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Aims and Scope

Religion & Development publishes peer reviewed research and analyses in the emerging field of religion and development. It seeks to foster critical investigation of the intersection of religion and development in global perspective. The journal is transdisciplinary and welcomes contributions from across the humanities and social sciences as well as reflections from policy and practice.

BRILL | SCHÖNINGH

Editorial: Multiple Perspectives on Religion and Development

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Abstract

This editorial introduces Vol. 2, Issue 2 of *Religion & Development*. The articles in this issue explore the religion and development nexus from a variety of perspectives. In terms of geography, they encompass studies focusing on Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana and the Philippines and of a more overarching international scope. Methodologically, the contributions include empirical approaches (qualitative and quantitative) and a systematic literature review. Thematically, the issue includes studies scrutinising the very notion of development as well as those highlighting specific topics within the development debate and on related themes. Furthermore, the issue includes reviews of recent book publications relating to the religion and development nexus.

Keywords

religion – development – Sustainable Development Goals – COVID-19 – post-2030 agenda – social cohesion – migration

Editorial: Multiple Perspectives on Religion and Development

It is our greatest pleasure to introduce the third issue of the transdisciplinary journal *Religion & Development*. After the publication of the inaugural issue in 2022, the journal has now moved into its regular publication rhythm of three issues per year. Following the exciting special collection in Vol. 2, Issue 1, guest-edited by Séverine Deneulin and Masooda Bano, on *Care for the Poor, Care for the Earth: Christian-Muslim Dialogue on Development* (see Deneulin and Bano 2023), the current issue includes a range of contributions with different thematic angles. The articles explore the religion and development nexus from a variety of perspectives. In terms of geography, the articles encompass studies focusing on Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana and the Philippines and of a more overarching international scope. Methodologically, the contributions display great diversity as well, including both qualitative and quantitative empirical approaches as well as a systematic literature review. Lastly, we are delighted to present articles in this issue that display a multiplicity of perspectives also in their thematic focus. This includes studies that engage in scrutinising the very notion of development from non-mainstream perspectives as well as those highlighting specific themes within the development debate and on related topics such as social cohesion and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first article in this issue, "Expanding Imaginations for a Post-2030 Agenda: The Interaction between Christian and Indigenous Spiritualities in the Philippines" by Emma Bridger, engages with the ideological foundations of the religion and development debate. Following decolonial thought, the article challenges dominant notions of development and dominant (often instrumentalising) approaches in the field of religion and development. It seeks to bring to the fore subaltern perspectives and to highlight their relevance for future development frameworks for the period after the implementation phase of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2030. The article emerged from a contribution to the IN//RCSD conference Religious Communities and Sustainable Development: Points of Departure for a Post-2030 Agenda and constitutes a highly important contribution to the emerging debate on how development should be conceptualised post-2030.

The second article, "Child Protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba Municipality, Ghana" by Ebenezer Tetteh Kpalam, engages with the crucial

issue of child protection in religious communities. Focusing on one of Ghana's largest churches, the article investigates questions of child protection both in biblical perspective and using empirical material from qualitative interviews conducted with district leaders and children's ministry leaders. The results show that while the biblical imperative of caring for and protecting children is considered highly important, child protection measures and policies are thus far inadequate to ensure comprehensive child protection. The article not only shows the relevance of adequate child protection policies in religious communities and their implementation, but also underscores the importance of strategic partnerships between religious communities and other stakeholders such as governments and international organisations in the efforts to protect children.

It has been an important paradigm shift in the development debate that development, particularly understood as sustainable development, has transcended being an affair of the global South. At the latest with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations 2015), the important realisation as taken root that all countries need to transform to achieve sustainable development. Consequently, *Religion & Development*'s scope is global, and the journal welcomes studies focusing on the global North, as outlined in our Introductory Article to the inaugural issue (see Öhlmann et al. 2022).

We are hence delighted that the third contribution to this issue focuses on a country in the global North. Carolin Hillenbrand's article "Social Cohesion and Religiosity – Empirical Results from an Online Survey in Germany during the COVID-19 Pandemic" investigates the nexus of religion, social cohesion and the COVID-19 crisis. The results show that while social cohesion seemed to have increased during the height of the pandemic, the effect of religion on social cohesion is ambiguous. Hillenbrand's conclusion is that "Exclusivist religious beliefs, a punitive image of God, and private prayer practice are negatively related [to social cohesion], while a loving image of God and service attendance are positively related [to it]." The article shows that in the same context specific forms of religiosity can foster social cohesion while others have an obstructive role. An important implication of this result for the wider religion and development debate is that it reemphasises the necessity of a differentiated view on the (ambivalent, but often highly relevant) role of religion in society.

The roles played by faith actors in migration-related development challenges, particularly at the local level, are generally given scant attention in policy documents and academic debates falling within the migration-development nexus. This is an important aspect of the argument that Susanna Trotta drives home in the fourth article, "Local Faith Actors and the Migration-Development Nexus: A Literature Review". In her comprehensive review of

relevant literature Trotta shows how the roles of faith actors are conspicuously undervalued in debates on migration and development. At the same time, however, she also illustrates how this blind spot is mitigated by a section of the relevant literature that pays concerted attention to local faith actors' actual engagement in different aspects of migration and development policy in practice. Trotta, in this respect, identifies and discusses noticeable areas of local faith actor involvement but importantly concludes that several research gaps still remain that call for further exploration.

Finally, we are pleased to also include as part of this issue Alexander Chenchenko's article, "Religion, Mission and Development: The Catholic Church as a Religious Infrastructure in Kafa, Ethiopia". Chenchenko convincingly shows how the notion of religious infrastructure can be meaningfully used as conceptual apparatus to study the development relevance of religious organisations. His focus is the Catholic Church in the Kafa region of southwestern Ethiopia, where he conducted ethnographic fieldwork over several months in 2021. In the present article, by applying the concept of religious infrastructure to the data, he is able to demonstrate how the Catholic Church in Kafa has emerged as a site of Integral Human Development where material dimensions (such as church properties, schools and other social infrastructural activities) intersect with new opportunities for social inclusion and reconfiguration of social identity and status. An important part of Chenchenko's argument is that this interconnected religious infrastructure, through the positive change that it brings about in people's lives, enables the anticipation of new hopeful ideas about the future and development for Catholic Christians in contemporary Kafa.

Along with the five research articles, the issue includes a policy and practice note. As a cornerstone of the journal's transdisciplinary approach to include both academic and professional perspectives, policy and practice notes provide a platform for in-depth reflections of practice and policy in the field of religion and development. Policy and practice notes thereby seek to foster knowledge exchange between academics, practitioners and policymakers, inter alia by providing a platform to feed knowledge produced outside the confinements of universities and research institutions into the academic space.

The policy and practice note in this issue by Steffie Kemp, "Effective Faith Partnerships during COVID-19: Lessons Learned from Development Practitioners" is an excellent example of this approach. In light of the important role religious actors played during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a major recent crisis, Kemp presents the results of a study process initiated by the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities analysing factors promoting and hindering effective partnerships of international agencies and

governments with religious actors during the pandemic. The article inter alia highlights the important role of power imbalances, bringing about the danger of religious actors being instrumentalised as implementors of relatively short-term projects. At the same time, based on the research results the greatest impact seemed to have been made by bottom-up initiatives of local religious communities. Consequently, Kemp advocates for long-term engagements instead of "ad hoc partnerships at times of crisis" and the relocation of agency in these mutual engagements to the local level.

Moreover, the issue includes four reviews of recent book publications, curated by our book review editor Barbara Bompani. The section includes reviews of Courtney Work's *Tides of Empire: Religion, Development, and Environment in Cambodia* (reviewed by Peter Rowe) and Dena Freeman's monograph on *Tearfund and the Quest for Faith-Based Development* (reviewed by Elias Bongmba). The third review engages with Yonatan N. Gez, Yvan Droz, Jeanne Rey and Edio Soares' volume *Butinage: The Art of Religious Mobility* (reviewed by Theresa Mayer) and the section is rounded off with the review of Salvatory Hansjörg Dilger's recent study *Learning Morality, Inequalities, and Faith: Christian and Muslim Schools in Tanzania* (reviewed by Salvatory Nyanto).

In its multiplicity of perspectives and approaches, the contributions of this third issue illustrate the transdisciplinary, international and deliberately broad scope of *Religion & Development*. We trust the issue will be of great interest to scholars, students, policymakers and practitioners dealing with questions and issues in the multifaceted nexus of religion and development.

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Research Articles

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Expanding Imaginations for a Post-2030 Agenda: The Interaction between Christian and Indigenous Spiritualities in the Philippines
Research Article

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Abstract

Encounters with marginalised spritualties and religions can assist in the creation of a post-2030 agenda that recognises the limitations of existing ideas of 'sustainable development' and 'progress', the necessity of which is evidenced by our worsening climate and ecological crisis.

The acknowledgement that religion plays an important role in the lives of the majority of the world's population has led to increased partnerships between religious communities, humanitarian and development practitioners, and policy makers. At best, this has resulted in fruitful partnerships with those whose world views fit into predefined understandings of religion and development. At worst, it has led to the instrumentalisation of religious and spiritual leaders to implement western, individualistic, capitalist, anthropocentric ideas of development. Knowledge flows have remained unidirectional with the aforementioned partnerships yet to see the transformative potential of engaging with a greater diversity of religious and spiritual communities when imagining a post-2030 agenda.

This paper draws on ethnographic engagement and interviews with the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and Lumad Indigenous people in the Philippines to highlight how learned ignorance, encounters and horizontal relationships can expand individual and collective imagination – deconstructing imperial imaginations and prioritising people and planetary flourishing above profit. It highlights the potential way in which diverse subaltern, abyssal and decolonial movements can be engaged to support

a burgeoning of ecologies of knowledge capable of challenging hegemonic under-standings of 'progress' and 'development', essential to the post-2030 debate.

