious life, which compels them to play down their African and Christian (Judeo-Greek) communitarian ideals. Consequently, they reported that they struggle to identify with their cultural identity of love, care and hospitality. Thematic analysis was used alongside Dialogical Self Theory I-positions to portray the participants' cultural struggles and compromises within the context of living religious life. Based on the findings, this paper calls for further research towards interrogating the impact of culture on Catholic religious sisters' identity construction.

2. Literature review: religious life, culture and identity construction

The Catholic Church advocates that religious life socialization process must adapt to the cultural circumstances of the place where it is lived [6].¹ In this way, culture is presented as one of the vital variables that deepens and facilitates the individual's authentic self-expression [6–10]. Accordingly, culture and religion blend providing individuals with a set of belief systems that facilitates understanding of the world they live in [11, 12]. As such, religion is context-bound reflecting a history of human activity. In this regard, Pope Pius XII in his *Summi Pontificatus* stipulates that [13]:

The herald of the Gospel and messenger of Christ is an apostle. His office does not demand that he transplant European civilization and culture, and no other, to foreign soil, there to take root and propagate itself. His task in dealing with these peoples, who sometimes boast of a very old and highly developed culture of their own, is to teach and form them so that they are ready to accept willingly and in a practical manner the principles of Christian life and morality; principles, I might add, that fit into any culture, provided it be good and sound, and which give that culture greater force in safeguarding human dignity and in gaining human happiness.

According to the above quote, adaption of Christian faith to the cultural context is compulsory though caution must be taken to avoid watering down the essentials. Thus, the inculturation of religious life into African context has the sanction of the Church and need to be done diligently.

Conversely, it has been noted that Catholic religious formations within Africa fondly adopt Western values and norms in its socialization processes. Others who share similar views emphasized that one of the debilitating experiences for the African religious has been the

¹In this and subsequent citation, PC refers to *Perfectae Caritatis* (1965). Decree on the up-to-date renewal of religious life [6].

inability to translate the gospel and its charism into his/her cultural ways of life, particularly those African values that are life-giving and compatible to the gospel message [9–11]. They argued that formation programmes in virtually all the institute of consecrated life (religious life) engage cultural paradigms that are foreign to African perspective in orienting its members, such orientations as insisting that visitors are only welcomed if they have given prior notice to their visits. This kind of orientation is in opposition to the fundamental African communitarian concept of hospitality shown to visitors at whatever time they called [9]. She argues that for the Africans, 'a visitor is a blessing' ([9], p. 140), and by implication one does not refuse blessings and blessings do not give notices before coming.

Similarly, Musonda in discussing African relational characteristics in relation to religious life identified that Africans are well disposed to understand community life better than any other aspect of consecrated life because communal living is often prized above individualism in Africa [8]. Thus, he argued that one of the most vital relational characteristics in Africa is communal life where 'mutual help' ([8], p. 165) is offered to anyone in need. This need he identifies includes lack of food, shelter, clothes and sometimes visits to the sick, attending funerals and activities celebrating life. However, he acknowledges that the African religious is often challenged by the blatant lack of this mutual help in the lived experience of religious life.

Furthermore, a study carried out among 278 young Kenyan religious (a mixed group comprising of 134 Africans and 144 participants from international congregations) among other things reported that young African religious do not feel at home in religious communities [15]. In particular, their findings showed that the young religious feel like 'strangers' in their own religious communities because most times nobody seems interested in them, which is contrary to relational situations in their family of origin, where everybody at home gives time and attention to others and their concerns. The researchers interpreted this finding to mean that the young religious are compelled to live religious life in a culturally unfriendly manner, leading them to conclude that in a religious community most people appear to be too busy to spend time with their brothers and sisters. This, they argued, is contrary to the African communitarian worldview, which has been articulated as the existential experience of 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am' ([16], p. 106). This definition of the African person goes a long way to portray that there is a collective sense of others that is embedded in an individual's sense of 'who I am' and 'who I am becoming'; hence, the African person is defined by reference to the surrounding community [16, 17]. Consequently, the researchers argued that this lack of care impacts on an African religious person's performance of cultural and religious identity, which by extension prefigures his/her sense of identity.

In addition, they also reported that the young professed maintained that hospitality within religious life is nerve-racking and this is because of the stress impact it has on the community resources in terms of space, time and money. In analysing this finding, the researchers affirmed that visitors are not warmly welcomed in religious community compelling the African religious to underplay his/her cultural values of welcoming visitors any time they call [9]. They concluded that this is a source of tension and conflict for the African religious who have to live religious life in an alien cultural way. The tension experienced by the African religious could be likened to Edward Said's autobiography in which he reflects on cultural restrictions imposed on him and his colleagues whilst they studied in colonial Cairo in a

British school [19]. He describes how their cultural I-positions in terms of Arabic language were relegated to the background at the expense of English language.

Considering the above-reviewed literature, it is important to note that the major cultural challenge for the African religious has been that of conflict arising from living in the interface of religious culture which has been identified as heavily influenced by Western cultures [8–11] and his/her African worldview. In this regard, the African religious encounters the dilemmas of allowing his/her cultural values to be dominated, leading to struggles and compromises as she faces the challenge of losing her cultural identity. This kind of conflict calls for attention of religious leaders towards making inculturation a reality for religious life as lived in Africa.

3. Method: research design

This is a qualitative interpretive research aimed at capturing the participants' in-depth wealth of experience [20, 21]. The choice for interpretive approach is governed by the assumption that the participants' act of meaning making regarding 'who they are' and 'who they are becoming' is a subjective experience [21, 22]. Therefore, the participants are considered to be in the best position to tell their own stories of the meaning they make out of their lived experiences of religious life and its impact on their sense of personhood.

3.1. Research settings and participants

This research drew participants from Nigerian Catholic religious sisters. The participants are women who live the Catholic Church religious life by devoting their entire life totally to God and to the service of others [6]. These religious sisters are 'bonded to God' through the evangelical counsels (vows) of consecrated celibacy (chastity), poverty and obedience, and they live in the community [6]. The 2017 Nigerian Conference of Women Religious (NCWR) National Directory lists a total of 54 religious communities living and working in the country [23]. These religious are estimated to be above 5000 in number including members of the consecrated life, societies of apostolic life as well as monastic communities [24]. Hence, Nigeria is described as having vocation boom in Africa [25] wherein many men and women are identified as embracing religious life as a meaningful way of life [26].

One of the congregations whose sisters participated in the study is the Daughters of Divine Love (DDL), which is a diocesan congregation. Being a diocesan congregation means that its foundation began in Nigeria though membership has spread to include sisters from other nations, and it is recognized by the Vatican, thus having pontifical status. The other congregation is the Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ), an international congregation whose foundation started in England and has spread to America and Africa. What the two congregations have in common is that they both represent Catholic religious active contemplative life which comes under the supervision of the *Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life* situated in the Vatican. Both congregations are classified as living apostolic life in which case their members are engaged in active service to God and humanity under the auspices of the Church. In as much as 18 participants seem small in terms of the large number

of sisters who live religious in Nigeria, the strength of qualitative research focuses on in-depth study of the phenomenon under investigation. Hence, single cases can suffice for any qualitative research provided in-depth, and rigor is maintained [20, 21]. For each of the congregation, nine sisters participated, and their aged range was 30–60 as reflected in **Table 1**.

All the participants are Nigerians though drawn from across the country, and participation was voluntary. The selection for participation included the different categories of sisters who live religious life in terms of temporary and finally professed including leaders such as superiors/formators. This kind of selection was to ensure that information-rich cases are included acting as boost for validity and reliability of the narratives [27].

3.2. Procedure

The participants were obtained purposefully using a medley of two strategies, namely, convenient and theoretical samplings. This involves non-probability sampling, which entails that selection of participants is not determined by statistical principle of randomness [27, 28]. The participants were rather invited through letter and personal contact after the official gatekeeper permission had been obtained from their congregational leadership. Some others were invited to participate through snowball sampling wherein participants were invited through other participants. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants between January and July of 2010. The interview sessions were held at the participants' convenient places, sometimes in their offices or community space. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour at most. Therefore, data was collected using face-to-face narrative interview in which each participant was invited to tell her own story of lived experience of religious life and the sense she is making out of it. The open-endedness of the interview questions afforded the participants' opportunity to express views in their own unique ways [20, 21]. The interviews with the participants' permission were tape-recorded in order to capture accurately what was said.

3.3. Data analysis

Data were thematically analysed with the aim of interpreting and deconstructing the meaning that the participants are making out of their lived experiences [28, 20]. This involves verbatim transcription of the tape-recorded interviews, after which the primary researcher engaged in reading and rereading the data in order to familiarize self with the data [30]. The process began during data collection including keeping of research journal, which helped to affirm

Participants	Daughters of Divine Love	Society of the Holy Child Jesus	Participants' age
Temporary professed	3	3	30–35
Finally professed	3	3	30–50
Leaders: superiors/formators	3	3	35–60

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants.

the emerging themes, as well as was used for reflexivity purposes as the first and third authors are religious sisters. That means they are researchers with an insider's and outsider's voice [20, 29–31]. It involved familiarizing one's self with data by listening to the tape-recorded data and jotting down ideas for analytic purposes. The preliminary coding process involves line-by-line reading, which permitted a closer engagement with the data that lead to eventual assignment of meaning to them [29, 31, 32], followed by establishing relationships between themes and codes. Finally, the themes were reviewed to establish coherence and clear patterns to permit detail explanation of the phenomenon [33, 34]. The established themes were linked to theoretical framework of Dialogical Self Theory as an interpretative lens through which the participants' cultural I-positions were examined [35–37]. Thus, the theory constitutes part of the analytical tool through which the sisters' multiple cultural I-positions are examined and interpreted.

4. Findings and discussion

The findings are discussed under three themes, namely, (a) participants' identification with African communitarian identity, (b) African cultural worldview of hospitality and (c) the call for inculturation of African worldview into religious life.

4.1. The participants' identification with African communitarian identity

The majority of the participants used the cultural I-position of care and support to present Africa's communitarian identity. They claim that African cultural worldview mirrors the ideal culture of religious life based on the gospel values and the spirituality of their congregations. In this regard, they emphasized that as Africans they are oriented towards sharing communal support such as helping each other. For example, one participant indicated:

As Africans we learn to help each other, and that's what religious life also teaches us, particularly considering the 'servant song' which says we are here to bear each other's load...support one another...

This participant introduces the idea that Africans assist one another, which is in line with African communal 'mutual help' offered to one another ([8], p. 165) reflecting the premise of 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am' ([16], p. 106). She also emphasized that this culture identity is linked to the ideal culture of religious life based on the so-called servant song. Therefore, she uses the theoretical I-position of 'we-as-helping one another' to represent African communitarian identity, which some other participants' refute is missing in religious life. However, another participant who re-echoes the African cultural values of support and care said:

I believe that, you know, in Africa we live together and we have all these extended family. We care much about our brothers, our sisters ... So, the fact that we live together in families I think it is also helping us to live religious life. It is one of the things that are actually helping us-African sisters to live together...

This participant positions herself and other African religious sisters as living religious life effectively based on Africa's relational identity shared in their families of origin including the

extended family. She argues that Africa's relational characteristics [8–11] have helped them as African sisters to live religious communal life efficiently. In other words, her emphasis is focused on the fact that African communal orientation of care and support is helping them to live religious life appropriately. Thus, her construction of identity reflects 'I-as upholding my African relational identity within the context of living religious life'. Another participant reiterated:

I think the identity of oneness we find in our society (Nigerian society) is supposed to feature effectively in our religious life ... and that is what is helping us live our religious life.

This participant still emphasized that the 'identity of oneness' found in the Nigerian society helps the sisters to live religious life effectively. This 'identity of oneness' reflects the act of communal-shared voices/positions and how these constitute resources for cultural sense of identity [1–5]. In line with this view, some participants report that the services they render to one another in the community have both cultural and religious undertones. For example, this participant said:

It is part of our culture and also religious responsibility to help one another. Take, for example, when somebody washes and hangs her clothes on the line we mustn't wait for the person to be the one to bring them in. In this way, we share the love of Christ with one another.

In this extract, the participant argues that Nigerian culture of love and care mirrors the gospel values, thereby emphasizing that their Nigerian cultural orientation enriches religious life [7]. Consequently, based on the cultural orientation, she is able to construct her sense of identity with the I-position of 'I-as-helping others' [3, 34–36], which is a shared position with other sisters. Likewise, another participant claims that based on their African orientation, they exchange charitable acts with one another:

As Africans we really embark on exchanging acts of charity with one another ... when somebody steps out of her cell (room) you just rush, fetch water for her, iron her clothes and she wouldn't know who did it.