Keywords

knowledge – sustainable development – imagination – knowledge production – development alternatives – ecological crisis – Philippines

1   Introduction

Within the field of development the United Nations frameworks, whether in the form of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or a new post-2030 agenda set the norm: they determine what constitutes 'development' and what is 'alternative development'; they determine funding priorities and project design (Öhlmann, Gräb and Frost 2020). The current framework, the SDGs and the global commit-ments to the 2030 Agenda more broadly have had a positive impact on the lives of countless people.[1] The Agenda brought issues of climate change and environmental degradation into greater focus and included the principle of universality (UNGA 2015). This decentred industrial nations as the exemplar of development (Kothari et al. 2019, xiii) whilst acknowledging the existence of an imperial south in the global north and an imperial north in the global south (Santos 2016).

However, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are also deeply flawed.[2] Whilst no longer holding the West as the exemplar of development they continue in the capitalist, individualistic and anthropocentric western tradition that views modernisation, progress and development as a linear process of mate-rial improvement. They frame 'green capitalism' or 'green growth'[3] as the solu-tion to ecological destruction and gross inequalities in the world (Kothari et al. 2019, xxvi) and are therefore incapable of addressing our ecological crisis

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1   For example, the *Sustainable Development Report 2020* notes progress in maternal and child health, access to electricity, and women's representation in government (UNSD 2020).

2   The UNSD report itself noted that 'advances were offset elsewhere by growing food inse-curity, deterioration of the natural environment, and persistent and pervasive inequalities' (UNSD 2020).

3   Although these may perhaps be more illuminatively labelled greenwashing (Barry and Frankland 2014, 19) or green colonialism (Normann 2021).

noting that 'They [the SDG s] render environmental problems technical, promising win-win solutions and the impossible goal of perpetuating economic growth without harming the environment. (Kallis 2015).

Furthermore, as Sartorius notes, they are depoliticising, because 'causes, for example struggles of wealth distribution and land repartition, are veiled by statistics' (2022, 100). The result is that the SDGs are 'without strategies to reverse the global North's disproportionate contamination of the globe through waste, toxicity, and climate emissions' (Kothari et al. 2019, xxvii). In this way, the SDG s allow for and even support the very exploitative economic systems that cause many of the environmental and health wounds they purport to solve.

There exist many examples of alternative development or alternatives to development. One of the most commonly known is *buen vivir*, an internally and historically heterogeneous concept (Gudynas 2011),[4] which gained popularity and its present, generally accepted, meaning of intertwined community and environmental and social well-being in Latin America in the 1990s (Gudynas 2014). Another is ubuntu, which originated in Southern Africa and is often explained through the phrase 'I am because we are' in which all beings are interdependent and interconnected (Ramose 2015; Bowers Du Toit 2020; van Norren 2020; Sartorius 2022). A further example that is gaining attention in Europe is that of degrowth, which Kothari et al. describe as 'the hypothesis that we can live better with less and in common, in western countries' (2019, 2). *buen vivir*, ubuntu and degrowth acknowledge examples of alternatives to development that have been discussed in the post-development discourse and are among many transformative ways of living, the most comprehensive collection of which can be found in Kothari et al.'s *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (2019).

These alternative understandings of development had entered popular discourse prior to the formation of the SDG s[5] and the language of some non-western cosmologies, world views and development alternatives are present in the goals (van Norren 2020). However, simply including alternative language is insufficient without challenging the underlying assumptions on which western linear understandings of progress and development are based. Furthermore, notions of spirituality and community that are fundamental to understanding *buen vivir* and ubuntu were not even included tokenistically (van Norren 2020). It therefore remains that 'the SDG s do not effectively address the

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4   The term was first used as far back as 1615 (Quijano 2016).
5   See, for example, the article in *The Guardian*, a popular British newspaper (Kothari, Demaria, and Acosta 2015).

human – nature – well-being interrelationship' (van Norren 2020), nor do they acknowledge the importance of religion and spirituality in the lives of the majority of the world's population (Öhlmann, Gräb, and Frost 2020). The fact that the 2030 Agenda did not incorporate these alternatives suggests that it is not enough to know about them – western development agendas need to be transformed by them in order to decentre dominant notions of progress and development.

However, whilst literature acknowledges the failure of the SDGs and the need for transformation, less attention has been paid to what such transformations might look like. This paper draws on the example of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) and Lumad Indigenous people in the Philippines as narrated in 37 semi-structured interviews that took place in early 2020, supplemented by informal conversations, online events and interviews throughout 2021 to highlight how such transformations can and do take place. It argues that the IFI's theologically informed understanding of equality encourages a humility and learned ignorance that facilitates relationships and intercultural dialogue, leading to an ecology of knowledges that furthers the IFI's commitment to the Lumad struggle and alternative understandings of development.

2   Writing on Indigenous Spiritualities: A Personal Introduction

I am a white, cisgendered, able-bodied female born into a close-knit family in the United Kingdom, currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Birmingham. The ideas shared in this paper have developed from my relationships with three communities: those who are research collaborators within my ongoing PhD project, Lumad Indigenous people and the IFI; those engaged in religion and development spheres with whom I have interacted for the past five years; and my family and community here in the UK. Indigenous methodologies have been key in informing my research. Within Indigenous methodologies and understandings knowledge is relational; in undertaking the research and writing of this paper I am not only answerable to the aforementioned communities but to the entire cosmos (Wilson 2008). Relational accountability begins with a choice of what to research (Wilson 2008). To situate myself and explain why I chose to write this article I share a story, a common research method within Indigenous methodologies:

A few weeks ago, I met my niece, who is eight, from school and asked her, as I normally do, how her day was, the emotions she felt, the experiences she had, the things she learnt. She told me that she had been learning about how

humans became civilised. I held my breath, waiting for her to regurgitate something her teacher had told her that we could then gradually unpack together. I was unprepared for what happened next. My beautifully kind-hearted niece had internalised this narrative to the degree that she did not regurgitate, but gave me an example she thought I might understand:

> You know, like how we put tigers in cages, like I know that's not where they belong but we *can* do that to them and they can't do that to us. So that means that we are civilised and animals aren't.

How do you respond to that? The violent anthropocentric power hierarchy in what she said, the history behind it. I did not even know where to begin. I am writing within an exploitative capitalist system that regurgitates old colonial narratives to justify its continued existence, but also as a doting auntie who wants an alternative future for her family and as someone who has been fortunate enough to engage with communities around the world to know that alternatives exist.

I am not an expert on Lumad cosmologies or IFI theologies, nor could I ever be. Many people know much more about the sphere of religion and development than I do. However, I hope that by sharing and linking my understanding of the knowledges that have been shared with me I will be able to demonstrate the necessity and benefits of deconstructing imperial imaginations as we look towards a post-2030 agenda.

3 Ecologies of Knowledge and the Potential for Transformation

3.1 *Religion and the SDGs*

The marginalisation of spirituality and religion in the 2030 Agenda is not new. In the hierarchy of knowledge underpinning dominant development agendas rationalism has persistently relegated faith, religion and spirituality to positions of inferiority (Santos 2015). Whilst the SDGs contain no specific reference to religion, the consultation process leading to the formation of the SDGs did include religious actors and faith-based organisations (FBOs). This was the result of decades of advocacy and research by faith-based actors in academic, development and policy spheres, tired of having to 'leave their faith at the door.' The challenge was that those invited to engage were primarily large FBOs who engaged as NGOs, with nothing unique or 'faith based' about their engagement except for often a quiet personal motivation (Haustein and Tomalin 2019, 9).

Since the formation of the sDGs there has been an increase in partnerships and funding made available for faith-based initiatives (Petersen 2019).[6] However, this has largely been through an 'instrumental addition of religion to the pre-set, mechanistic sustainable development production process' (van Wensveen 2011, 85). The focus has been either on the 'added value' of engaging with religious actors, or the barriers they pose to the achievement of the sDGs, particularly in gender equality (Petersen 2019). Engagement has centred on the ability of FBOs to use existing faith networks for service provision, their long-term presence in communities, the trust they have often developed, and their ability to change attitudes and draw on their own funds (Petersen 2019). Bilateral and multilateral donors have used FBOs to implement their western capitalistic, individualistic, anthropocentric understandings of development.

3.2   *Imperial Imaginations*

Why have so many well-meaning partnerships led to instrumentalisation and dominant paradigms not managed to incorporate alternative understandings of development? Whilst I believe there are many reasons for this, including the need for funding, the desire for recognition and selective inclusion, what I wish to explore here is the limitations of the imperial capitalist imagination present in the so-called global north and global south.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the climate and ecological crisis necessitates a complete rethinking of systems and structures of power when looking towards a post-2030 agenda (Eisenmenger et al. 2020).[7] However, the western imagination has been limited in such a way that many of us are no longer able to imagine alternatives beyond our rational, progress-driven world view (Andreotti 2016). For many, like myself, who have been socialised within neoliberal capitalist notions of progress and development, alternatives are hard to imagine. Andreotti (2016) labels this box thinking, using the image of a person with a 3D box for a head to demonstrate the logocentric, universal, anthropocentric and teleological limits placed on our imaginations by dominant neoliberal capitalism. She argues that box thinking encourages us to focus on our minds rather than our bodies through a formal and informal education that 'attempts to tame or repress forces deemed unreasonable such

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6   Although these were mainly Christian partnerships with those holding similar ideas of development (Petersen 2019).

7   As do other intersecting issues normalised by colonisation including issues of race and gender inequality.

as the aesthetic, the erotic, the more-than-human, the divine and the hilarious' (Andreotti 2016).

Those of us educated within this box are encouraged to believe in only the empirically knowable and the describable, to believe that the way in which we see the universe is the only real and reasonable interpretation of it. The box convinces us that we can design our future into existence and that human beings' ability to think elevates us to a position of superiority that permits our control over non-anthropic beings (Andreotti 2016).

Writing over fifteen years ago, but accurately descriptive of the knowledge that supports neoliberal capitalist thinking today, Berry (2008) described the existence of a 'smart corporate mind' and the 'arrogantly ignorant' whose financial investments blind them to the negative consequences of their actions. Today, the corporate mind defines never-ending consumption as ethical whilst silently forcing communities and indigenous people from their lands to make way for mining and new technologies (Anlauf 2017; Mekaoui et al. 2020). Individuals remain blind as the corporate mind 'justifies and encourages the personal mind in its worst faults and weaknesses such as greed and servility, and frees it of any need to worry about the long-term consequences' (Berry 2008, 43). The underlying message: I am a green consumer, therefore I can continue to consume.

The continued dominance of the corporate mind and the superiority of imperial knowledge is not limited to one geographical region. Limited imaginations and support for the exploitative capitalist system and neoliberal understandings of growth do not only exist in the west (Santos 2012). An imperial south also exists in which empirical knowledge has been elevated to a position of superiority in a way that undermines and discredits all other forms of knowledge (Berry 2008; Andreotti 2016; Santos 2012).[8]

One way in which limited imaginations are being addressed is through decolonisation movements. However, much of the literature on religion and decolonisation focuses on reconnecting and recentring knowledges that have been colonised.[9] Whilst this is a necessary and important task, there is also a need, less often acknowledged, to decolonise the imperial mind. To enable this task to take place, religious communities rooted in imperial knowledges must be willing to be learned ignorants (Santos 2016), to know that which they do not know, to enter into horizontal relationships with alternatives and to be

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8   The individual knowledges referred to in Berry include empirical, experience, traditional, religious, inborn, intuition, conscience, inspiration, sympathy, bodily and counterfeit knowledge.

9   See for example Öhlmann, Gräb and Frost (2020).

transformed by them. It is only from here that they will be able to refamiliarise themselves with local contextual alternatives to development as well as those from their own tradition in different areas of the globe. The question that we must then ask in preparation for a post-2030 agenda is how we can work across cultures and linguistic and ideological divides to deconstruct imperial imaginations wherever they are and move from a '"sacred market" to a sacred world' (Augustine 2019, 128).

3.3   *Ecologies of Knowledge and Intercultural Translation*

Ecologies of knowledge are an epistemology to counter the exclusive primacy of western, supposedly rational, scientific knowledge (Santos 2009, 68). According to Santos, the logic of the monoculture of western knowledge that includes capitalist growth, linear time, universal and global scales and the naturalisation of differences through racial and sexual hierarchies produces non-existence (2014, 172–174). 'The repeated mantra that there is no alternative to neoliberal capitalism and all it entails aims to sweep away from social thinking the will to criticism and the possibility of an alternative.' (Santos 2018, 249–250). Santos labels this process the sociology of absences and argues that the appearance of 'no alternatives' conceals alternative knowledges and the possibilities they present for the future (Santos 2016). Ecologies of knowledge are one of five knowledges that Santos recognises as necessary to counter absences, recognise marginalised knowledges, and counter the production of non-existence. 'The ecology of knowledges aims to provide epistemological consistency for pluralistic, propositive thinking' (Santos 2009, 69).

Ecologies of knowledge are then, according to Santos, spaces in which people and knowledges interact in horizontal relationships of reciprocity. Multiple meanings and understandings of the world are held with respect and the incompleteness of each form of knowledge acknowledged whilst maintaining each group's unique motivation for social action. 'In the ecology of knowledges, knowledges intersect and so do ignorances. As there is no unity of knowledge, there is also no unity of ignorance' (Santos 2009, 69). Through such an ecology, each form of knowledge is expanded, its incompleteness addressed, and the anti-capitalist struggle strengthened (Santos 2016, 227; 2018, 78). Key to the formation of an ecology of knowledge then is the willingness of those involved to discern commonalities and ways of working together for a common cause, defamiliarising themselves with knowledges that are no longer valuable where value is determined by the contribution made to a particular struggle and the broader anti-capitalist movement (Santos 2012, 57). This defamiliarisation is supported by intercultural translation in which cultural

similarities and differences are understood and, when necessary, hybrid forms of communication devised. The process of intercultural translation and the forming ecologies of knowledge then expands the sociology of absences whilst reducing the sociology of emergences in a way that acknowledges the limits of future possibilities (Santos 2016, 185–186), such as the impossibility of simultaneously perusing endless growth and global well-being.

Ecologies of knowledge, as outlined by Santos, have the potential to support the defamiliarisation of imperial imaginations in a way that supports the creation of a post-2030 agenda rooted in understandings of progress and development that are supportive of the flourishing of all people and the planet. In what follows, I demonstrate how an ecology of knowledge that formed between the IFI and Lumad communities helped the IFI to defamiliarise themselves with their imperial imaginations and strengthen the anti-imperial struggle in the Philippines.

4   Methods

I was introduced to the IFI by the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG), an organisation with which I previously worked which has partnered with the IFI for over fifty years, and introduced to Lumad communities by trusted IFI leadership. Whilst informed by broader relationships and activities, this article is largely based upon ethnographic engagement and qualitative data collected from the thirty-seven aforementioned interviews that I conducted with Lumad and IFI communities in the Philippines between January and March 2020. Members of the Obispado Maximo, the leading unit of the IFI, organised the fieldwork schedule. However, the evolving security situation thwarted our attempts at prolonged ethnographic engagement and the length of time spent with each cohort and interviewee ranged from two days with some Lumad communities to six weeks with some members of the Obispado Maximo.

Within the IFI, semi-structured interviews took place with six bishops, sixteen Church leaders and four staff of the Obispado Maximo, all of whom had a history of engagement with Lumad communities. These interviews were conducted in English and focused on individual motivations and the institutional mandate to engage with Lumad communities despite military persecution. Being introduced by USPG likely had a positive influence on the initial level of trust that I was afforded by the IFI, supporting the discussion of 'difficult' topics including government criticism and individual experiences of persecution. However, USPG's relationship is largely with bishops and throughout

the research I remained cognisant that my association with USPG may have affected individuals' willingness to criticise the IFI's institutional approach to the Lumad mission.

Issues of access and participant safety largely determined the selection of Lumad communities. I conducted six interviews with the first cohort, a Lumad community who still reside on their ancestral land, who requested anonymity. The second cohort consisted of four students, two teachers and one community leader at the Lumad Bakwit (evacuee) School who were, at the time, receiving sanctuary in the University of the Philippines. Interviews with both Lumad communities were of a semi-structured nature and sought to elicit understandings of what is commonly referred to as the Lumad struggle, the motivation for participating in such a struggle and experiences of persecution. These interviews relied on Lumad advocates to translate with interviewees speaking in Tagalog or Visayan whilst I spoke in English. That introductions to both Lumad communities were made by members of the IFI with whom they had existing relationships and who identify as 'progressives' likely indicated that it was safe to criticise the government, military and capitalist approach of foreign companies. However, it is possible that these introductions also discouraged criticism of the Church and Lumad advocates for fear of affecting the funding provided by the IFI. Furthermore, my position as a white British person influenced responses as interviewees assumed a level of power and initially greatly overestimated my ability to encourage United Nations intervention in the Philippines. The need to manage research participants' expectations was a continual struggle.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the inability to travel during 2021 I supplemented the data shared in 2020 with online interviews with six members of the Obispado Maximo and three Lumad leaders. I contacted the IFI members via Facebook and interviews were conducted via Zoom, in English using a semi-structured format. These interviews encouraged further reflection on themes emerging from the initial analysis whilst also discussing recent developments in the IFI's theology and the way this interacted with and was influenced by their mission with Lumad communities.

The online interviews with Lumad leaders were arranged by a teacher at the Bakwit School with whom I had maintained contact via Facebook Messenger. An IFI member joined each of these semi-structured Zoom interviews to translate as the leaders spoke in Visayan and I spoke in English. The interviews focused on understandings of Lumad identity and the challenges of recognising the heterogeneity of Lumad tribes whilst maintaining a collective struggle.

5   **Findings**

5.1   *Lumad Indigenous Communities*
Lumad is a term adopted by 18 ethnolinguistic indigenous groups and numerous subgroups from Mindanao and the Caraga region of the Philippines in 1986, to reflect their collective identity and distinguish themselves from their Christian and Moro Muslim neighbours (Paredes 2013, 24). Despite their diversity, Lumad tribes hold a common affinity with their ancestral lands, a unity with nature and collective living practices that bind them together and lead to understandings of success and development that are foreign to the busy metropolitan cities of the archipelago.[10]

Nature is at the centre of Lumad spiritualties and understandings of power; spirits live in the trees, rocks, water and air (Clariza 2005). In Lumad cosmology, the individual is inseparable from their human and ecological community and their spiritual understanding. For Lumad, power is a divine energy that resides in nature and responds to human attempts at appeasement through natural phenomena, such as rains for a bountiful harvest (Clariza 2005). This power is sometimes referred to as God, but not God as a singular entity, rather, God as an energy that is everywhere and in everyone and everything. There is an inseparability of God, self and nature, as one teacher explained, 'We have a God but if you ask the child, they will say [that they] have a God but the God is herself, is she or he self' (Lumad teacher). The power derived from this understanding of God dwelling in nature and of each person being part of that nature fuels Lumad unity and their collective work on the land (Alamon 2017). It is what underpins the anti-capitalist sentiment and alternative understanding of development held by most Lumads.