This participant uses the cultural I-position of 'I-as-charitable' based on cultural orientation to construct her sense of identity [3, 34–36]. However, there are some participants who lament that these cultural I-positions of care, support and charity are silent in religious life. They argue that the ideal discourse of religious life as communal life form has been influenced by other cultural characteristics where their foundation of origin was laid. In this regard, some of the participants maintained that the foundation for their congregations were laid in the West, particularly Europe or America. Holding such view, one participant remarked:

...when it comes to religious life the culture is Western base. In Africa's culture somebody's uncle or distance relation who dies is regarded as your father... But in religious life if it is not your biological father or mother and brother/sister you are...on your own. So looking at the two, I would say... there are two different things.

This participant observes that there is a distinction between the African and Western understanding of familial relations. According to her the culture of religious life is Western; therefore, by implication the African religious struggles to incorporate her cultural values into lived expression of religious life [10, 11]. Typically, this participant constructs herself with

the cultural I-position of 'I-as not able to join my family to mourn the death of an uncle because I am a religious'. This kind of cultural I-position reflects culture identity alienation as was expressed in Said's autobiography depicting what happens when one's culture of origin is dominated by foreign culture [19]. Another participant restated that the infiltration of Western individualism culture into religious life is the catalyst that distorts African cultural worldview, and here she said:

Our community life is changing, people have learned to live on their own; no one cares for the other. We have become so much individualized based on the so-called western culture... We could count the number of times we come to eat together; recreation - people don't come again.

This participant claims that religious community life has changed because people 'have become so much individualized based on the so-called western culture', and this could be likened to the Kenyan-based research findings with young religious men and women, which stated that the religious have no time to care for one another [15]. This participant argues that sisters have no time/space to share with each other the communion of doing things together, such as eating together or socializing with one another in the evening after work, thereby inferring an infraction of African cultural orientation [17, 18]. Hence, she uses the emerging cultural I-position of 'I-as-individualistic' to present the sisters. Another participant laments that African cultural value of communion is not reflected in religious life:

We are lamenting that the Africa's spirit of communion is lacking in religious life whilst it is very much alive in our culture...so sad that we just want to be seen as individual cut off from others - aloneness is far becoming part of our life... just me and that's all ... sisters are finding it difficult to even tell others (sisters) what they are doing ... they just want to mind their own business.

This participant argues that the African way of life particularly that of interdependence is often lacking in religious life [15]. She points out that sisters are allowing individual interests to sway them from sharing communion with one another. This participant by using the expression 'we are lamenting' positions herself as speaking with a collective voice on behalf of all religious representing the institute of consecrated life [1]. In this regard, she presents the argument that Africa's cultural worldview of communion is a vital aspect of their life as religious [7-9, 14], but, unfortunately, it is sidelined, leading the religious to experience the conflicted I-positions of identifying with their culture. What this means is that the sisters are compelled to live religious life in a culturally unfriendly ways, thereby subscribing to their cultural subjugation due to pressure coming from the context of living religious life.

4.2. African cultural worldview of hospitality

A good number of the participants used the discourse of hospitality to describe their experience of the warmth shown to visitors within African culture. These participants claim that in Africa's worldview hospitality is a value that is treasured, and they report how important it is that people are welcome warmly and cheerfully when they visit. They argued that visitors are blessings, and whenever one visits, the visitor is cherished [9]. In this perspective, they argued that visitors are always cherished and they share joyfully whatever the host has to offer no matter how small. For instance, one participant verbalized:

In our African culture except now that cell phone is everywhere but in those days you (people) just get up and you are going to see your relation; you just go, and you're welcomed warmly. Whatever the living condition is, you share it with them and you know you're there to share love and joy.

This participant argues that within the African context people visit their relations anytime they feel the need with or without informing the host about the intended visit [10]. She further argues that both the visitor and the host accommodate each other and adjust to whatever living conditions they meet or have to offer. Furthermore, some participants continued to identify that religious life's culture is not very open to receiving visitors. These participants reported that in religious life they are often required to let their visitors notify the community before visiting, which is contrary to what is common within Africa's cultural setting [10]. To this effect, one participant stated:

If a family member is coming to the house (religious community) and the person didn't call to say I am coming. It is going to be a problem. You know, you have to give prior information. So that a room can be made ready and food prepared.

This participant points out that hospitality in religious life requires that visitors notify the community about their intended visit; otherwise, it will be problematic. In other words, this participant constructs her sense of African identity as estranged, and it is not just about her but also others who live religious life within African context. Thus, her dominant self-presentation with regard to culture identity becomes 'I-as-neglecting my culture identity of hospitality'. No doubt, this kind of situation is a source of conflict which according to the participant, the sisters act as 'strangers' within their cultural environment [15]. In similar ways, many participants report that such situations have led their family members to stop visiting, even under emergency situations. In the light of this, one participant suggests a way forward as follows:

I would suggest that we in religious life should always make room for emergency...may be a sister is travelling and...is stranded somewhere and needs hospitality and remembers that we have a community around there... would say let me run there...or a family member remembers that my sister is in this congregation - then can always run there for hospitality. So, let her get the assurance that she... would be welcomed...we are Africans so let us make room for travellers who may stop by...not just the situation, where it is, that you have to or must inform the community. I'm not saying we shouldn't give information, you know, not that we shouldn't say it before hand but in case of emergence, I would suggest we be more welcoming to visitors...

In this extract, the participant suggests that the religious community should be more receptive towards visitors, particularly in emergency situations. It is not clear what these emergency situations are, but the bottom line is that a visitor needs to be warmly welcome at all times. The constant use of the pronoun 'we' appears deliberate, which suggests the act of collective identification and speaking on behalf of other African religious [1]. Although the participants have multiple I-positions through which they express their culture identity, there is a dominant position which seems to show that African's cultural values, especially those of interdependence conveyed through hospitality, are undermined in religious life. In response to this act of neglecting one's cultural values and norms, many participants expressed the need to review such situations in an attempt to balance the difference. This becomes a clarion call that is very obvious in the next section.

4.3. Call for inculturation of African worldview into religious life

A number of the participants in response to their experiences of losing their cultural identity within the space of living religious life advocate for inculturation of African worldview into the lived reality of religious life. This is in line with the Church's proposal of adapting the Christian faith to the cultural circumstance of the people [6, 7, 14]. Accordingly, the participants construct identity as persons advocating for inculturation of Africa's (Nigerian) cultural worldview into religious life, which they argue in silent. In this light, one participant argues that even though the culture of religious life is based on the traditions of the foundation of origin, contextualization approach should be adapted. In this regard, she purported:

Holy Child is an international congregation and what I have realized is that the culture that we maintain upmost tends to be those tradition (culture) which has come down to us...there are couple of things that we are saying it is our tradition...it is our tradition because of our root; ...because of our foundation...but ask me about contextualization - yes I would prefer contextualization...

This participant stressed on the fact that religious life has traditions which are influenced by the culture of its initial beginnings, but she recommends that attempts be made to integrate religious life into the context of its surrounding environment wherever it is lived [6, 7, 14]. In this case, Nigeria's (Africa) cultural worldviews need to be given the space to be transmitted into the lived reality of religious life rather than have it sidelined by other cultures of religious life. Passionately, she presents herself with the position of 'I-as-advocating' for inculturation of African worldviews into religious life. Another participant who shared similar position of calling for inculturation emphasized that African hospitality values should be an inclusive value of religious life. On that point, she affirmed:

In the African way of life, there is hospitality and care for one another, which seemingly is lacking in religious life. Particularly in terms of welcoming visitors: when people come, you give them all the respect, you give them the best things. But in religious life we don't have that. A family member coming to us is not accepted; we have this Western kind of life when it comes to religious life... Even though we are Africans in religious life but I think that the Western way of life we have embraced dominates our African culture...I would suggest that we in religious life should identify with our African culture...

In this extract, this participant constructs herself as advocating for the inculturation of Africa's culture of hospitality into the lived reality of religious life. She contrasts the difference between religious life's lived expression of hospitality and Africa's cultural practice of hospitality and acknowledges that visitors are not warmly welcomed in religious life, which is in opposition to the African way of life. She argues that the cultural value of the West has permeated religious life and as such has influenced the way it is lived. Specifically, she forecasted that Africa's cultural value of welcoming visitors warmly anytime they come has been overshadowed by Western cultural values. Therefore, she argued that they, who are Africans, are living religious life in a cultural way that is at variance with the values and norms of their culture of origin. Consequently, she cautioned that African religious should endeavour to incorporate Africa's way of life into religious life [6, 7, 14]. In a nutshell, her proposal is centred on the need to cooperate African (Nigeria) values, particularly those that are life-giving into religious life. Another participant in the process of calling for inculturation condemns the de facto lack of warmth and hospitality (including warmth) among the sisters in religious community:

I told you before what my experience on my first day of arrival was...it does not make sense to me to be asked to go and cook on my first day of arrival after I have sat outside waiting for you people (the sisters). I didn't think that resemble the Africa's sisterly treatment we give to people when they arrive from a long journey...and to think of it that we are from the same culture that is noted for its hospitality to people...

In this extract, this participant claimed that the kind of welcome she received upon her arrival in her new religious community was unfriendly, reflecting lack of warmth, which is popular among Africans. In this sense, she argued that Africans do not subject travellers to the experience of cooking food for themselves including others after making a long journey. Her argument accentuated that others whom the traveller comes to meet have the obligation to prepare the meal and keep for the traveller, particularly on the day of arrival. Hence, she criticizes African religious sisters for not living out their cultural values of engaging warmth and care in their interpersonal relationship with one another [7]. Her criticism is conveyed in this expression: 'to think of it that we are from the same culture that is noted for its hospitality to people'. In this way, her self-expression is conveyed through the position of 'I-as-criticizing' lack of sisterly care among African religious sisters. Directly or indirectly, she argues that Nigeria's cultural worldview of hospitality should be accommodated in religious life particularly when the sisters in question share common cultural background. Interestingly, one participant argues that what they need in order to live genuine religious life is to embrace Africa's cultural worldview of love and care. To that effect, she said:

As Africans...in religious life we need each other... Like our servant song says we are here to help one another; we are here to walk with one another - we are here to bear one another's load. Because if I come back from work with so many loads...in my head and I don't have anybody to say 'sister let me help you to relieve that load,' you know it will also affect me because it will be like I am bearing it alone - you know nobody is helping me to bear the burdens of the day; yes, God is there but we need one another also. So that is why the individualistic life is not really encouraging in religious community. It doesn't help us to grow...

This participant's position-taking is based on the fact that Africa's relational practice is fixed on interdependence on one another [16], which resonates with the ideal religious culture but contradicts with individualism, where each one strives alone or protects his/her comfort zones. She links this African relational value to a certain Christian spirituality, using the 'servant song' to portray collective collaboration of love and care. In this perspective, the religious need one another, which is part of their identity as people who live a communal life [6, 8, 10]. Vividly, the discussion above indicated that the participants have used multiple cultural I-positions to construct identity. These multiplicity of I-position emerged as a result of their self-positioning and self as positioned by others within the context of living religious life. Generally, these I-positions present contradictory positions representing the participants' affirmation of their culture as well as their experiences of losing their cultural identity. The latter in particular calls for the attention of the leaders and policy-makers of religious life to initiate actions that would lead the religious to appreciate each members' culture.

5. Implication of the study

Predominately the findings of this study as presented in this paper pointed to the fact that there exist some discrepancies between religious life culture and Nigeria culture. This discrepancy

is mainly portrayed in the fact that religious life culture as presented by the sister participants is dominated by Western worldview as against Nigerian culture that is communitarian in nature. As a result, the Nigerian sisters who live religious life experience the dilemma of either regulating their culture of origin to the background in place of the Western culture or continuing to struggle to live religious life in a cultural unfriendly ways, including resistance that some of them adapted. The implication is that African religious sisters, particularly those who participated in this study, ought to source for meaningful ways of integrating African (Nigeria) life-giving culture into religious life. On this note, more research is needed in order to create further knowledge regarding how the interface of religious life and Nigerian culture impact on religious sisters' sense of identity.

6. Study limitations

The major limitation in this study is based on the fact that as a qualitative research design, its sample size is small; therefore, the findings could not be used for generalization. However, transferability is possible, as the research procedure has been well detailed allowing for similar research to be carried out in other African settings.