However, Lumad ancestral lands contain minerals for mining and rich soils for plantations, making their lands a prime investment for national and multinational companies and government programmes of economic development, which Lumad communities have resisted for centuries (Alamon 2017). Despite legal recourse, including the Indigenous People's Rights Act of 1997, the Filipino government label those who resist 'development' programmes and refuse to sign over their land in free, prior and informed consent agreements as terrorists (Alamon 2017). This label then supposedly justifies the Filipino military's forced removal of entire communities from their ancestral lands using violence that by June 2020 had resulted in the bombing, burning or

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10   For more information about Lumad culture see Masinaring (2014).

other means of forced closure of at least 178 of 220 Lumad schools.[11] By label-ling those who resist the exploitation of their lands as terrorists the Filipino government is able to narrate these forced evacuations, school closures and arrests and extrajudicial killings that accompany them as peacekeeping activi-ties, supporting the achievement of SDG 16.[12]

The Pantaron Mountain Range is one site where the Filipino government's understanding of capitalist development and economic gain clashes with the intergenerational, communally driven and cosmically connected development of Lumad communities. The Pantaron is home to an incredible biodiversity of flora and fauna, including the Philippine eagle, and has the last remaining vir-gin forests in Mindanao where 'even if 16 people hug the tree they can't hug it because it is too big' (Lumad student). The mountains are the home and rec-ognised ancestral domain of the Manobo, Higaonon, Talaandig and Agusanon Lumad tribes. The government continues to issue mining certificates for the area, allowing national and multinational companies to destroy Lumad com-munities' source of food, health and education. In a prime example of the way in which the neoliberal capitalist system purports to solve the very problems it causes the government argues that Indigenous groups benefit financially from the royalties of destructive mining projects that provide good jobs, economic growth, innovation and infrastructure (SDG s 8 and 9) (Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs 2020).[13]

To feign support for its understandings of neoliberal capitalist progress at the expense of the lives of its own citizens the Filipino government bribes individuals within Lumad communities to become paramilitaries and support the violence against their own community. This takes place in two ways: 'they [young people] are threatened that if you don't go to military then something will happen to you. The second is economy, money. Because of the life that we Lumads have.' (Lumad community member). This demonstrates both the immediate violence used to allow neoliberal capitalism to thrive as well as the results of decades of such abuse where capitalist development has disrupted Lumad life to such a degree that some are now unable to live off the land and are forced to assimilate into the neoliberal economy.

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11   Dino N (2020).
12   For the Filipino government's narrative of peacekeeping activities in relation to human and ecological rights see Philippines Department of Social Affairs (2020). Available from: https://www.genevapm.ph/HRC/PHRS.pdf.
13   For an example of the violence and resistance associated with the exploitation of the Pantaron range see Kagula (2019).

Acknowledging the importance of Lumad systems of governance, the government supports this process through the employment of a fake *Datu* (tribal leader), where 'the government also chooses a *Datu*, which is a *Datu*, paid, has a salary. And then it happens that our tribe has two *Datus*. And the *Datu* that is paid is fake.' (Lumad community member).

The creation of such a position adds cultural integrity to capitalist exploitation.

These divide and rule strategies are a twenty-first century version of forced assimilation. They make it more difficult for Lumad communities to meet their daily needs and transfer their spiritual, linguistic and cultural heritage to the next generations, thus reducing future resistance to the exploitation of the land. For Lumad communities reducing poverty is reducing the theft of their land so that they may continue in harmony with this source of life, energy and spirituality, not destroying it so that they can be employed and pay for the food and healthcare services the land once provided.

There are many points of struggle against the exploitation that Lumad communities face however; Lumad communities define their schools as their highest form of resistance. It is in their schools that Lumad youth understand and acknowledge the limitations of education within the neoliberal capitalist system and in which alternatives are lived and continually developed:

> The dep ed [Department of Education], they focus on the students to be exported like labour export policy, it is not just the goods that they export, it is the people too. We study for the benefits of the community, not for the other country because the mind of the mainstream universities and schools is they study to gain more money to become rich because you know dollar is so big when converted into peso so they want to go abroad. In our school the concept of the students they want to learn to defend their rights. They want to graduate for the benefit of the other children who are not in school. (Lumad teacher)

Lumad communities are not opposed to other knowledges and they describe their education as scientific (SOS 2020).[14] It is just that their science, what they investigate, how and what they consider a successful outcome differs; for Lumad students success is dependent upon an idea or a contribution of activities to the community as an interconnected part of the cosmos. Lumad

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14 For more information on Lumad schools see https://www.facebook.com/saveourschools network.

education has similarities with broader conversations on the need to decolonise education where, as Mbembe notes in relation to the South African context, 'decolonisation (*a la* Nugugi) is not about closing the door to European or other traditions. It is about defining clearly *what the centre is*' (2015, 16). Innovation and infrastructure does not mean destroying the land but finding new ways of working with it.

Whilst scholars such as Alamon (2017) have documented this struggle, what has been missing from scholarly and activist initiatives is a purposeful attention what dominant societies, in the imperial south of the Philippines and beyond, have to learn from Lumad teachings. Such multidirectional knowledge flows are essential if the notions of progress and development that underpin Lumad persecution are to be decentred and alternative understandings of development and progress, capable of addressing our ecological crisis, are to inform our futures.

5.2   *The Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI)*

Whilst there have been peaks and troughs of attention to the Lumad struggle there are groups of dedicated activists, NGOs and religious organisations whose commitment to support the Lumad has remained steadfast for decades. This support is imperative, particularly when forced removals disconnect entire communities from their source of nutrition, medicine, shelter and spiritual well-being. The IFI is one such religious group. The IFI are an independent nationalist church that formed from the people's struggle in 1902 (Whittemore, 1961).

Whilst they formed from the people's struggle, the neoliberal capitalist environment in which the IFI has subsequently developed has also influenced them. They have at times been part of the anti-imperial south but at times supportive of the racist and exploitative economic systems of the imperial north. In what follows, I share the experiences that IFI leadership used to explain to me how they are learning what it truly means to be a Christian in the Philippines today from Lumad communities. By sharing this information, the IFI have provided us with an example of how intercultural translation and ecologies of knowledge can work to challenge the persistence of neoliberal capitalist thinking and how, through engagement with the struggle of those marginalised by the violence of this system, the individual and collective mind might be expanded to imagine beyond them.

According to the IFI, their calling is to stand with the oppressed and the marginalised, supported by a missional understanding in which God created all people in God's image with no missional distinction between those who identify as Christian and those who do not. For many of the IFI leadership in

Mindanao their understanding of their calling naturally meant engagement with Lumad communities. This engagement began with unequal hierarchies of power, rooted in imperial-south understandings of 'helping' by providing aid to the 'poor' Lumads. As one participant noted:

> ... the church has been responding in whatever way the church can and I can say that, that began with relief, I think that's the easiest now the church can do. You have a news, you receive a plea for help and you tell the people about them and you ask to collect some rice and all those things. (IFI priest)

However, these hierarchies have changed significantly over the past five years. In September 2015 IFI clergy were asked to join a fact-finding mission in response to the deaths of five Lumad people in Pagadian, Western Mindanao. Whilst participating in this mission they received the news that three Lumad leaders, one of whom was the head of the award-winning Alcadev School, had been murdered in Lianga, Surigao Del Sur, Mindanao. These events represented an increase in military and paramilitary violence against Lumad communities, a violence that the IFI believed necessitated a more coordinated and institutionalised response. Through discussion with Lumad communities, the IFI Lumad ministry began to take shape. A key component of this ministry was an accompaniment programme that invited clergy to spend approximately six weeks living in Lumad communities as a 'protective presence', monitoring and raising awareness of human rights abuses (CPCS 2017, 10). The aim of the project, approved by the Mindanao Clergy Conference in February 2016, was to accompany Lumad communities in their struggle to protect their ancestral domain (CPCS 2017, 10).

In addition to the six-week accompaniment programme the IFI responded to requests to attend special events, such as harvests, as Lumad communities believed that the presence of the IFI accompaniers could protect them from government and military theft and exploitation where previously 'after they harvest, the guns are already waiting to harvest their harvest' (IFI priest). The IFI also increased their participation in resistance marches, such as Manilakbayan (a countrywide Indigenous mobilisation that travels from Mindanao to Manila), at government meetings when requested and continued to support those the military had forcibly removed.

These various forms of interaction enabled the building of relationships and reciprocity between the IFI and the Lumad that led to the organic development of an intercultural exchange and ecology of knowledge:

> ... we have not even consciously entered into a multicultural dialogue or intercultural dialogue trying to understand this "other" or I mean there was no conscious of doing that, like I mean like "let's talk we want to understand your faith, we want to share", the Ecumenical *chuchu* thing. So we were just there because we know the issue and we know that they are human and we know that by our faith they are as important as anyone else. And that if we are there by our practice we have been helpful at least. (IFI priest)

The gradual formation of this ecology of knowledge began with the simple act of being together in relationships of respect.

The humility and learned ignorance of the IFI then allowed them to begin the process of defamiliarising themselves with dominant societal narratives, starting with understandings of Lumads as 'backwards' and 'lazy.' For example, one bishop noted that he grew up in a community that 'easily discriminates Lumads', sharing how:

> *Lolo* and *Lola*, our grandparents, teach us about the kind of, the Lumads ways and their living ... Lumads as different from us; they have dirty clothes, they have ragged wears. That is why, for a community who easily discriminate, we put them into a lower degree of being a human and worth not to be accompanied. (IFI bishop)

The bishop noted that he grew up with notions that 'Lumads are just only poor' and that 'Lumad is good for an alms' (Bishop Carlo), a Greek word which the Bishop translated to mercy or pity. However, he noted that 'as I grow and as I become a minister of this church and get involved and have an opportunity to visit them [Lumad communities], my learning has been gradually changed' (IFI bishop).

The bishop then proceeded to share stories detailing what he had learnt from Lumad communities, all of which centred on communal living, sharing and attitudes towards the environment.

This defamiliarisation with societal narratives of Lumads as backwards and lazy had also taken place in other clergy. One young priest shared that:

> ... some of them [Lumads, are] living there on the streets, and we are discriminating against them because of what they wear, what they look like ... After the immersion, I know and I understand the life of them. (IFI priest)

The building of relationships and the process of defamiliarisation from abusive hegemonic narratives has allowed IFI leadership to identify the way in which the government narrates dehumanisation and human suffering as natural or necessary in order to justify abuse (Santos 2016).

In the continuation of their defamiliarisation process, IFI leadership began to acknowledge the way in which the government used abusive narratives of Lumad communities to justify their forced removal from their ancestral land and assimilation into the neoliberal capitalist system:

> … especially in the government, they threaten the Lumads, and think they are the lower rank people, the illiterate people. They threaten them … They grab it [Lumad ancestral land] and they use constitutions; they use their powers in order to oppress, in order to harass. (IFI priest)

The IFI understood the motivation behind such dehumanisation and abuse to be purely financial where:

> … they are dehumanising the existence of our people in the Philippines. … both of them are collaborating, the government and the companies, using people and just to augment their capitalist ideas. To have more money at the expense of people. (IFI priest)

This understanding and ability to see Lumad people for who they are, not who exploitative systems narrate them to be, gradually reduced power hierarchies and allowed an intercultural translation to take place.

The defamiliarisation process continued as the IFI began reflecting on their own lives and defamiliarising themselves with capitalist notions of progress. For example, one priest noted the way in which Lumad communities 'are contented [with] what they have, they share what they have … I tell myself that I don't need big money, much money, big land' (IFI priest).

This ecology is more than just a collaboration. It is a transformational relationship that inspires knowledge holders to rethink basic assumptions underpinning their capitalist world view including the idea that economic gain is necessarily positive or that the value of land can be determined by how much one can gain from its minerals in the global market.

Understanding that the IFI has much to learn from Lumad communities led to new forms of engagement. For example, one diocese asked the *bahi* (spiritual leader) of a Lumad community to lead their Lenten retreat where:

> … the *bahi* was sitting there on top of that, the priests who were in cassock were down there listening to her…. The clergy are really learning from the *bahi* … some of the clergy are now doing full retreat under instruction of the *bahi*. (IFI priest)

Reflecting upon this process in 2020 the Obispo Maximo, the head of the Church, identified three particular areas in which he believed the IFI could learn from Lumad communities:

> First is how they regard and treat the earth and the environment…. Secondly, we learn much about how they regard their own God, their belief is part of themselves unlike the Christians, there is tendency for the Christians to have their faith separate from their daily life…. The other one is a sense of being a community; they are part of one another. (Obispo Maximo)

Whilst not all members of the IFI leadership have begun this process of defamiliarisation, the role of the Church according to those who had was to stand with Lumad communities in their resistance, learning how to challenge the political, economic and cognitive stronghold of the system whilst acknowledging an immediate need for aid and sanctuary. They were conscious of the potential of aid to distract from the need to destabilise underlying systems and structures of exploitation and its historic role of silencing transformative agendas and suppressing revolutionary energy (Shivji 2007; Banks, Hulme and Edwards 2015). In his seminar to IFI students, one bishop shared that:

> Historically, conservatives and reformists … utilized programs to promote the Christian religion, as a humanitarian response to the needs of the poor, and to neutralize and defuse the growing demands of the people for revolution. In some cases, these programs were used as a counter-revolutionary tool. (Ablon 2021)

However, the IFI believed that aid and sanctuary take on a very different dimension when they are part of a broader struggle. Being rooted in the struggle ensures that they are not silencing but are meeting immediate needs to ensure the continuation of the struggle. It is not about assimilating Lumad communities into the dominant world view but enabling them to continue fighting for respect for their own world view from which the IFI is learning.

6 Discussion

Over the past six years the IFI has strengthened their understanding of the impact of neoliberal capitalist development and the narratives used to justify its continuation through the development of horizontal relationships with Lumad communities. The ecology of knowledge between the IFI and Lumad communities enabled the IFI to re-see marginalised knowledges in an alternative light and thereby further their commitment to the struggle of counter-hegemonic globalisation (Santos 2016). This understanding has helped strengthen the anti-capitalist struggle as the IFI supports Lumad communities to raise awareness of their situation, seek legal support and interact with national and international governmental and intergovernmental policy-making spheres. In this way, their experience provides an example of how humility, learned ignorance, relationship and intercultural dialogue have the potential to form ecologies of knowledge that defamiliarise groups' imperial knowledges and the violent systems of exploitation on which they are based.

The IFI's theology means that they, like many other religious institutions and FBOs, are particularly well placed to form this ecology. Understandings of the physical and spiritual as inseparable domains for well-being by religious institutions and FBOs often pose a challenge to modernist conceptions of development (Bowers Du Toit 2019). It allows them to understand the inseparability of God, self and nature within Lumad cosmologies. Furthermore, the IFI's theology and aforementioned belief that all people, Christian and non-Christian, are created in the image of God facilitates their ability to rethink and learn from others. This ability to develop such an ecology of knowledge is not rivalled by the government nor the humanitarian aid and NGO sector. The government's aforementioned view of the Lumad as 'lower rank people, the illiterate people' (IFI priest) closes it to any form of reciprocal learning whilst its capitalist-informed notions of progress and development prevent it from understanding the inseparability of the physical and spiritual. NGO and humanitarian sectors also focus on physical development and are often accountable to donors who require demonstrable progress towards external frameworks such as the SDGs. There is little room for incorporating non-material domains or encouraging the learning that challenges the systems that sit behind such frameworks. Local religious infrastructure with theologies rooted in equality, with humility and a desire to continue understanding the will of God, to whom they are ultimately accountable, can offer unique spaces

for the development of ecologies of knowledge and the emergence of alternatives to capitalist development.

Whilst within religion-focused development and policy spheres there has been great encouragement for challenging social norms, this is normally the imperial north challenging norms in the imperial south. What is needed now are similar initiatives to challenge norms related to capitalism, materialism, greed or mammon and growth in relation to our ecological crisis. However, there is little support for such initiatives, as they would mean the periphery challenging the core, those marginalised by the abyssal line challenging those who created it, and those defined as in need of development challenging those who defined them as such. The entire global capitalist system would slowly, but surely, come into question.

Growing energy and literature surrounding decolonising practices offers vital insight (Öhlmann, Gräb and Frost 2020). However, much of this literature argues for an expansion of existing models. What is unclear is how to support those that do not call for the expansion of existing models but for their demise. Those situations of alternative development where taking into account local religious or spiritual knowledge and cosmologies would mean challenging the entire neoliberal capitalist system, ideas of growth and a good life and relationships between the people and the land. As we have seen, in the current Filipino context, challenging the hegemonic system results in your labelling as a terrorist, your schools being bombed, and you being forcibly removed from your ancestral land.

The relationship between the IFI and Lumad communities demonstrates the cross-cultural interfaith potential of ecologies of knowledge to challenge the existing exploitative world order and the efforts of governments, encouraged by large corporations to silence them. Looking forward we must build on the advances made, the recognition of and space for religious voices, the increasing acceptance of alternative forms of development, and the universality of the SDGs. Global religious institutions and networks have two opportunities: firstly, to support and add legitimacy to these existing struggles. Secondly, to look for those alternative understandings of development within their own institutions, such as the Indigenous Network in the Anglican Communion, and to work with them in creating an ecology of knowledge that helps the parts of the institution rooted in imperial imaginations to delink their thinking from violent capitalist norms. This work is essential if we are to create a post-2030 agenda capable of addressing our ecological crisis that finally prioritises people and planet over profit and power.

7   Conclusion

With eight years to prepare for a post-2030 agenda the intertwined ecological crisis and persistent abuse of human rights under the neoliberal capitalist system make defamiliarisation imperative. Unless we decentre neoliberal capitalist notions of progress and development, the necessity of community for individual well-being and of remaining on one's ancestral land for spiritual and physical well-being will remain as 'alternative' world views. Centring so-called alternative knowledges through multidirectional knowledge flows has the potential to help expand limited imaginations and support the creation of a post-2030 agenda that moves beyond addressing the environmental and health wounds caused by exploitative systems and structures and begin addressing the roots of the current ecological, human rights and inequality crisis. Perhaps the way to ensure that 'no one is left behind' (UNGA 2015) is to ensure that no knowledge is left behind.

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Child Protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba Municipality, Ghana

Research Article

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Abstract

Child abuse is a common phenomenon in Africa, and Ghana is no exception. Where child abuse exists, the appropriate response is child protection. Child protection involves policies, structures and practical steps to ensure children are safeguarded. The Church of Pentecost is one of the fastest-growing Church in Ghana, with a local congregation in almost every community. Winneba, a predominantly fishing community, is affected by several forms of child abuse – child labour, child prostitution, child neglect and trafficking. The Church has 37 local congregations across the length and breadth of the Winneba municipality. In recent times, churches have been recognized as strategic partners in child protection efforts in the communities which they serve. This paper examines the child protection ministry of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba in relation to insights from biblical and practical perspectives on child protection. The findings point to insufficient child protection in the Church of Pentecost congregations in Winneba. The current situation only views children in terms of God's salvific plan that includes children (conversion and sanctification). The paper posits that something far broader is required in the light of child abuse throughout the world and in Winneba. Consequently, certain recommendations are made to enable the churches to take more concrete measures to safeguard children.