7. Recommendation and conclusion

Overwhelmingly, the participants' narratives reveal that the Church's discourses of inculturation [6–11, 14] need to be transmitted into action particularly in the face of seemingly culture domination that the participants experienced. To this effect, leaders of religious life and all who live the life within the African context should make conscious effort to recognize and respect Africa's cultural norms. Based on the participants' narratives, some of the African cultural values such as support, charity, care and hospitality are life-giving; therefore, it should be integrated into the lived reality of religious life within Nigeria. Such integration could be achieved through organizing constant conferences, seminars and workshops wherein religious sisters will have the opportunity to make their voice heard, as well as become proactive in decision-making and designing policies that govern the context-bound integration of their culture of origin into religious life. In addition, there is a need to carry out further research towards exploring the impact of loss of culture on religious sisters' identity construction. It is hoped that such further research will yield significant results, which will facilitate the religious sisters' authentic expression of self within the context of living religious life.

To sum up, these multiple cultural I-positions that the participants presented and its associated challenges in which the participants indicated that they are compelled to subjugate their African culture identity call for urgent attention; it demands that religious life as lived in Africa needs to reassess its initial and ongoing formation programmes. These formation programmes should be designed towards incorporating African worldview as Pope Pius XII proposes that the principles of Christian faith fit into every culture [7, 14]. In this way, the African religious, particularly the Nigerian religious and for the two congregations whose sisters participated

in the present study, will appreciate and celebrate their culture as an integral aspect of performing their personal/religious identity. As a way forward, much more research is needed to explore how culture identity impacts on religious sisters' identity construction. Hopefully, such research will throw more insight that will continue to facilitate sisters' identity construction. Such research might as well include the male religious, which no doubt will enrich the findings and, thus, create inclusive literature, promoting a wealthier data for the ongoing understanding regarding how the religious make sense of 'who they are' and 'who they are becoming'.

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Reflections on Culture and Identity

The Significance Attached to Education and Youth Development in Rural South Africa

Reginald Botshabeng Monyai

Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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Abstract

Education plays a significant role in improving the socioeconomic conditions of individuals and communities. Given that the youth make up the largest proportion of the population in the rural areas, it is important to understand the social and economic dynamics that affect their ability to develop as individuals and members of society. To put it another way, the significance attached to education will play an important role in the development of young people in the rural areas. This can be attributed to the fact that these young people have to contend with the difficulties posed by resource mobilization when it comes to accessing education or, in some cases, the social and cultural constraints that they face. This chapter shows that the significance attached to the education of the youth in the rural areas of South Africa is a reflection of a myriad of challenges presented by cultural and social expectations and is compounded by the bottlenecks in educational resource mobilization.

Keywords: rural development, significance, skills, youth development

1. Introduction

At the outset, it is an undisputed fact that Africa may now be at a turning point in terms of economic growth and development [1]. This calls, naturally for an education system that will equip the citizens with the requisite skill to match the rapid economic growth. The education system is intended to prepare young people either to enter higher education institutions or to enter the world of work, using the skills that they have acquired. In striving for such achievements, these young people have to contend with a number of difficulties that may prevent them from taking advantage of such opportunities or claiming such basic rights in the social realm. The quality of the education that these young people receive will determine their

economic futures. The significance attached to education and youth development in South Africa can be looked at from the perspective of the historical development, contours, and consolidation of power relations between the rural and the urban, and within the rural areas as influencing the formal or substantive quality of life of people living there.

This is in keeping with the Highest Good of the education system of South Africa, which asserts that curriculum seeks to create a life-long learner who is confident, independent, literate, and numerate. This learner has to have compassion and have respect for the environment, but in the main, he or she must be able to live with others as a critical and active citizen [2]. This curriculum is underpinned by a well-structured student support system that puts the learner at the center. Teaching in the South African context should be to guide the student to full physical and mental maturity and help to develop critical thinking and be encouraged to practice the truth and have self-respect and respect for other people.

This can happen only if the learner is afforded the opportunity to self-accept. If he or she fails to do that, they are likely to have lack of confidence, which will lead to lack of independence. Ultimately, there will be no critical thought, which is what we desperately need today. This chapter considers the significance attached to education and youth development in the rural areas of South Africa with the aim of establishing how education influences development. Attention will be paid to the delivery and the economic outcomes of education in the rural areas of South Africa.

2. Relevance of the study

Schooling and the transition to higher education set the stage for economic development at the personal and the societal level. Policy-makers need to understand how the provision of education affects the access to education and the use people make of educational experiences later on. The creation of conditions enabling people to access such rights can be translated into formal and substantive equality through the enhancement of substantive freedoms through the redistribution of resources [3].

In the South African context, a study in this regard could contribute significantly to enhance the delivery of education in the rural areas in three ways, namely by encouraging the acquisition of authentic knowledge in its context of use rather than through decontextualized exercises, by emphasizing learning connected to coherent knowledge instead of knowledge that has been compartmentalized into distinct courses and subjects, and by promoting learning in collaboration rather than isolation [3].

An evaluation of the education system in South Africa reveals that prior inequalities constraining the rights to, within, and through education relate to the responsibilities that children in the rural areas are expected to bear, especially regarding labor and human production [4]. Therefore, policy-makers need to identify ways to deal with such issues in the community so that the full utility of educational experiences can be achieved at the individual and societal level. This is because, in the South African rural communities, children's roles in the

context of household labor often constrain their freedom to exercise their rights to, within, and through education [4]. The study reported on in this chapter could make a significant contribution in enlightening South Africans about how social and economic dynamics play a role in defining the significance attached to education and youth development in the country and help in policy formulation.

3. Ethical considerations of the study

In any kind of study, ethical considerations guide the way in which the research is conducted and the validity of the information that will be obtained from it. Researchers must, therefore, not only bring their own principled ethical sensitivity to bear on the study in question but also conform to the often stringent requirements of ethical codes that have been formulated by ethics committees [5]. In conducting the study reported on here, it was necessary to pay careful attention to avoid ethical violations so as not to compromise the quality of the research study.

The study relied extensively on data from previous studies as a means to verify or understand various elements. It was necessary to validate the information obtained from any secondary source by evaluating whether the research was conducted in an ethical manner or not. Even though some of the information was obtained from old sources, most of the research studies were conducted in an ethical manner that would guarantee the validity of the research information that was collected in the field.

It was, therefore, necessary to evaluate the way in which the study was conducted by examining the kinds of sources used and how the questions in the study were structured and put to the respective respondents. The interviewers were trained to pose objective questions in a way that would not interfere with the respondents' intended meaning. The secondary sources were also evaluated for possible bias to ensure that the information that was obtained from the previous studies constituted an objective reflection of what was obtained in the field.

Another ethical consideration related to the fact that some of the questions to be asked would involve having to delve into the personal lives of the respondents, to ascertain their income and educational levels specifically. Thus, the researcher had to ensure the confidentiality of all information supplied by the study participants. The researcher had to inform the respondents about the nature of the study and how it would be conducted, including the nature of the information that the respondents would be expected to provide. Respondents who subsequently provided informed consent participated in the study.

4. Method

Various approaches were adopted to gather relevant information for use in the study. Because the research study was related to education, the intention was to collect information from various learning institutions while at the same time involved a number of learners or students

who had completed their education and were either employed or unemployed. Emphasis was placed on obtaining their opinion about their educational experiences and how their educational experiences had helped them thus far in their lives.

In addition, records from learning institutions and the employment bureau were used to assess the level of education of people from various backgrounds and how it influenced the lives of the young people in one way or another. Statistics from previous research studies were used in support of information that was collected in the field. Information from the institutions of higher learning such as universities or technical institutions was used to collect secondary information, particularly regarding past employment trends.

Given that accessing information of this nature involved using several secondary sources, the originality of the information or data had to be ascertained before it could be used. The researcher received training in how to identify a piece of work that is not merely a replica of other work or one that simply applies well-established methods and proposes solutions to straightforward problems. Preferable are texts that apply new methods in tackling existing problems in new ways. Therefore, suitable sources had to demonstrate diversity in their approach to evaluate the significance attached to education among the youth in rural South Africa.

In addition to the use of various secondary sources for the study, interviews were conducted to gain insights into the perspectives of young South Africans. This was done because, in as much as quantitative research is crucial in the practice settings, especially with regard to policy issues, the qualitative approach as embodied in interviews also makes a significant contribution in the assessment of the efficacy of the policies that have been put in place.

It was felt that the interviews would be useful in exploring the lives and viewpoints of the young people and elicit in-depth responses to complex research questions. Moreover, when carrying out research studies on the youth, it is important to recognize the importance of communication. Hence, evaluation of the information about the individual biographies and organizational profiles of young people is important in ensuring that there is more information on the topic. The qualitative approach plays a significant role in the collection of data that contextualizes the feelings, meanings, and experiences of individuals as well as groups.

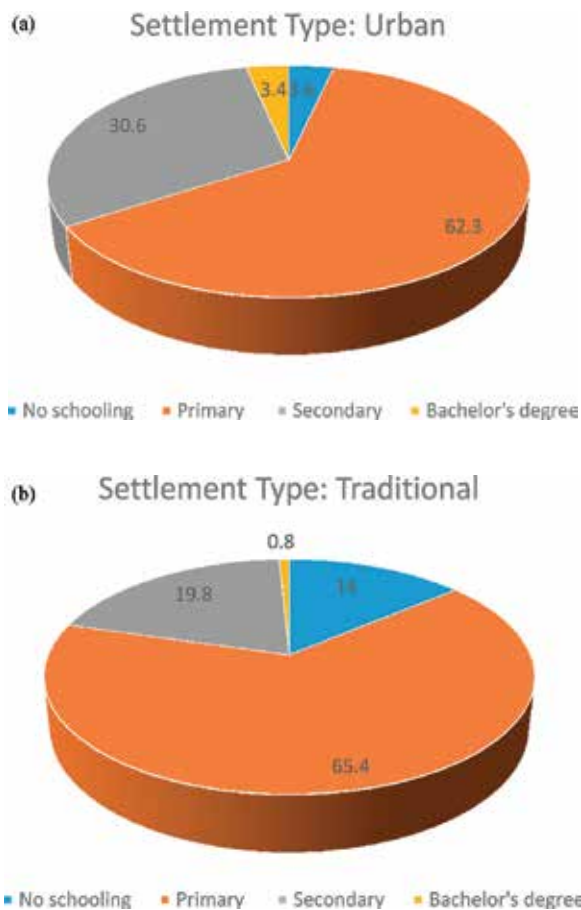
5. Results

5.1. General overview of education and socioeconomic issues in rural South Africa

A study conducted by Spaull in 2013 focused primarily on evaluating the relationship between schooling and the transition to higher education [6]. Spaull's study provided a general picture of the education and employment situation in South Africa that had the potential to contribute to an understanding of the specific factors that determine access to education opportunities. The study revealed six critical facts relating to school-to-work and school-to-tertiary institution transition in South Africa. The first is that poor quality schooling at the primary and secondary levels significantly impedes the ability of young people to take advantage of opportunities they encounter later [6]. In 2009, for instance, 446 schools obtained a pass rate of below 20% [7].

The worst affected provinces are Limpopo, KwaZulu Natal, and Eastern Cape. In Limpopo province, for instance, Excelsus Academy, Hlabirwa Commercial, Kabela Secondary, Kulani Learning Centre, Matokane High school, and Setotlwane Secondary all had 0% matric pass rate. This is just a sample of the 446 schools exhibiting this trend; there are many more within the same province showing similar patterns. In KwaZulu Natal, Lubelo Secondary, Zizamele JS, Msimbithi, Uphezeni Secondary, and Nqumizwe Secondary, all had matric pass rates of below 8% [7]. Again, this is a sample, which means that there are more schools showing the same trend in the actual sense. These statistics show that despite enrolment in learning institutions, the success rate is very low and as such, chances of enrolling in institutions of higher learning are equally inhibited.

Those residing in urban areas are more likely to attain higher education levels than their rural counterparts. Although this is to be expected, given the disparity in opportunities available to either party, there is a stagnation of low schooling over an extended duration of time [8]. The increased rural-urban migration has shown an increased number of those with a bachelor's degree since many in the cities are now exposed to learning environments and opportunities that they would have otherwise missed on. **Figure 1a-d** on settlement type below gives meaning to the story.