Keywords

child protection – child abuse – church – ministry – Ghana

1   Introduction

Child abuse is not uncommon in African societies.[1] Where child abuse exists, an urgent and appropriate response is child protection. UNICEF (2006) defines child protection as "preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse to children – including commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking, child labour and harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation/ cutting and child marriage". Although UNICEF is a global actor, its ability to work in some countries, including Ghana, could be as a result of its continuous effort to contextualize and remain culturally relevant through extensive engagement with local stakeholders. The Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana (2014, iv) opines that "child protection seeks to guarantee the right of all children to a life free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect". The policy further states that child protection has multiple players, such as children and youth, families, communities, government, civil society and private organizations. Consequently, all institutions, including churches, are called upon to institute measures to ensure that children are not harmed (Child and Family Welfare Policy 2014, 22). The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 highlights child protection as one of the key areas, since violence against children continues to rise (United Nations, n.d.). Responding to and preventing violence against children is essential in the developmental efforts of societies. For this goal to be achieved, strategic partnership is envisaged with all stakeholders (SDG 17).

There are no adequate data on the extent of the problem of child abuse in spite of recent national surveys in several low- and middle-income countries (World Health Organization (WHO) 2014). Further, disparities in child protection are directly related to region or continent, geographical location, ethnicity, disability, gender and income (Van Rensburg 2013, 52). Also, the true extent of violence against children is impossible to measure. This is because much of it occurs in secret and is not reported (van Rensburg 2013, 53). Frequently, children facing or witnessing violence remain silent out of fear and the stigma attached to abuse; and many children accept violence because they view it as an inevitable part of life (UNICEF 2009, 24).

Even though the true situation regarding child abuse is not fully known, globally it is estimated that between 500 million and 1.5 billion children experience violence annually, resulting in many child victims experiencing long-standing

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physical and mental health difficulties later in life (Innocenti Research Centre cited by Rensburg 2013, 53). Sadly, violence occurs at all socioeconomic levels. Also, many people are not aware that millions of children are at risk in different parts of the world, and that no child, whether rich or poor, urban or rural, is safe today (Jeyaraj cited in van Rensburg 2013, 25). For instance, in Ghana over 90% of children experience some form of abuse at home or in the school environment (UNICEF 2017).

Abuse can take various forms. It is often emotional abuse (sometimes referred to as psychological abuse). Such abuse can take many forms: neglect, terrorizing, humiliating, defaming, ostracizing and blackmailing (van Rensburg 2013, 80). There is physical abuse by bullies that includes poking, punching, shoving, hair-pulling, biting, stabbing, burning, strangling, suffocating and poisoning.

It is estimated globally that 23% of people reported being physically abused as children (WHO 2014). Verbal abuse includes persistent name-calling, teasing and gossiping; relational abuse is the deliberate exclusion from group activities; and sexual abuse includes sexual harassment and exhibitionism and more serious forms like rape (Rensburg 2013, 80). These are still on the increase in spite of efforts by governments and civil society organizations. WHO noted that global research estimates that 20% of women and 5–10% of men reported sexual abuse as children (WHO 2014).

In recent years, there is a growing interest in the strategic role churches can play in the development agenda of communities. The World Council of Churches' (WCC) conversation on the advocacy for the rights of children concluded that

> the church is called to care for children in the community and the church by advocating for their rights in partnership with other organizations, by empowering them to stand up for their rights and by implementing policies and procedures to protect children. (WCC 2017, 146)

Faith communities continue to be integral partners of UNICEF to champion children's rights and well-being. Prior to the inception of UNICEF, churches were significantly involved in the advocacy for vulnerable children (UNICEF 2012, iii; Garland and Chamiec-Case 2005, 22–43). In South Africa, Yates (2010, 168) contends that religious institutions make valuable contributions towards the welfare and the development of children. Similarly, in Malawi, Eyber, Kachale, Shields and Ager (2018, 31) recognize that faith leaders are strategic partners in child protection efforts in the communities in which they serve. In Ghana, the Child and Family Welfare Policy outlines that churches should

provide communication and education initiatives that promote posi-
tive family values; provide direct help to vulnerable families and serve as
their advocates; provide care and support services to families, children
and adolescents; and participate in national co-ordination activities to
minimize duplication and enhance the establishment of complementary
programmes, projects and activities. (2014, 22)

There is limited data on the extent to which churches are playing this role.

Eyber, Kachale, Shields and Ager (2018, 31) further argue that faith commu-
nities can be effective, and in some cases take the frontline role due to their
shared beliefs and practices that inform their ministry. This implies that faith
communities are more likely to be effective in a ministry of child protection
when it is deeply rooted in scripture or theological tradition. Is this the case
for the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba municipality? What does this
Church do to protect children in her ministry? Brewster (2011, 82) believes that
although churches are uniquely placed and equipped to address the needs of
vulnerable children, their impact in this regard is minimal. This is because in
many of these cases evangelism leading to conversion is seen as the churches'
primary or exclusive function – it focuses on spiritual conversion and the
future eternal kingdom.

The main aim of this paper is to investigate the extent to which child protec-
tion in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba is consistent with what is revealed
in scripture and corroborated by social science. In this paper, the nature of
child abuse in Ghana and Winneba is briefly discussed. An integrated theology
approach is then employed to obtain insights from biblical and practical per-
spectives on child protection. The practical perspective involved a small-scale
empirical survey into current practice of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba
with regards to child protection.

1.1   *Background and Context*

The Church of Pentecost was considered the largest Pentecostal Church in
Ghana in 2006 (Pew Research Centre, 2006). With its headquarters in Ghana,
it has external branches in 101 countries across the globe. The vision of the
Church is to become a global Pentecostal church that is vibrant in church
planting and evangelism. As a result, the Church has a presence in most com-
munities in Ghana. The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost provides for
a Children's Ministry, which comprises children (from birth to 12 years) and
their teachers (volunteers who are trained to teach children the Scriptures) in
the local congregation, with the main function of holding "Sunday morning

services to pray, fellowship and study the word of God" (The Church of Pentecost 2016, 91).

The Winneba municipality is located in the Central Region of Ghana. In the Church of Pentecost, a number of local congregations form a District. There are 37 local congregations across the length and breadth of Winneba, forming four Districts of the Church of Pentecost. Each of the four Districts in the Winneba municipality is headed by a pastor who is a full-time minister known as the "District Minister" (The Church of Pentecost 2016). In addition, each district has one lay leader assigned to oversee the activity of the Children's Ministry referred to as the "District Children's Ministry Leader" (The Church of Pentecost 2016, 96). With the Church of Pentecost doing ministry in every suburb of Winneba, it is imperative to investigate what the Church does to protect children in her ministry.

2   The Nature of Child Abuse in Ghana and Winneba

The Children's Act of Ghana 1998 (Act 560) defines children as all persons below the age of 18. In addition, the Child and Family Welfare of Ghana Act (2014, iv) opines that "a child is one who is still largely dependent on an adult for the necessities of life". This is to ensure that in addition to the legal definition, a child is conceptualized to be consistent with the Ghanaian family setting and concept of childhood. Child abuse is not uncommon in Ghanaian society. The realities of the situation of abuse of children have attracted the attention of both international and local organizations working to promote protection of children. It is reported that approximately 90% of children in Ghana have experienced some form of abuse (UNICEF 2018). This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect. A significant amount of data on child abuse focus on sexual abuse.

A national survey by the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) revealed that 6.3% of women and 5.3% of men reported they had engaged in sexual intercourse before the age of 15 (ISSER, 2011). This data is similar to an older national survey of 3,041 participants in which 6% indicated they had experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15 (Pappoe and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 1998). Some studies have also focused on examining child sexual abuse among schoolchildren. A 2009 study conducted in selected schools by a non-governmental organization reported that 53% of sexual abuse cases occurred in the school environment, while 47% happened at home. The report further states that 67% of the victims of child sexual abuse are in senior

high school, 28% in junior high school and 5% in primary school (Plan Ghana 2009). Similarly, in a descriptive and exploratory survey, information collected from 490 schoolchildren, 116 parents and 49 head teachers from four out of the 110 districts in the country showed that the incidence of child sexual abuse in Ghanaian public schools was about 11.2% (Agu, Brown, Adamu-Issah and Duncan 2018, 122).

The staggering rate of child abuse in Ghana affects all cities, and the situation could be worse in rural communities such as Winneba (Development Action Association 2017, 7). Winneba, a predominantly fishing community, is affected by several forms of child abuse such as child labour, child prostitution, child neglect and trafficking (Challenging Heights 2018; Development Action Association 2017, 7). Similarly, Sasu, Asare and Ayensua (2015, 1) observed that it is normal practice in Winneba to see children employed in the fishing activities. Children as young as eight years old who should be in school are sold for usually a small amount of money of between 10 and 50 Ghanaian Cedis (USD 1.00–5.00) by their needy parents to be used as labour in the fishing industry. A recent comprehensive qualitative study by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) of Ghana on fishing communities revealed that many children between 10 and 18 years of age are directly or indirectly involved in child labour, and the worst forms often involve children engaged in fishing in Winneba (CHRAJ 2021, 33). The report concludes that child labour and trafficking are still a public health concern in Winneba. Additionally, Koomson and Abdulai (2021, 28) argue that child labour and trafficking is still a major problem in Winneba and its complex and multifactorial nature has rendered earlier interventions less effective.

3   The Biblical Perspective on Child Protection

Biblical perspectives involve the processes that aimed at the collection of biblical texts in order to understand the entire message of a book, a corpus, a whole testament or the canon as it was meant for its original hearers in their own context (Smith 2013, 137).

Child protection due to limited relevant texts was investigated under the umbrella of the more widespread shepherding paradigm in the canon. The concept of a shepherd is a common imagery in the Bible. A shepherd refers to a person who knows, feeds, seeks, rules and safeguards the flock (Ugwu and Okwor 2013, 50). It also refers to the one who "exercises pastoral functions to the people on behalf of God" (Stott 1992, 273).

The Old Testament revealed God as a good shepherd with regards to Israel (Gn 49:24; Num 27:17; Ps 28:9, 74:1; 79:13; 95:7; Isa 44:1; Mic 7:14; Jer 17:16). This relationship of God to his chosen people is most vividly revealed in his covenant with them. He demonstrated his love, protection and deliverance from the enemy. For instance, Jacob near the end of his life declared that God had been his shepherd all his life (Gen 48:15). David rejoiced that God was his loving, caring and protecting shepherd and therefore he lacked nothing (Ps 23). David's brave role protecting his father's flocks from danger (1 Sam 17:34–36) positioned him to understand the shepherding role of God in his life.

My exegetical findings with regards to Psalm 23:1 indicate that David expressed trust and confidence in, and thanksgiving to God, as a result of his experience of God's shepherding role. God was encountered as his protector, carer, guide and provider. Psalm 23 is all about God's providential care, guidance and protection throughout the vicissitudes of life and its joyful celebration in the community of God's people. However, it also places a responsibility on us towards the weak, needy and helpless among us (Craigie 1983, 204). The qualities of a caregiver (shepherd) espoused in Psalm 23 provide adequate guidance and motivation for the church to take up the shepherding role towards the weak and helpless.

This shepherding nature of God with reference to his people implied that they were to be competently and with integrity shepherded by their leaders (for example consider King David's commission in 2 Sam 5:2, 1 Chron 11:2 and Ps 78:70–72). Consequently, God was displeased and judgmental when Israel's leaders were uncaring and predatory shepherds (Ez 34:2, 11).

The portrait of God in the Old Testament as the shepherd of his people throws light on why Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, manifested the supreme qualities of a good shepherd. The failing of the Old Testament shepherds and God's shepherding attributes unsurprisingly result in messianic promises of a Messiah (Zac.13:7; Isa 40:11; Ez 37:24; 34:23) who would fulfil God's heart for the faultless caring of his people (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998, 880). Smith (1988, 56) argues that Psalms 23 and 78 and many others connect the shepherding theme in David with Christ. Their falling short of God's ideals in this regard prepared the way for the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. He provides the perfect example of the shepherd's role.

With the gospels in the New Testament, it was observed that Christ described himself as the good shepherd (Jn 10:11, 14). Jesus sees himself as the good shepherd in contrast to the malevolent thief. During the time of Jesus, sheep were often considered weak, defenceless and unable to fend for themselves and therefore totally dependent on the shepherd. They were prone to wandering,

and were exposed to dangers such as heavy rainfall, robbers, rushing water from valleys, attacks by wolves, snow in the winter, and scorching sand during summer. Consequently, shepherds continually kept watch over them (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998, 1047). Even in the night, the good shepherd still kept watch over the sheepfold (Lk 2:8), making sure that the flock was not attacked by wild animals. This implied he endured uncomfortable conditions and even the possibility of losing his life in ensuring the well-being of the sheep. This could partly explain the rationale for Jesus stating that the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

The shepherding ministry of Jesus was not only focused on adults, but also the vulnerable, including children. Christ displayed special attention to children, even in his busy, tight schedules. For instance, he entreated that we welcome, receive and accept children in his name (Mt 18:5). In addition, Christ gave a charge to us to ensure that not one child is harmed (Mt 18:6; Mk 9:42). This implies no one is to place an obstacle to their faith, piety or happiness (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998, 928).

The shepherding ministry of Jesus to children is also seen in his great displeasure at his disciples rebuking the mothers for bringing their children to him to be prayed for and blessed (Mk 10:13–14; Mt 19:13–15; Lk 18: 15–16). This attitude of discrimination towards children was to immediately stop. It is important to note that Christ did not tolerate any form of abuse to children and made conscious efforts to prevent such abuses. Walvoord and Zuck (1983, 150) argue that these actions of Christ at the instances of ill treatment of children are also to set the pattern and pace for his followers.

The New Testament Christians manifested love, care and protection among themselves. For instance, Paul when describing his ministry among the Thessalonians stated, "but we were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of her own children" (1 Thes 2:7, ESV). This depicts the level of the apostle's love for, and care of, the flock. It could be likened to how the hen surrounds her chicks, warming them in her bosom, and making sure they were adequately fed, and portrays the kind of affection a mother will show to the child at her breast (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998, 1281).

In summary, the biblical perspective has demonstrated that the canon presents one clear biblical understanding for caring for children. It is rooted, firstly, in the shepherd's heart of God through Israel's history. This was noted in God's care for Israel and disappointment in her shepherds (leaders), his judgment on them. Secondly, it flowed from the prediction of a coming messiah-shepherd, who would perfectly model God's love and care for his people, including the children, and who fulfilled this prophecy. Thirdly, the rest of the New Testament reinforces the need for the churches and the children to be shepherded in the

tradition of the "good shepherd". In the church the vulnerable are to be protected, nurtured and have their needs supplied.

4   Practical Perspective on Child Protection

The practical perspective is concerned with the complex interaction between theory and practice. It involves an empirical study of some concrete situation in the Christian community and the underlying theory with the goal of informing, modifying, reforming or transforming it (Patterson and Woodward 2000, 7). Smith (2013, 146) also believes that practical perspective has its main purpose of transforming existing actions or situations through "informed strategic thinking" as well as "action planning".

4.1   *Methodology*
In this small-scale study, a qualitative approach, with interviews as the method of data collection, was used. The aim of the study was to explore respondents' understanding of child protection and the measures put in place to ensure children are safeguarded in the ministry of their local churches. In addition, the study investigated what strategic partnerships exist with relevant institutions tasked with child protection.

Each of the four District Ministers (all males) and the District Children Ministry Leaders (comprised of three females and one male) in Winneba were purposively selected for the study and agreed to participate. These eight leaders are strategically placed in the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba Municipality to provide relevant information with regards to the Church's child protection efforts.

Separate face-to-face interviews were conducted with all the eight leaders. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the questions guiding the interview were given to participants to study and seek clarification where necessary. This was also to ensure that they were comfortable responding to all the questions. The main questions were: *how do you understand child protection; why should a church be concerned about child protection; what does your church do to protect children from abuse; what collaboration does your church foster with state agencies responsible for child protection in your communities; what recommendations do you have for your church with regards to child protection*?

Their responses were carefully noted and effectively analysed based on the five steps described by O'Connor and Gibson (2003, 64–90). The main focus was largely on the exploration of where the participants and their churches were with regards to promoting child protection.

5   Findings and Discussion

The section presents the analysis and discussions of the four pastors as well as the four ministry leaders. Tentative conclusions are also noted. It was observed that there were no significant differences in the responses of the pastors and the leaders of the children's ministry.

5.1   *Understanding of Child Protection*

All eight respondents demonstrated an appreciable concept of child protection. It was perceived as plans or measures put in place to protect children from abuses such as child labour, sexual abuse, trafficking and neglect. Also, that it entails securing a safe environment for children so that they can develop holistically. Two respondents felt that child protection has more to do with adults taking care of children in such a way that they can take advantage of the opportunities in their environment to become better persons in the future. This understanding is consistent with UNICEF (2006) and Save the Children (2013) positions on child protection. For instance, UNICEF (2006) considers child protection as "preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse to children". Also, the notion of the respondents on child protection agrees with that of the Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana (2014, iv), which states that "child protection seeks to guarantee the right of all children to a life free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect".

In addition, all the eight respondents' views also reflected the conclusions of the biblical perspective that Christian parents and churches are to foster a nurturing and protective environment for children (Bunge 2016, 98). They understand from Scripture that God is the shepherd of his people (Psalm 23), and Christ is the good shepherd of the Church (John 10:11). Further, they understand that this means every effort to safeguard and nourish the sheep is to be made. They also appreciated that these models of shepherding were to be followed by parents and church leaders. The understanding of the respondents supports a view of children that saw them as precious in God's sight and worthy of being nurtured in a loving, safe environment to become mature Christians and productive members of society (Kpalam and Light 2020, 41; Knoetze 2016, 238; Bush 2010).

The rationale for the church's involvement in child protection was also explored. It was noted that Ghana has laws that are against child abuse. They require institutions like the Church to take measures to ensure that children are safe (Agu et al. 2018, 126). Churches are also obligated to make information about suspected abuse of children available to state institutions so that they can act accordingly. Six respondents made reference to the fact that the Church

as an institution is expected by the state to be involved in child protection. This is consistent with the call on Churches in Ghana to institute measures to ensure the protection of children, and to act in the best interest of children (Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana 2014, 22). Similarly, Oladipo (2000, 148) argued that Churches are more of a community than social institutions. As a result, Churches should be concerned about every aspect of the lives of all its members.

However, it was noted that only one of the pastors and one of the ministry leaders made reference to the Bible as the basis for the Church's involvement in child protection whilst the other six did not make any reference to Scripture. Although no reference was made to a particular biblical text, two respondents indicated that God has given in his Word the mandate to his Church to protect the vulnerable in our society, especially children. This understanding is congruent with contributions from the biblical perspective. For example, Malherbe (2004) argued that God is the protector of children and expects his people to do nothing less than that. God commands the Church to protect vulnerable children among us (Exo 22:22; Deut. 24:20). In addition, God punishes leaders and nations that fail in this responsibility of protecting children (Exo 22:23; Mt. 18: 5–6).

5.2   *Measures of Child Protection*

With regards to the measures put in place by the Church at the moment, it was noted by all the respondents that special services are held on Sunday for children. These meetings are handled by volunteers, who are trained to share the word of God with children. It is believed that this programme on a weekly basis will empower the children to become responsible Christians and citizens. This is because the children do not only learn about the Christian faith, but also other life issues such as good moral conduct, academic improvement and how to live healthily.