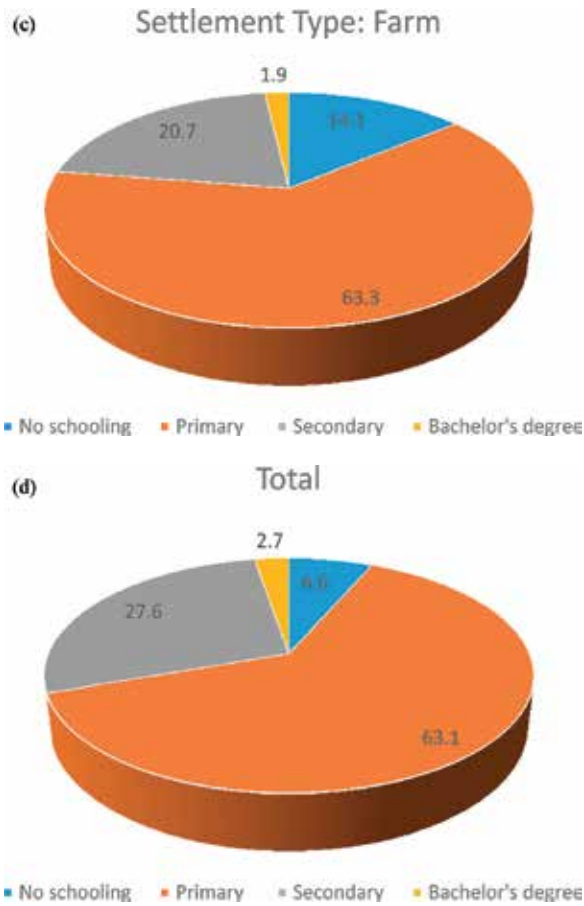


Figure 1. Those who have completed education level by settlement type. (a) Settlement type: urban, (b) settlement type: traditional, (c) settlement type: farm, and (d) total.

In total, 1,176,728 people in urban areas had completed bachelor’s degree, a figure that showed a significant gap from the 88,499 located in traditional/tribal areas and the 38,670 located in farm areas. The census further revealed that one of the main reasons for this disparity is the challenges attributed to socioeconomic development because of electrical connection, piped water, and proper sanitation. However, it is worth mentioning that despite the high number of those with bachelor’s degree in urban areas, the same census reveals that that figure is less compared to those with secondary school level as their highest education level. The figure is even less compared to those that have reached primary school level. In the urban context alone, 10,447,758 people have reached secondary school level. This is less than half the same number who has reached primary school level. The same trend can be observed in the traditional and farm settings.

Consequently, skill deficiencies will persist among those who are considered the products of the underperforming schools. The second is that South Africa has an abnormally high level of youth unemployment (50%), which is high within the realm of the lower average and global

and sub-Saharan youth unemployment rate, while the prevailing unemployment rate in the country is 25%. Third, the percentage of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years who are not employed or enrolled for education or training increased from 30% in 1995 to 45% in 2011, while those in employment decreased from 50 to 36% [6].

Based on these statistics, it becomes apparent that unemployment continues to cripple economic activities in the region. Fourth, over time, there has been an increase in unemployment levels, and this has made the situation even worse. In the same vein, it was discovered that the nature of youth unemployment has undergone a change, in that the number of young people who have never been employed and those who have been seeking employment for more than a year has increased. In 2009, the South African working-age population was 32.4 million, a figure that has since increased to 36 million by 2015. Of the 36 million, 63.7% constituted of whites who are actively employed compared to 40.6% blacks Africans in the same category. In the same year, majority of postsecondary qualification holders (77%), who had the capability of working, were actively employed [9]. This shows that higher educational qualifications increase chances of meaningful employment. The study population included those who have completed secondary and postsecondary education levels. The results affirmed the same thing that higher education levels increase chances of employment. The following figure also shows a similar trend. Between 2008 and 2015, the rate of employment was highest among those without secondary school qualification as compared to those with such levels of qualifications [10], as seen in **Figure 2** below. The rate of unemployment, in this case, refers to the portion of the population that is trying secure jobs. The same tabulation also suggests that secondary schooling is not enough guarantee to secure a job, as was the case in the past.

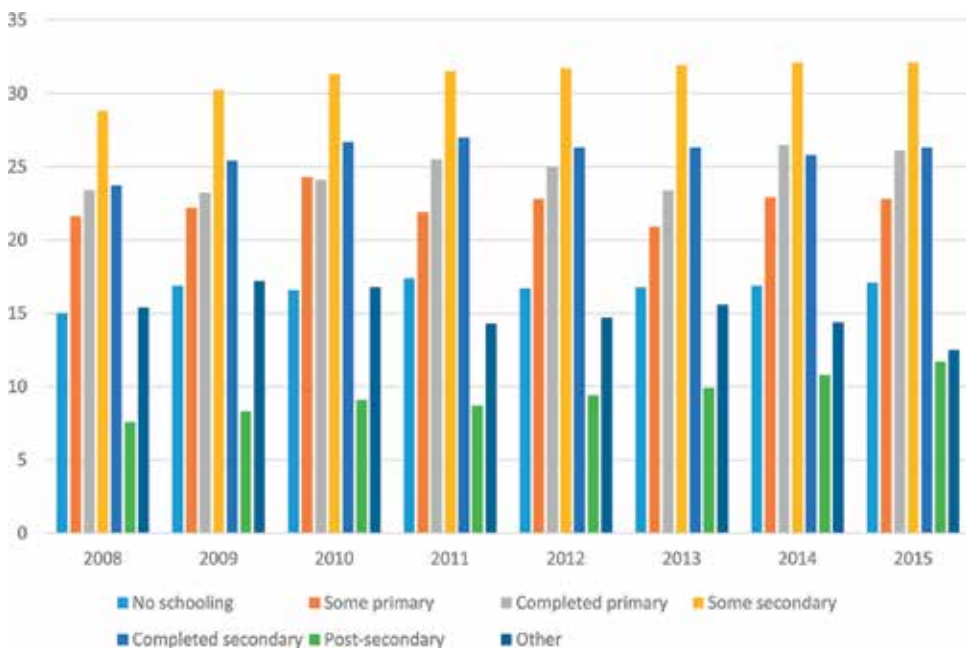


Figure 2. Rate of unemployment subject to education level between 2008 and 2015.

Fifth, the young people believed that passing the national senior certificate (NSC) exam neither guaranteed employment nor increased one's chances of becoming employed.

They believed that passing the NSC exam helped set the stage for tertiary education as a way of improving future employment prospects and that there was, therefore, no need to go out of their way to take advantage of the skills that they had acquired from such opportunities. Finally, in as much as the employment rate of those aged between 18 and 24 years who have tertiary qualifications is much lower than that for young people with NSC or less, it is nevertheless high in relation to South Africa's overall employment rate [6].

5.2. Education and development in the rural areas of South Africa

A study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council, Nelson Mandela Foundation, and Education Policy Consortium (2005) aimed to explore and improve the complex relationship that exists between poverty and education in the context of rural South Africa. The research was carried out in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, and Limpopo. The selection of these provinces was because they include former homelands within their boundaries and they routinely appear among the provinces that exhibit the highest levels of poverty and unemployment and the lowest levels of educational attainment [4]. Moreover, over half of the school learners in South Africa attend school in these three provinces, with the learning population in the remaining six provinces being much smaller. The levels of adult illiteracy and youth unemployment are also highest in these three provinces. The traditional authorities play a crucial role, as seen in their strong presence in these areas.

From the research that was conducted, it was apparent that poverty conditioned the children's ability to access education in the rural areas of South Africa. That is, the conditions under which the young people were able to access educational opportunities in order to advance their personal and societal development were largely dependent on the conditions under which the government can provide education. In this regard, the uneven spread of schools, particularly the missionary schools, constituted a significant obstacle for those in the rural areas [4].

The uneven distribution of schools throughout the country was reinforced by the unequal provision of education in the apartheid era, and the fact that in some instances, families in these areas needed their children's labor, so elected not to send the children to school [4]. This shaped the students' participation in decisions about education. The fact that traditional values in these rural areas continued to define the way they lived their lives implies that some of the communities rejected either schooling or Christianity or both in some instances [4]. Such divisions are still evident in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

The inclusion of educational experiences in development agendas for young people was also evident in the way they viewed the value of educational experiences. Most people living in the rural areas will use their educational experiences in the way that society expects them to. For instance, in Tshamavhudzi, society's notions concerning the predetermined roles of men and women define Limpopo, the main purpose of education in the rural areas. More specifically,

schools and education are viewed as important for employment, making a good marriage and being a responsible citizen [4].

Consequently, the purposes of education will be viewed differently by girls and boys within the context of marriage. For the young women, there tends to be a strong emphasis on marriage and childcare [4]. The fact that access to education and educational experiences has been defined within the realm of gendered norms has led to the formation of certain social attitudes toward education and educated people.

For example, women believe that if they are too highly educated, they may not get married, and men may fear educated women on the grounds that they may not submit to their husbands once they are married [4]. Societal expectations of this kind significantly influence people's decision whether or not to be educated or whether or not to further their education for their own development. From another perspective, the traditional and modern forms of education play complementary roles.

In all three provinces, it was noted that the majority of parents encouraged education relating to sexuality and the transition to adulthood as supplied by initiation schools [4]. What this reveals is that the decision to acquire an education is guided by the societal attitudes of the community members in these rural areas toward education. If they believe that education will not pave the way for a better position in society, they prefer to forego such opportunities.

5.3. The quality of education and youth development in the rural areas

In terms of helping the rural South African population fit in with the contemporary education framework, the quality of the education that young people in the rural areas receive plays a significant role in defining how they choose to position themselves in their communities. This is what a study conducted during the post-apartheid era aimed at evaluating. The study indicated that with regard to the provision of educational opportunities, the education that young people in the rural areas receive must be defined by their culture and their experiences as members of a particular community; otherwise, they will end up fighting the very system that has been designed to improve their socioeconomic status.

The rural areas in South Africa have undergone structural and systemic changes in the transition to democracy. In the process, the most critical and interrelated problems have been the fact that only a small percentage of the rural population is employed, and that the education available to the majority of the rural population is of poor quality [9]. Such bottlenecks negatively affect the socioeconomic status of people from the rural areas because the post-apartheid era in South Africa ushered in political freedom and legal justice, but did very little for economic freedom and social justice [11]. This system has persisted and to a significant extent defines current rural society.

In the quest to overcome the problems that arose because of the influence of the apartheid era, rural-based universities were established in South Africa. The underlying philosophy was that the potential of the rural-based universities in the country would play a significant role in

sustainable development, especially among the communities within their vicinity [9]. Despite the presence of universities in these rural areas, poverty and unemployment remain rife there. It is an indication of the failure of the education system that regardless of the policies that have been formulated to redefine, restructure, and transform higher education, socioeconomic issues such as unemployment and poverty persist in these areas [11]. Therefore, the provision of education opportunities has not been structured to take cognizance of the cultural issues in the rural parts of South Africa, and this increases the chances that socioeconomic problems will persist.

6. Discussion

Based on the research that has been conducted so far, it is clear that the rural areas of South Africa are characterized by underdevelopment at both the individual and societal level. This is because the decision to send children to school is heavily influenced by the economic, social, and cultural context of the community members. Ultimately, the level of education in the rural areas of South Africa greatly influences the development of both community members and society as a whole. This section will analyze the significance attached to education and youth development in the rural areas of South Africa from an economic, social, and cultural perspective.

6.1. Economic perspective

The UN 2013 Economic report on Africa hits is critical of the status of economic growth and puts the blame squarely on the current disproportionate growth pattern caused by lack of education and skills [1]. According to the UN 2010 Economic report, this explains why “the continent continues to suffer from high unemployment, particularly for youth and female populations, with too few opportunities to absorb new labor market entrants” [12]. Being educated sets the stage for a person to be informed about the opportunities that he or she can take advantage of in the future. Therefore, the quality of education that a person receives will significantly determine how he or she makes use of the skills acquired through studying. Good quality education teaches the student to understand the environment better and come up with ways to overcome various societal problems. In the rural areas of South Africa, young people and the elderly make up the majority of the population. Most of the employable men and women are not well educated, so they have to find ways to sustain themselves in the rural domain because they lack the skills necessary for a position in the corporate world. Consequently, the rural population constitutes a source of cheap labor for use in the economy. This is a confirmation of the structural adjustments and social engineering that have always defined South African history. The creation of the Bantustans by the nationalist government was pursued from the 1950s as a means of creating the rural areas where the population density allowed for the supply of labor to the urban or the mining areas [4].

This explains the persistence of subsistence farming in the rural areas of South Africa, in which just under half of South Africa’s children are located [4]. The persistent lack of skills because of

limited opportunities for the young people limits their potential to apply their educational skills. Cumulatively, the persistent lack of quality education creates a culture of neglect, which affects the delivery of education for the youth in these areas, this, in turn, sustains the higher poverty levels in the rural areas.

6.2. Social perspective

In the rural areas, the decision to pursue an education is significantly determined by the social expectations of family members. In some communities, education is perceived as a threat to the stability of the social fabric in the sense that women will be more empowered and will not be "biddable" in their marriages. Women perceive the attainment of education as being a critical factor in helping them reinforce their stability in the community. In other words, education is supposed to help them become better people in the context of childcare and as domestic workers. With such an approach toward learning, young people will strive to advance their skills purely to fit into the social context of their society. This sets the stage for formal inequality in education, depending on the level of access to and participation in the decision-making processes in education. In addition to that, the decision to pursue further education can also be understood within the context of direct and indirect costs to the families, which further compound problems such as repeating a year, the dropout rate and unemployment [4]. The persistent lack of quality education provision in these areas creates an attitude that does not promote participation in matters that are pertinent to human development and growth, and this is what sustains the continuous underdevelopment in the region.

Those in the rural areas do not get the opportunity to be actively involved in development issues that directly affect their lives in one way or another. Thus, it is important to note that the social environment can provide an enabling situation that defines the way education and eventually development are achieved and sustained. It means that the inequalities that constrain the rights to, within, and through education relate to the responsibilities that the children in the rural areas bear, especially in the areas of labor and human production [4].

6.3. Cultural perspective

The culture of rural communities incorporates gendered expectations of the roles of men and women in the context of education. This has led to a situation in which children's roles in household labor in the rural economies limit their freedom to exercise their rights to, within, and through education [4]. Because of this cultural expectation, people in the rural areas are accustomed to living a life in which activities that are not integrated into their culture are perceived as potential threats. Therefore, they either refrain from such activities or limit their participation in them to the minimum.

This creates a culture in which there is very little involvement of the community members in government-sponsored initiatives, and this reinforces neglect by the government. The persistent neglect by the government is what makes education and schooling in the rural areas appear to be a denial of freedoms and opportunities to live a long, creative and healthy life,

acquire knowledge and have wisdom, and live in dignity and with self-respect [4]. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that the freedoms that some stalwarts have laid their lives for are realized. If these freedoms are not guaranteed, it will be a dereliction of the primary duty, and it constitutes neglect. Vision 2030 of the National Development Plan states that poverty shall be eradicated, and inequality reduced, by the year 2030 [13]. This vision is only a pipedream, especially for rural youth because of the following:

- Learners are not adequately equipped with the requisite 3Rs (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic) to have proper skills to cope.
- Learners drop out before they could reach matric; yet the South African Bill of Rights states that basic education is free.
- Schools from rural areas continue to be abandoned. Good and competent teachers are poached out of the rural teaching setup by urban schools. Most of the time, these teachers would have been teaching at adult education and training (AET) centers, where they do not get the same benefits accruing to teachers in urban areas.

Against this background, it is apparent that the provision of educational opportunities in the rural areas must factor in the element of how cultural affiliations affect access to and participation in bread and butter issues about their personal growth. This is the only way of making education meaningful for the people in the rural areas.

7. Recommendations

Solving the problems relating to education in the rural areas of South Africa can make a significant contribution toward encouraging youth development within rural communities and the entire country. However, the education system has to be designed in such a way that it integrates the social, cultural, and economic issues that those in the rural parts of South Africa face. It is the only way of ensuring an appreciation of the significance of education and youth development in South Africa.

One of the ways of promoting youth development in South Africa is through the encouragement of reforms in education and training. According to Fox, such reforms help in improving the productivity of the labor pool and narrow the wide gap that exists between the skills that the labor market demands and those that workers can supply [14]. Most important, it can also increase the signaling ability of education, which in turn will advance the search and matching efficiency of the labor market [14]. Reforms in education will promote policies that are aimed at ensuring equal access to opportunities for the communities living in the rural areas. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the young people in the rural areas rely heavily on agricultural produce as a source of livelihood.

These young people would rather miss educational opportunities but take care of their means of livelihood, even if this were to jeopardize their future. Reforms in education should be geared toward ensuring that the young people have better opportunities to hone their skills

for use in the job market. This can be made possible only by ensuring that primary, secondary, and tertiary education institutions offer quality education. Arming the youth with the educational skills required for the job market sets the stage for them to improve their socioeconomic well-being.

Another possible strategy to promote youth development in rural South Africa would be to ensure that the education system is designed in such a way that education equips young people in the rural areas to deal with the various societal challenges that they face. For instance, most of the rural communities in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal have a gendered perception of the role of education in the lives of young people. Most parents believe that education is supposed to prepare their children to fit into the social fabric of that society. In consequence, the young people pay little attention to life beyond what they are used to. They define themselves by the experiences and the limitations of those who have gone before them.

This kind of attitude does not encourage competition, nor does it promote creativity, because the young people have been conditioned to use their educational experiences to fit within the predefined realms of their communities. In other words, the significance attached to education and youth development in the rural areas of South Africa has been determined by the expectations of rural society, most of which relate to the gendered roles of men and women. Educational experiences should be designed in such a way that the youth can better understand their environment and come up with creative ways of overcoming the challenges that they experience.

8. Conclusion

The education of the youth in rural South Africa is an important aspect of the socioeconomic development of the region and the people who live there. It can be explained by the fact that education affects the social, economic, and cultural expectations of the community members in various ways. At present, the youth in the rural areas of South Africa have to deal with the cultural expectations of the community members as well as their families. This affects their ability to access educational opportunities and other matters that promote taking part in decisions about education. Moreover, it also defines the context in which they choose to apply the knowledge that they have acquired through learning. As a result, the youth will continue to define their successes in life in the context of what their societies have defined for them. They are unlikely to develop themselves beyond what they are used to in their communities.

Being educated implies being informed about the various activities that take place within the community or developing a more informed approach to engage with the contentious issues that a community is dealing with. This research suggests the importance of acknowledging that promoting youth development in the rural parts of South Africa should be based on a holistic approach ensuring that education promotes cultural, social, and economic prosperity at the individual and community levels. Adult education and youth development are synonymous with literacy because here we are dealing with adult learners who dropped out of school for different reasons; but who are striving to be part of the society through learning and

improving their developmental needs. Literacy is, therefore, important in adult education and youth development.

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Popular Religions and Multiple Modernities: A Non-Western Perspective

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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Abstract

Religious diversity and pluralism is increasing all over the world, and globalization is creating a widespread awareness of that. The growing influence of religions in public politics and culture around the world is contradicting conventional narratives of secularization. Indeed, the resurgence of religions in all the continents is tangled in different ways to modernization processes. The main argument of this chapter is that this religious change toward pluralism can be fully understood in the context of multiple modernities theory, provided that it be revised and modified. The key understanding of changes must come from a better insight of popular religions worldwide. Latin American, Eastern Asia and Islam regions are good examples of popular forms of religious revitalization that contrasts with the Northern European case. New ways of producing sense and spiritual search in non-Western areas are framing specific relationships between religion and modernities and bringing about pluralisms. The interweaving of old and new religious traditions is accentuating interculturality and is generating great conditions for the emergence of new types of syncretism and/or sociocultural and even material (and violent) conflicts. The consequence is the development of religious patterns within societies that have a specific and distinctively form of modernity of their own.

Keywords: popular religions, religious pluralism, multiple modernities, new theories of religion, non-Western religions

1. Introduction

Religious diversity and pluralism is increasing all over the world. In fact, religious, rich diversity and plurality are abounding within religions in the world—diversity in both belief and praxis—and globalization is creating a widespread awareness of that [1].

One of the main influences on recent social theory of religion has been the growing influence of religious institutions in public politics and culture around the world [2]. During the twentieth century, the vast majority of Western social theorists had predicted that religion was in decline. Nevertheless the different conventional narratives of secularization have been contradicted by the resurgence of religions—Islam, Hinduism, Christianity—in all the continents interwoven in different ways to modernization processes ([3], pp. 97, 98).

In the Christian world, not only popular Pentecostalism or Neo-Pentecostalism, but other Evangelicals and independent churches as well, are expanding in Latin America, Africa and many Asian countries [4]. New forms of relationship between religion and public sphere are emerging and non-affiliated religious expressions are increasing in the West. Within Islam and Eastern Asian, and Latin American contexts popular religions are lasting, and even invigorating the religious fields. African and ethnic religions are present in transcultural contexts as well as popular forms of Buddhism and eastern religions. New age tendencies are spread all over different continents. New transnational religious movements [5] and old revitalized indigenous religions [6] are emerging in the globalized world. The most successful refiguration of religions and spiritualities flourishes by drawing themselves down into mass society through new technologies of communication and migrations of people and ideas leaving aside elitist expressions of religions.

The main argument of this chapter is that these religious changes toward pluralism can be fully understood in the context of multiple modernities theory [7–10] provided that it be revised and modified. A new sociological approach is needed. The classical sociological concepts and theories, beginning with secularization, must be criticized and replaced with a more complex theoretical view. Latin American, African and Asian historical processes must be compared with what is happening in different regions of the world and not only with the West. World religions are answering each one by their own path to multiple interactions with modernities. The key understanding of changes must come from a better insight of popular religions worldwide. Latin American, Eastern Asia and Islam regions are good examples of popular forms of religious revitalization that contrasts with the Northern European case. They put in evidence the fact that new ways of producing sense and spiritual search in non-Western geo-cultural areas are framing specific relationships between religion and modernities and bringing about new religious pluralisms.

The theoretical and methodological perspective is guided by a conceptual discussion and is based on recent historical and sociological analyses. The critical appraisal of secondary sources and authors who have written recently on the subject is the base of the main set of arguments put forward.

The chapter begins with an introduction and a theoretical discussion on multiple modernities and religion. Section 2 develops a general overview of religious evolution and statistics in the world today. Section 3 goes in deep on the concepts of popular religion and gathers sound data and interpretative approaches to popular religions in Latin America, Eastern Asia and Islamic milieu and in comparative terms with Industrialized Western countries. The texts end with a proposal of a new sociological approach of the subject trying to overcome the classical and predominant paradigm on religion and modernity.

The main interpretative scope of the chapter comes from the three decades experience of the author doing research and publishing scientific works on popular religion, mainly on the Latin American sociohistorical recent evolution. The critical appraisal of the predominant Western-oriented theories of religions is extended to analyze non-Western contexts such as Islam, and Eastern Asian popular religions in countries submitted to rapid modernization processes.

2. Multiple modernities and religions

In search for a theoretical interpretation of this phenomenon, Eisenstadt's theory of multiple modernizations [7, 8] reveals insightful. This theory allows us to criticize the classical evolutionary theory of linear and Eurocentric modernization that would drive us directly to secularization. It allows to understand the sociohistorical, ideological and institutional contexts that have given rise to different forms of modernities in the world last century.

Eisenstadt states that:

"The crystallization of modernity has indeed greatly changed or transformed the basic characteristics of political centers and dynamisms. From the point of view of the contents of these centers, the major transformation which has occurred concomitantly with modernity has been the growing secularization of the centers, and the nonacceptance of the givenness of their contents and symbols can indeed be reexamined anew. This change was closely connected with the growing autonomy of the political, cultural, and societal centers, and above all with changes in the relations between the centers and the periphery; with the growing impingement of the periphery on the center and by facilitation of the access to the center by the periphery, by the permeation of the periphery by the center, often culminating in the concomitant tendency toward the obliteration of the differences between center and periphery" ([8], pp. 262-263).

Notwithstanding in recent decades we have observed the resurgence of greater differences between the center and the peripheries in religious terms. Meanwhile, Western societies, especially Europe, remain the epitome of secularization, a set of non-institutional expressions of religiosities and spiritualities with diffuse frontiers of the *post-axial* type have been generated and expanding, all over the peripheries and even in the North American experience, including such secular components as the nation or person that have been re-sacralized, generating not a few symbolic cleavages [11].

This theory is useful to understand current changes of religions in the world, and it is an invitation to delve into the consequences of his analysis for the theory of secularization [12]. The logical consequence of the theory of multiple modernities applied to religion is that there are and will be diverse processes of 'multiple secularizations' [13]. Indeed secularization must be understood as a complex process and not a lineal one that will be followed by all societies experiencing the modernizing processes. Globalization leaves footprints and affects in its own religious evolution [14].

The approach of Eisenstadt is multidimensional and wide-ranging. It puts the emphasis on institutional and ideological dimensions of historical processes worldwide. The critics

received are because it does not take into account economic aspects. Additionally, it has been considered conceptually flawed and empirically unfounded [15]. It is based on the center-periphery theory, but does not delve into the colonial and neocolonial conflict that it implies. It does not give relevance to the unequal distribution of power in sociocultural phenomena, not considering either conflicting interests and ideologies in contemporary societies.

Some dynamics of current globalization are neglected in Eisenstadt's approach [16]. Globalization during the last century has given enough examples of growing inequalities that accentuate social conflicts [17, 18]. In fact, the uneven development of capitalism with its dialectics of north/south and center/periphery, together with the hegemonic globalization, raises the resistance of local or 'glocal' identities [19, 20]. All these dynamics affect religious evolution and its expressions in different geo-cultural areas of the contemporary world.

Whether born out of poverty, the precariousness of life (unemployment, instability, economic crisis, debts, risks for the future, etc.), violence, social discrimination or new marginalization, new religious movements are leading to traditional religious fervor, traditional or new popular religiosities, and new fundamentalist movements. Either the processes of forced, authoritarian, modernization generate uprisings of nonconformity, or the cultural modernizations affect traditions and customs and generate discontent, claiming cultural identity [18] and generate political motives for mobilizations everywhere. Within these identity claims the religious factor can be relevant. It is not surprising that messianic, clerical, new apocalyptic, or new esoteric movements support and are interwoven with anti-globalization movements or discontents. Trying to protect their dignity people pray to God or supernatural beings that can help them to survive and develop.

The search for meaning is present in popular religions as the result of the cry of the subaltern classes burned by the unequal system and by the institutional and political crisis. Overcoming alienation of consumer society, violence or injustice, triggers new ways of constructing the sense of life and cosmos. The millenarian or apocalyptic tendencies of old or new religious movements have its roots in this type of rationale.

Although multiple modernities give us a conceptual key for understanding what is happening in these religious changes in Latin America there must be at least two other remarks. The first one is that the world religions are answering each one by their own path to multiple interactions with modernities. The example of the answers given by Catholicism in one side, and Islamism in the other, is clear. So, the thesis that they all tend to respond in similar ways to the challenge of multiple modernities [3] must be left aside. The second complementary remark is that in each civilizational area the processes of religious transformations are very different. Secularization tendencies can be present in diverse scenarios although there are diverse religious responses. We observe different types of religious genuine transformations. 'This transformation little by little acquires its own characteristics as a function of historical dynamics, structural conditioning and traditions, evolutions and constructions proper' [21] to the cultures and peoples of Latin America, Asia, Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. Religions are being transformed in northern developed countries (for example, Northern Western Europe) with the diminishing importance of public and personal religious practices. In southern countries and

in developing countries (as in Latin America, Africa, Asia), however, religions are being revitalized according to their specific sociohistorical conditions within their cultural peculiarities.

3. Religions: statistics and evolution in the world today

What now seems indisputable is that the old paradigm of secularization has been surpassed. The debate now focuses on whether it should be replaced by the theory of post-secularization or by that of neo-secularization [22]. What is decisive is that recent data and estimates from surveys and centers of research are indicating that the great world religions are not disappearing, and instead religions in general, except Buddhists and other religions, are tending to increase the number of members they draw [23] (**Table 1**).

By 2060, [24] Christians are expected to reach 31.8% of the global population; Muslims 31.3%, Hindus 14.5, Buddhists 4.8 and Folk Religions 4.6. Unaffiliated population is supposed to reach only 12.5% while today it represents 16%.

We must acknowledge that religious affiliation is a dynamic phenomenon. Religious switching plays a role in religions growth and the changing sizes of religious groups. Those people born in the context of one religion might abandon his/her mother's faith. Changes can go in different and even contrary directions. For example, PEW estimates for the period 2015–2020 [25] show that about 5 million people globally are expected to become Christians in this five-year period. At the same time around 13 million are expected to leave Christianity, probably to join the ranks of the religiously unaffiliated.

	Projected population	% of world population	Projected population	% of world population	Population growth
	2015	2015	2060	2060	2015–2060
Christians	2,276,250,000	31.2	3,054,460,000	31.8	778,210,000
Muslims	1,752,620,000	24.1	2,987,390,000	31.1	1,234,770,000
Unaffiliated	1,165,020,000	16.0	1,202,300,000	12.5	37,280,000
Hindus	1,099,110,000	15.1	1,392,900,000	14.5	293,790,000
Buddhists	499,380,000	6.9	461,980,000	4.8	-37,400,000
Folk religions	418,280,000	5.7	440,950,000	4.6	22,670,000
Other religions	59,710,000	0.8	59,410,000	0.6	-29,000
Jews	14,270,000	0.2	16,370,000	0.2	2,100,000
World	7,284,640,000	100.0	9,615,762,060	100.0	2,331,130,000

Source: Pew Research Center [24].

Table 1. Size and projected growth of major religious groups (2015–2060).

Age and fertility are other major factors behind religious changes. Contrasting the great fertility rate of Muslim populations (that evidence a clear growth tendency for this religion), people who do not identify with any religion are probably reducing its relative size worldwide due to the dearth of newborns among the unaffiliated population (that lives mostly in developed central countries).

Some religions are expected to increase their number of members over the next decades, including Islam, which will represent 30% of the world population by 2050 [25]; 31.1% by 2060 [24]. Islam is strong and widespread in Arab countries, non-Arab countries such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and in many South Asian and Southeast Asian countries (Muslims are a strong majority in Indonesia and Malaysia, for example).

Christianity will increase its numbers in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2050 and worldwide; independent churches of various denominations and forms of Pentecostalism will have increased, mainly in Latin America, Africa and the East (Asia and Oceania). The influence of Christianity on the lives of individuals is increasing in many places, and it remains strong in the USA but is expected to have decreased in relative terms in North America by 2050.

Hinduism will prevail in India and Nepal, and as a strong minority in many other Asian nations. Buddhism, Judaism, folk and ethnic religions, Shinto, Confucianism, and many other religions that are widespread in specific contexts are to grow slightly or to decline slightly.

In all the estimates that are made those without religious affiliation seem destined to decline by 2050 (from 16% in 2010 to 13% by the middle of the century, to 12.5% by 2060). It is expected that the so-called 'none's' (atheists, agnostics, those indifferent and others) will suffer the impact of this wave of religious growth.

The important conclusion of the Center for the Study of Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Global Theological Seminar of South Hamilton (Massachusetts) in the United States is that by 2030 the religious affiliation of the population will be higher than in 1970: the figures are 80.8% in that year and 90.2% in 2030. Religions 'do not tend to disappear, as some authors used to predict beginning from the 1960s [23].

Although it is very important to assess religious changes, these religious statistics and socio-religious demography lack precision and understanding of real religious changes that are taking place deep in the mentality of the masses and under the surface of the figures. Indeed we know that statistical invisibility can become the basis of religious discrimination [26].

Great dynamics of religious shifts are left aside or underestimated by the figures. On the one side, there is: (a) the loss of the influence of religions, mainly Christianity, in economic affairs, political and legal issues, and even personal morality in many industrialized countries in the West; (b) the diminishing power of institutionalized religions (churches) over society in general and even their own faithful in many Western-oriented countries. On the other side, in a counter movement, there is the increasing phenomenon of: (a) believers without religious affiliation in many regions of the world; (b) the double affiliation of people in many diverse religious contexts; (c) the revitalization of many types of popular religions (traditional and new), especially in non-Western countries and regions; (d) the global religious resurgence aimed at recovering a religious foundation for the organization of society in the face of a modernization process that has

failed (especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall and in the Islamic civilization that now intends to 'Islamize modernity'); and (e) the changing patterns of religious systems—including religious reforms and revitalizations—in different regions of the non-Western world (the Islamic world and Latin America, each with its imprints and idiosyncrasies, being good contrasting examples).

These facts make us realize that in reality what happens is that the specific religious evolutions depend much on the regional (or continental) history, culture and religious dynamics. Depending on the type of analysis employed, one can identify at least nine great religious/civilizational or geo-cultural areas in the world today: Western Europe; Eurasia (Central-Eastern-Europe and North-Center Asia); North America; Latin America and the Caribbean; Middle East-Arabia; Indo-Asia; South-East and East Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa; Oceania. The hypothesis that these geo-cultural-religious areas of the world correspond to different processes of modernizations can be sustained—*mutatis mutandis*—in historical, cultural and statistical terms.¹ We can presume that in each religious/civilizational area we will find specific religious field dynamics driven by the main world religious traditions historically spread through the region for centuries and the peculiar arrangements between religions and society in each case through the modernization processes from the eighteenth century onwards, including colonization and neo-colonization processes and the attempts toward decolonization in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

4. Popular religions of the world today

Social sciences have recognized the historical trend—in many cultural areas and world religions—in the formation of a widespread 'popular religion' related and subordinated to an 'official religion'. Under, and in a dialectical tension with, the official religion a popular religion with its own manifestations is developed [29]. Official and popular religions interact in a complex way: they share a lot of things, they are mutually attracted and repelled; they intersect and differ and take distances, and they are constantly providing feedback to each other, although in a permanently asymmetric relationship.

Here 'popular' does not mean fashionable or in vogue, nor massive or related to media culture, as the expression in English is usually used. Popular designates the expressions of ordinary people's faith and the search for relationships with the divine (or the supernatural) in an individual or communitarian way—in a more direct and effective way—in their everyday lives. They are religious expressions often found in less privileged classes and groups. The body and iconic expressions take an outstanding role in this less intellectual and dogmatic type of religiosity. New forms of religiosity, mostly spiritualities that democratize mysticism, are spreading all over the world [30].

¹Considering the World Value Survey database [27], Smith and Vaidyanathan [12] and Huntington [28]. The latter author's hypothesis about the 'clash of civilizations' takes into account that we are not moving toward a unified world: language and religion worldwide is diversifying. The author suggests that this diversification among civilizations is a threat to peace and calls for a revitalization of the West. As he affirms: 'Modernization, instead, strengthens those cultures and reduces the relative power of the West. In fundamental ways, the world is becoming more modern and less Western' ([28], p. 78).

Popular religion can be understood as a set of local and massive religious expressions where simple lay people practice their heterodox rituals and beliefs related to a universal religious system. In all the world religions we find historical expressions of popular religion, although with many serious differences.

Generally speaking, the singular concept of popular religion is used. In conceptual terms it is an ideal type, though the historical and empirical phenomenon of the multiple and multitudinous forms of religiosities and varied expressions must be acknowledged. This is why we speak here in plural terms of popular religions.

As it can be demonstrated we can find diverse expressions of popular religion in the different forms of Christianity, Judaism, and with other traits than found in Western cultures, in Islam, and in Eastern cultures, Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism and other Asian religions.

Beyond the religious multicolored landscape printed by local and ancient traditions, the popular religions of Latin America, Africa and Asia seem to share common features: attachment to life, perception of evil, dynamisms and symbolisms, the presence of the extraordinary (e.g. miracles), and their distance, more or less accentuated, from Western thought and rationality.

In each case the features of popular religion will depend on the specificities of the historical-cultural area traditions; the cultures and local religious traditions; the institutional development of the religious macro-field; the evolution of local social structures and power; and the types of cross-cutting interethnic or intercultural encounters to which they have been subjected historically.

5. Latin America and popular religions

Latin America—a peripheral continent in world context—in religious terms is increasingly plural. The religious field that was some decades ago totally Catholic has changed radically. Catholics percentage has diminished, and Evangelicals have grown considerably in recent years. The classical interaction between religion and society, and between religion and politics in this continent has been replaced by new forms of religions in the public sphere. The revitalization of religions—especially in terms of Pentecostals and charismatics; ethnic and indigenous religions; believers not affiliated, etc.—in public and private spaces reveals the changes that have taken place in Latin America’s cultural evolution since the nineteenth century [31–33]. We observe in this context popular religions that are revitalized where millions of Latin American devotees go on pilgrimage each year to ask favors of their saints and the Virgin Mary and crowds take part in Pentecostal rituals.

The renewed religious landscape can serve us as a paradigm in comparative terms. The processes of secularization in developed central countries—especially in Western Europe—have privatized beliefs and practices, specialized functions and reduced church influence. In contrast, Churches have now less influence than before and in all Latin American countries church and state have been separated for a long period, and religion continues to be a relevant

part of the cultural landscape. In Latin America the privileged, educated (high or upper middle class) social groups have been secularized, but the vast majority of the middle and lower classes are adepts of rituals and popular cults, Catholics, Evangelicals or Pentecostals, including in some countries indigenous and/or African-Americans cults. The macro-religious field has been pluralized and diversified across various sociocultural Latino contexts, in line with the globalization of communications and knowledge, and the modernization processes undertaken in the region.

There have been many studies on popular religion in Latin America [32, 34, 35]. It is perhaps one of the main characteristic features (certainly not the only one) of Latin American culture and it defines, in a specific way, its cultural identity in the context of multiple modernities and the new landscape of religious diversity [36].

According to recent data on Latin America, nearly 50% of the population say in their religious services that speaking in tongues, praying for a miraculous healing and prophesying are common practices. The percentages are 86% for Protestants and 49% for Catholics. This type of religious expressions is linked to what has been called charismatics. In 15 countries (out of 18) Protestants practice it by more than 80%. In 12 countries (out of 18) Catholics practice charismatics by more than 50%.

We must add to this type of ritual a great population that takes part in popular religion rituals. Sometimes popular religion and charismatics overlap, nonetheless there are also disjoint sets of popular religion in its own and pure charismatic expressions. There is no doubt that popular Catholicism continues to be one of the main expressions of religious belief in the continent. There are numerous shrines to the Virgin Mary throughout Latin America, from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego. Each year millions of pilgrims, from four million pilgrims for the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico to half a million pilgrims for the Virgin of Tirana in northern Chile, visit these. These are devotional expressions of colonial origin maintained in the midst of modernity. The Virgin of Copacabana, of colonial Andean origin (1583), on Lake Titicaca, remains vital as one of the most important devotional sites in Bolivia. Others may be mentioned: Caacupe (Paraguay), Caridad del Cobre (Cuba), Aparecida (Brazil), Lujan (Argentina), Chiquinquirá (Colombia), Coromoto (Venezuela), Alta Gracia (Dominican Republic), Del Rosario (Guatemala), Santa María de la Antigua (Panama), etc.

Together with charismatics (either Pentecostal or Catholic), there are a great number of devotees of popular rituals. These expressions flourish in the Latino culture with its carnivals, football fans and the mood of festivities, with their counterpart in sorrow, suffering and violence [37]. Many of the everyday lives and cultural manifestations of the Latin American people are then guided by a symbolic logic of action, an 'other logic' [32] that has been denied by the Latin American elites with their Western-oriented codes.

One dimension of popular religion is that it helps to shape identities to different groups whose position in society is negatively privileged [38]. Popular religion often accompanies forms of cultural resistance of non-Western peoples to the modernization that damages their traditions. The popular religion then contributes to resisting the various forms of exploitative and enslaving capitalism, restoring dignity and hope to ordinary people.

The critical review of current manifestations of religious Latin American pluralism, the loss of influence of institutional expressions (churches) and the increasing development of charismatic manifestations and different spiritualities, the growing presence of popular and 'lived religion' not only have to do with the crisis of many churches and the disaffection toward institutions, also with the influence of new symbolic languages, rituals and body-oriented practices whose vector has been the modernization process itself. What Latin American popular religions are showing in many aspects raises questions and suggests new ways of interpreting religious phenomena in the globalized world.

The features of Catholicism in the popular Christian Latin area (Latin America and South-Western Europe) engender typical traits very different from those Christian traditions found in the Protestant (Northern Europe) or Orthodox (Eastern Europe and Russia) areas of the world. Popular Catholicism is an example of the dialectic between global and local and specific modernities interwoven in peculiar forms: Latin American's popular Catholicism has some roots in common with Latin/European popular Catholicism (Spain, Portugal, Italy), but differs in relevant points; within the Latin American region the Meso-American indigenous, syncretic Catholicism (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras) has distinctive features we do not find in the Andean Region of South America (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and the north of Chile). This indigenous Andean Catholicism has its own specific symbols and identities. Popular Christianity in the areas colonized by English-speaking and Protestant cultures (areas of the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa) share some features in common with its mixture of tribal rituals and Christian beliefs, but differ greatly from Afro-American Catholicism or Afro-American Cults (with syncretic Christian beliefs) as in Umbanda, Candomblé and Santería. Catholic popular expressions of Asian countries (the south of India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines) share varied elements with Latin American Catholicism, although they also have their own traits because of long-term backgrounds and ancient traditions [39].

6. Religion in industrialized western countries

In industrialized central countries—especially in Western Europe—the liberal culture has introduced new values and icons and traditional religion is reserved for the few. A growing number of people do not profess the orthodox beliefs and do not participate in church activities and organizations. The traces of Christian influence—in a civilization marked by Western Christianity—are still there but they do not have the significance that they did in the past. Churches are losing their former influence and power and new suppliers are, as a result, offering religious or spiritual alternatives and replacements.

Apparently the percentage of atheists and agnostics is growing, however it does not seem to be the real trend. The share of the unaffiliated population residing in Europe is projected to grow from 12% in 2010 only to 13% in 2050 [25]. However, many of the religiously unaffiliated do hold some religious or spiritual beliefs [40]. Following the Pew data, it can be estimated that between a third to two-thirds of the unaffiliated population in Western countries believes in God or a higher power.

A growing number of people do not see themselves as church members, but are in search of religious or spiritual meaning: they are 'believers without belonging' [41]. In everyday life, religion continues to be important, perhaps with different meanings and significance. 'In tragedy and disaster, religion is still a major source of symbols, sentiments and ceremonies' [42].

The theoretical model of the religious market has been used to understand this type of religious experiences of people in a secularized milieu. The rational choice will induce consumers to pick and mix religious items to match their commitment and interest at the modern supermarket of faith [41]. There is not the space to discuss or debate this approach, but we only can advance the idea that consumers of religion are not in fact consumers as we currently understand the term: each individual is an active agent of religious production, although framed by the official religious codes and cultural regulations of his or her time and society.

New forms of religious or spiritual beliefs and practices are flourishing in the high-tech society. Interest in spiritualities by 'non-religious' or, better, non-practicing believers [30], appears to be growing. Astrology, yoga or other esoteric expressions, New Age or adapted Eastern spiritualities (westernized Buddhism or Taoism or similar), native or Afro-American or neo-pagan religions are growing movements, networks or even individualistic cults that tend to be present within well-trained, well-educated populations working with or handling high technologies and seeking self-knowledge, body care, human development, a better quality of life and harmony with nature and the cosmos.

All these unchurched forms of religions—flourishing also in North America and in Western Europe—and in the Western-oriented elites of developing countries of the Global South—have to be studied in greater detail as forms of 'new popular religions'. They cover a vast range: from metaphysical religions, alternative medicines, psychological spiritualities [43], transhumanist cults to auto-secularized Christianity [44].

We have studied for a long while what has been called the 'believer without religion' or the 'believer my own way' in Latin American contexts. Although similar in appearance they cannot be assimilated to Sheilism [45]—a name for religious 'do-it-yourselfism'—in industrialized countries. The contextual ethos and culture in each case are different and induce diverse types of 'lived religions' [46]. The believer 'my own way' in Latin American countries is usually inspired by the distinctive mode of 'Latino' spirituality, participating without problem in popular cults—which is not an intimate and individualistic way of religiosity. This is also a powerful reason why these type of new popular religions expression must be studied under the multiple modernities paradigm.

7. Popular religions in eastern Asia and Islamic milieu

Popular religions in East-Asian countries must be the object of more attention. Since statistics show very high percentages of non-affiliates in countries like China and Japan. China alone is the home to 62% of the world religiously unaffiliated people [40]. The hypothesis that can be advanced is that we are facing forms of believers without explicit religious affiliation, hidden

from the surface of the numbers. Many of these forms of 'religiousness' can mask 'popular religionists' who are invisible to statistics. The other fact is that in Eastern Asia many traditional practices are indeed not called "religions".

The particular interaction of religious traditions with political power—in its changing historical phases in this cultural area—may also explain the emergence of the 'unaffiliated' category, which is actually a form of expression of the parallelism that runs between the official and canonical religious expressions (used to interact with power and the state) and the various forms of popular and folk religions that survive—maybe hidden—in the daily lives of ordinary people.

Popular religion in China has been usually studied under Weberian optics, the popular cults of the masses included multiple gods and sorcerers, with magic having a predominant role [47]. Perhaps one of the main misconceptions comes because the Western concept of religion does not fully apply to the main Chinese traditions, some of them considered philosophies and not religions in China [48].

In modern China, the religious landscape can be studied beginning with the three canonical religious systems: Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism [49]. Because these teachings often interact with each other the most important 'lived religion' freely integrates what it calls the 'three teachings', producing many and diverse manifestations of popular and syncretic religions with its widespread devotion to the ancestors, pilgrimages, shrines and its multiple mediums and shamans [50]. The revitalization of these Chinese popular religions brings about a debate about its relations with Christianity, the politics of the People's Republic and modernization [51].

A similar dynamic—although with different traits—is often found in Japan, Thailand, India and many other Eastern Asian countries. Eclectic and syncretic religious expressions are found not only in Asian contexts as those promoted by prominent Buddhists in Sri Lanka [52] but also in the Muslim world. Zar possession and exorcism cult—probably from Ethiopian origin—has spread in North Africa and The Middle East [3] becoming popular in the contemporary urban culture of Cairo and other major cities of the Islamic world. A women-only cult, its gatherings involve food and musical performances, culminating in ecstatic dancing, lasting several nights. These subaltern religious experiences within or alongside Islam evidence that modernization, urbanization and migration have opened ways for new popular religious forms, which can be considered an alternative to the official and elite religious and cultural discourse.

The dialectics official and popular religion can also be found in South Asian contexts where kings and clerics often built devotional centers alongside pre-existing indigenous cults. As Hefner [3] says "This cosmological accommodation resembles the relationship between non-Christian cults and saint veneration in European and Latin American Catholicism" (...) Although Protestantism and reformed Catholicism fought these degraded and heretic forms of popular and syncretic Christianity, in South and Southeast Asia pre-Hindu or non-Hindu cults have survived and even revitalized together with the official great traditions, even after elements of them were drawn up into Hindu superstructure.

In Islamic contexts, the relationship between religions and modernity is quite specific. Gellner [53] sketches a quite plausible picture of the relationship between official Islamic religion ('high Islam') and popular Islamic religion. The existence of a variety of movements and religious groups within civil society in Muslim countries is part of its multiple modernities and has not been sufficiently recognized in the West [16, 54, 55].

The official religion tends toward puritanism and is in the forefront of reforms. Popular Islam with its magical beliefs in saints, pilgrimages and shrines, rituals and festivities departs from the elites (and therefore takes distance from reformism and of modernity). This type of religiosity has always provided the masses for the leadership of reformers and even in cases for the radical *jihadists*. Since this popular religion has been more likely to externalize its rituals, it has sometimes been questioned for having Sufi influences, with its mystical rituals, chants and dervish dances.

The accommodation of high Islam with the requirements of modernity is clear and makes modernization fully compatible with the reform of Islam, combining in one movement reformism and nationalism. Thus religious traditions in history gradually assumed an important role in defining 'authentic' Muslim modernities [56].

Perhaps the crises caused by the invasions of Afghanistan (in the 1980s by the USSR and then subsequently by the USA), the Gulf War and the Iraq War, and then by the chaotic aftermath of the Arab Spring (2010 on) have revitalized popular religious movements in Arab and Muslim countries—reinvigorating local warlords and tribalism, and with them local Islamic practices.

The contradictions of the modernization process and the search for autonomy *vis-à-vis* the Western colonial or postcolonial powers has accentuated an entire range of Muslim responses, from politics to clothes to architecture. 'In Muslim society postmodernism means a shift to ethnic or Islamic identity (not necessarily the same thing and at times opposed to each other) as against an imported foreign or Western one; a rejection of modernity (...and...) above all, a numbing awareness of the power and pervasive nature of the Western media which are perceived as hostile' ([57], p. 32).

The changes and turmoil brought by the recent neocolonial interventions, the Arab Spring and the Middle East civil wars (Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen) are creating new conditions for religious changes and conflicts between factions (Sunni vs. Shiite) and giving more space for movements to polarize (fundamentalists vs. liberal and moderates), and creating new conditions for revitalizing Popular Islam.

8. Toward a new sociological approach

Glocalization—as a complex and dynamic process—often revitalize local and popular traditions under forms that share common trends and in the same dialectical movement it gives rises to different and specific expressions and reshapes the religious fields. Religions do not simply react against modernization instead they originate diverse responses to the modern world. All these religious changes are taking place in a world of nation-states, mass

urbanization, economic specialization, mass and new technological communications and migrations that render social borders permeable to transcultural flows. Sociological theory is in a continuous effort to be able to improve understanding of these dynamics and current transformations.

In recent years, we have many signs that the sociology of religion is regaining the prestige that should never have lost. In part this is due to the emergence of the religious phenomenon under study. But partly it is because what Jim Beckford requested in his *Religion and Advanced Industrial Societies* [58] is being fulfilled, although gradually [59]. Beckford requested that sociologists of religion come out of their isolation and begin to debate with sociology in full, and also requested that theoretical and general sociology take into account religions because it 'challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about their models of modernity' ([58], p. xi).

The scientific approach to religious phenomena is to be assessed within the framework of scientific production as an international system. If we look at the intellectual production of the sciences, and social sciences in particular, we will see that there is still social asymmetry in the international division of scientific labor. Theories, major issues and even controversies are generated in the North; the intellectual production of the Global South follows them, producing abundant empirical or historical analysis, but usually generating scarce original theory.

A well-known tradition of postcolonial studies has emphasized the process by which the West has 'invented' a certain image of the Orient—functional to its interests. This type of image allows you to define what the 'other' is, nevertheless in terms totally unrelated to what the other defines as himself. Said [60] stresses that 'East' and 'West' operate as opposites, building the concept of the 'East' as a negative inversion of Western culture.

The production of the social sciences reveals still a postcolonial trend, in fact. The main authors in the industrialized countries—English-Speaking or Western European continentals—tend to ignore the production of the intellectuals of the Global South (Asia, Latin America, and Africa) while the latter still—although with less emphasis than was previously the case—consider intellectual production in the North as their guide and inspiration. This also happens in the field of sociology of religion, of course with honorable exceptions.²

A remarkable author that supports the thesis of multiple modernities is the British researcher Grace Davie. In an outstanding analysis of religion in contemporary sociology, *Sociology of Religion* [41] she makes a record of studies of religion—first of Britain, then of Europe, then globally. She underlines the exceptionalism of religion in Europe with its specific process of secularization [63], which cannot be generalized to other continents. But like many sociologists producing science in the North—very used to reading their own English-speaking or European colleagues, trapped in their Eurocentrism—when it comes to analyzing religious realities of Latin America she does not quote any native author—who have done valuable work, some translated into English—she makes only references to American or English authors on Latin America.

²Some examples are Beckford and Demerath III [61] and Cipriani [62].

The difficulties for analyzing the phenomena of different modernities not only derive from the division of intellectual labor but also from the categories and the analytical framework from which we start.

Kepel [64] in his study of the so-called fundamentalist movements from the three monotheist religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, affirmed that each religious culture is developing specific 'truths' that are giving rise to strong identity claims. Their discourses and practices are meaningful and not 'the product of deregulation of reason' ([64], p. 26). The point is that there are still no appropriate concepts for some religious movements. The notions used to understand Muslim events come from Paris or New York. 'Integrism' as a concept was born in Catholic milieus; 'fundamentalism' as a concept was born in Protestant milieus. They have only metaphorical, not universal, value. The author explains that these terms are 'biased' and simplify reality. They are adopted for convenience, given the current Western inability to interpret Islamic movements. Yet they hinder knowledge and blur the perception of these phenomena as a whole ([64], pp. 15–16).

Many Latin American sociologists have tried and are trying to advance toward the decolonization of sociological knowledge [65–67] and of the sociology of religion in particular [68, 32]. No better understanding of the local and 'glocal' realities can be obtained—in a comprehensive perspective—than when local people are involved in knowledge production. Foreign observers need to enhance objectivity—epistemic intersubjectivity—but local knowledge is better fitted to establishing connotations and decoding meanings.

As the Asian sociologist Syed Farid Alatas [69] has suggested, attention to local intellectuals such as the ones he examines, José Rizal (1861–1896) from the Philippines and Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), an Arab from the north of Africa, can open up an alternative research agenda other than the Western-oriented one. It reverses the subject–object dichotomy in which the knowledge in social thought and social theory are generally derived from Western European and North American white males, and replaces the domination of European-derived categories and concepts with a multicultural coexistence. Spikard has been making inroads in this direction with forays into the possibility of a Confucian sociology of religion [70] and an Islamic sociology of the same [71].

There are multiple religious transformations in the world today. They are a challenge to the analytical and theoretical frameworks of mainstream sociology. The evolution of sociology—especially the sociology of religion—is marked by the 'fathers' (Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Troeltsch, Mauss, Simmel, James) all of them writing in Western contexts [72]. So, it is not strange that many of the sociological controversies about religion have been around the Western pattern of an 'evolutionary' framework: modern societies will be secularized, so modernization processes will be brought—among other variables—by secularization. These theoretical statements were displaced by the criticism of secularization theories from the mid-1970s onwards. But the implicit framework is still there.

The fact that this premise has been taken as normative in the theories of modernization and then the theories of development has had huge implications for sociological theory in general and for sociology of religion theories in particular. Thus Western-oriented approach has

gone hand in hand with Christian-oriented and even Christian church-oriented approaches [72] and they have polluted current approaches to the cultural and religious phenomenon worldwide.

As stated some years ago [72], there is an agenda for the 'de-Westernization' of sociology and the need to determine new analytical categories. Changes that have taken place in recent decades in globalization with its multiple modernities' outcomes have transformed religious fields as previously understood by sociological theory. 'This calls for a revision of concepts. For the "de-Westernization" of global religious reality forces us to rethink once again those sociological categories that are grounded in the experience, tradition and structure of Western religion' ([72], p. 71).

In this new multidisciplinary and intercultural effort, new ideas coming from the South are welcomed. And the South must be seen more as an epistemic and intellectual way of seeing things than a geographical or geopolitical place. The South here means a different and alternative view to the hegemonic Western, colonialist, white, male view of reality.

9. Concluding remarks

Contrary to the classical theses of secularization, the contemporary world is not witnessing the inevitable decline of religions. Religions are being transformed. As we have seen, this is evident in the various expressions of popular religions in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. The case of the "secularized" societies of the West is specific in its own and cannot be taken as a model, neither empirical nor theoretical and less in evolutionary terms.

As we have said, the theory of multiple modernities permits us to understand why homogeneous and hegemonic modernization models—Eurocentric—are in crisis. Davie [63] herself talks about the uniqueness of the European case in terms of its own religious and secularization processes, which cannot be generalized. Otherwise as there is a European case—which has served for a long time as an exemplary model, although erroneously—there are also the Asian, the Arab, the Latin American, the African and the North American 'religious transformation' cases.

Each one has its particular historical, cultural, sociopolitical and religious traditions and present processes. Certainly there are some common traits within a global process of religious transformations, but what is dominant is the crystallizing of different religious modernities within broad cultural/civilizational patterns—whether near to or far away from Western European civilization and Western Christianity.

The cross-cuttings between the dynamics of modernization processes and local/regional traditions and histories are producing many more transformations than we imagined, both in the cultural and the religious sphere. A *long durée* perspective, as suggested by Braudel [73], combining sociology and history must be put in place. Intercultural processes have increased in these multiple contexts (and so social conflicts [74]). The interweaving of old and new religious traditions is accentuating interculturality and is generating great conditions for the

emergence of new types of syncretism [75] and/or sociocultural and even material (and violent) conflicts. The consequence is the development of not one pattern of religious evolution and change, but multiple cultural, institutional and religious patterns within societies that have a specific and distinctively form of modernity of their own [8].

Modernizing theories posited the process of secularization as a positive path toward progress. In its radical perception, the rationalization of life—assisted by the scientific-technological society—will make religions fade and eventually disappear. These theories assumed that religion would inevitably diminish in terms of its role and influence in modern society. Meanwhile theories of postmodernism preached the crisis of modern reason and the multiplication of narratives that would end with the mega-narratives of the past. Therefore, along with the progressive dissolution of the subject, all religious legitimization would tend to fade.

Thus, these common sense ideas (and even classical frameworks of some sociology) applied to religious phenomena are not well fitted to understanding at least two great current religious dynamics of the world today: (a) the increasingly different paths that we can find in religious diversifications and the multiplication of popular religion and spiritual expressions within multiple modernities; (b) the increasing importance of emotions and bodily dimensions within religious symbols, icons and practices of the masses in the different geo-cultural areas—and religious fields—of the world today.

A full understanding of religious pluralism and of the multiple religious types of transformations—including new religious movements, new forms of the world's religious traditions and multiple popular religions worldwide, not only in the West and in the North—must be an *intercultural* [76, 77] effort that requires new epistemic fundaments.

Many sociologists have advanced or proposed the theory of rational choice to analyze the growing religious pluralism and the various forms of individualized religions. Following my arguments, the rational choice paradigm has to be considered a flawed perspective because religion has to be understood as a unidimensional, rationalistic and monocultural reality. It certainly is more applicable to Western Christianity, as Sharot [78] has shown, and much less relevant and pertinent for analyzing Eastern religions and magic/popular religions because they are not built on rationalized ways of living, as in the case for Western Christianity. The rationality of their social actions follows another logic [32] that the rational choice theory does not address, and further it is based on the congregational-based Christian religion of the West—as we have said—and not on popular or ethnic religions, which Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism, and other Eastern, African or folk Latino-American religions have as their base. Religions and spiritual experiences in the multiple modernities paradigm must be assessed in a cross-cultural and from an intercultural perspective.

Theories of religion that attempt to build up a body of transcultural, universalistic generalizations, beginning with basic axioms of human one-dimensional rationality, will fail. A new sociological approach means making a great epistemological effort to overcome the problems of the analytical focus based on one type of rationality, mainly the Western-oriented type of rational action. Religious and spiritual pluralism in the globalized world, with its diverse and multiple manifestations, is challenging that effort.

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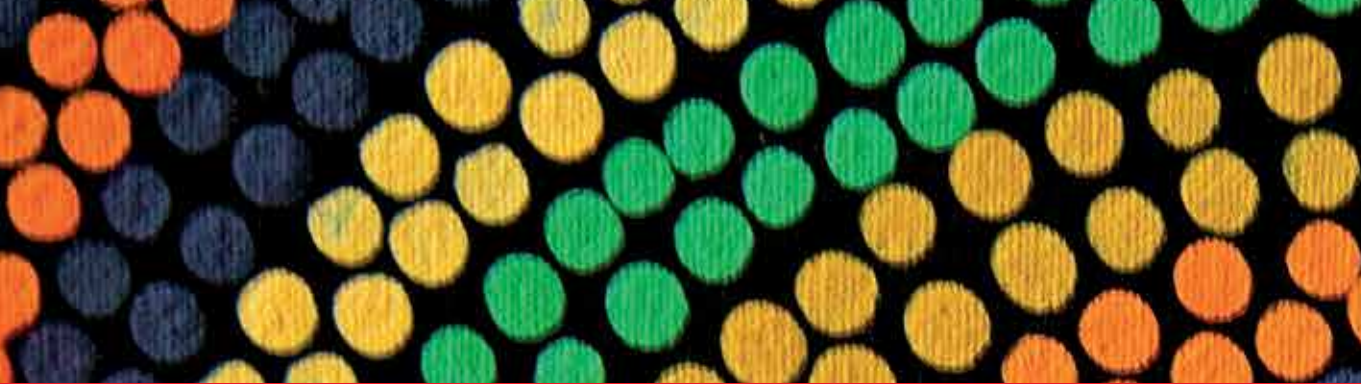
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This book is a wonderful celebration of culture and identity, especially from the cultural lens of the various authors' nation of origin. Culture is viewed as a collective programming of the mind and is at times compared to an onion-the more you peel off the layers, the more you get to learn about the values, beliefs, and norms of the respective societies. As complex as the onion diagram is, and it gives the possibilities of tears due to its complexity, a great understanding is critical to interact and communicate effectively. It is a unique tribute to the many scholars who have embarked on this journey of exploring culture and how identity is defined. It is an intellectual discourse that could act as a springboard for many more experiments to be conducted around the world, more specifically the multidimensional aspects of culture and identity. Other interesting elements in this book are the many historical details and the abundance of insightful illustrations.

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