In addition, it was reported that the Church practices, such as naming ceremonies and child dedications, contribute to child protection. The respondents opined that the naming gives the child recognition and identity. In the same vein, child dedication points to the fact that the child is accepted fully into the faith community, according to the Church's constitution (The Church of Pentecost 2016, 90). It was revealed that there were no specific measures that directly address child protection in the ministry of the Church. The situation regarding child protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba is inconsistent with provisions of the Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana (2014, 22), which postulates that churches should *"provide communication and education initiatives that promote positive family values; provide direct help to vulnerable*

families and serve as their advocates; provide care and support services to families, children and adolescents". The inability of the Church of Pentecost to institute practical measures to respond to child abuse in Winneba falls short of the literature that suggest that in African communities churches are strategically placed to provide concrete measures of child protection such as public sensitization, listening to children and reporting abuse, providing counselling and guidance to children and their parents as well as providing homes for the rehabilitation of abused children (Jailobaeva, Daiconu, Ager and Eyber 2021, 95; Mghendi and Etukei 2019, 17; Eyber, Kachale, Shields and Ager 2018, 31; Ede and Kalu 2018, 46).

Furthermore, the findings show that there were no strategic alliances with state agencies that are involved in child protection such as the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service or the Department of Social Welfare. It became evident that although the pastors and the ministry leaders are aware of these agencies, the churches have limited knowledge as to what kinds of partnership can be forged. This could account for the lack of partnerships. It could be argued that this falls short of expectations of churches to "participate in national co-ordination activities to minimize duplication and enhance the establishment of complementary programmes, projects and activities" (Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana 2014, 22). The involvement in national coordination efforts could contribute to strategic partnerships among churches and other agencies for child protection. There is evidence that partnerships between churches and national agencies are essential in addressing violence against children and also strengthening child protection systems at the national level (Jailobaeva, Daiconu, Ager and Eyber 2021, 96; Quarshie et al. 2021; Robinson and Hanmer 2014, 610).

In short, the results show that all the participants understood child protection as the plans, activities and structures put in place to safeguard children. Also, that the churches are key institutions that should be actively involved in child protection. Scripture was not cited as the main reason for the Church's need for participation in children protection. Another concern was that the churches relied entirely on church services with children, teaching the children the word of God, child naming and dedication ceremonies for contributing to child protection. In addition, there were no strategic alliances between the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba municipality and state agencies that are tasked with the responsibility of child protection. Examining these findings in the light of the biblical perspectives and the entire literature showed a significant gap in the child protection efforts of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba.

6   Conclusions and Recommendations

Generally, the findings point to insufficient practice of child protection in the Church of Pentecost congregations in the Winneba municipality. The current situation only views children in terms of God's salvific plan that includes children (conversion and sanctification). Clearly, something far broader is required in the light of child abuse in Winneba, Ghana and throughout the world.

Firstly, a major biblical teaching component ought to be adapted to the spiritual and intellectual levels of the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba municipality. This teaching and its practice should be included in ministerial formation as well as training of children ministry leaders. Secondly, the church should obtain information and statistics about child abuse and neglect worldwide, but especially in the Winneba municipality, and efforts to prevent same. Finally, guidelines are required by the Church of Pentecost on how to protect children in the Winneba municipality. This guideline should direct practical actions such as public sensitization, care and support for victims of abuse, reporting/disclosure of abuse as well as strategic partnerships with relevant agencies in the child protection efforts.

It is therefore recommended that further research focuses on developing contextual practice of child protection as well as factors influencing churches' child protection efforts.

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Social Cohesion and Religiosity – Empirical Results from an Online Survey in Germany during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Social scientists and development practitioners are increasingly recognizing the significance of social cohesion as a prerequisite for and part of sustainable development. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic poses severe challenges to the cohesion of societies. However, the specific role of people's religiosity in their attitudes and behaviors relevant for social cohesion has rarely been empirically-quantitatively investigated.

Using primary data from an online survey in Germany, this article addresses three research questions: *1) How can the construct "social cohesion" be empirically and quantitatively measured? 2) What dynamics of social cohesion were evident in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic (in 2020/2021)? 3) What specific role did people's religiosity play in social cohesion in that context?*

These questions are answered within a theory-led empirical analysis. *Social cohesion* is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that manifests itself in horizontal (citizen–citizen) and vertical (citizen–state) relationships. It is measured by eight subdimensions: social/institutional trust, social inclusive/national identification, social/institutional responsibility, and social/political engagement. *Religiosity* is specified with three dimensions: *belonging* (religious affiliation), *believing* (faith intensity/content), and *behaving* (prayer/service attendance).

The empirical results for Germany show that the people surveyed in the period from July 2020 to January 2021 tended to hold together more. Several cohesion dimensions, particularly institutional trust and national identification, strengthened. In contrast,

social trust weakened. The role of religiosity is ambivalent. It is not the intensity but the content and practices of faith that make the difference. Exclusivist religious beliefs, a punitive image of God, and private prayer practice are negatively related, while a loving image of God and service attendance are positively related to social cohesion.

1   Introduction

In view of current challenges around the globe, such as polarization, state collapse, and civil wars, the ageless question of what holds societies together is particularly relevant. Being a fundamental prerequisite for a functioning state, social cohesion is regarded as an essential political goal (Fonseca, Lukosch, and Brazier 2019; Langer et al. 2017; Schiefer et al. 2012). Consequently, various research projects, institutes, and organizations have increasingly recognized the relevance of social cohesion and integrated corresponding concepts and policies into their work, especially in the field of sustainable development. Current initiatives include the Social Cohesion Projects[1] of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the recently launched Social Cohesion Hub[2] of the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), and the Social Cohesion Radar[3] of the Bertelsmann Stiftung. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), social cohesion is considered an essential part of or pathway to achieving SDG 16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."[4]

However, the global COVID-19 pandemic has posed major challenges to the cohesion of societies. Have their members stuck together (because they "sit in the same boat") or have they drifted apart (due to restrictions, e.g., concerning personal contacts/social distancing)? The literature proposes two possible scenarios: "coming-together" vs. "coming-apart" (Borkowska and Laurence

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1   For example: https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/social-cohesion.html; https://www.mw.undp.org/content/malawi/en/home/projects/social-cohesion-project.html (Accessed June 17, 2022).

2   www.socialcohesion.info (Accessed June 17, 2022).

3   https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/social-cohesion/ (Accessed June 17, 2022).

4   https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16 (Accessed June 17, 2022).

2021; Delhey et al. 2021). In Germany, for example, both tendencies have become visible. Numerous initiatives for solidarity and neighborhood assistance were launched on the ground. However, protest movements and anti-COVID demonstrations (e.g., by the "*Querdenker*") became louder and various conspiracy theories circulated (Kühne et al. 2020b; Schulz and Faus 2022; Yendell, Hidalgo, and Hillenbrand 2021).

So, the term "social cohesion"[5] has become a buzzword: "[E]veryone talks about social cohesion, but everyone means something different by it, and hardly anyone can really say what it is all about" [own translation] (Vopel and Unzicker 2012, 8). However, "[d]espite its importance, social cohesion is rarely quantified and measured. Yet measurement is needed if we are to investigate causes and consequences of SC [social cohesion] empirically" (Langer et al. 2017, 323). Against this background, this article considers how the abstract construct "social cohesion" can be empirically and quantitatively measured and analyzed by presenting a theory-led empirical research design and applying it exemplarily to the German context.[6] To this end, I use primary data from a (non-representative) comprehensive online survey that we, at the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics" (WWU Münster)[7] carried out in cooperation with the Research Institute of Social Cohesion (University of Leipzig)[8] between July 2020 and January 2021.

While several studies about social cohesion in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic have been published recently (e.g., Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022; Brand et al. 2021; Delhey et al. 2021; Follmer, Brand, and Unzicker 2020; Schulz and Faus 2022), they have rarely looked at religious factors (see section 2.2). Therefore, I specifically examine the role of people's religiosity in aspects of social cohesion in a comprehensive and differentiated manner. Within the limited scope of this article, I concentrate on the German context, focus on the micro level (individuals as units of analysis) and situate myself in quantitative attitudes and survey research.[9] Specifically, I answer the following research questions:

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5   In German, the term "*Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt*" is widely used.

6   I conceptualize "social cohesion" as a multidimensional construct on horizontal and vertical relationship levels, including four core dimensions: trust, identity, responsibility, engagement (see section 2.1).

7   https://www.uni-muenster.de/Religion-und-Politik/en/index.shtml (Accessed June 17, 2022).

8   https://www.fgz-risc.de/das-forschungsinstitut/standorte/leipzig (Accessed June 17, 2022).

9   I will conduct a more extensive, cross-national comparative analysis, considering both micro and macro levels, in my forthcoming dissertation thesis. The meso level is difficult to integrate in quantitative empirical research designs due to the lack of corresponding data for groups/communities (especially when making comparisons across countries and religions). Further studies, e.g., using other (qualitative) methods and data, could shed more light on this. However, I indirectly consider the group level, for instance, with the dimensions

1) How can the construct "social cohesion" be empirically and quantitatively measured?

2) What dynamics of social cohesion were evident in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic (in 2020/2021)?

3) What specific role did people's religiosity play in social cohesion in that context?

In the first part, I outline the theoretical framework, in which I provide a literature review corresponding to the three research questions: the conceptualization and measurement of social cohesion (2.1), studies on social cohesion in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany (2.2), and the role of religiosity in social cohesion (2.3). Then, I lay out my methods and data (3), as well as the operationalization of the variables (4). In the empirical part, I present key descriptive statistics (5.1), multivariate regression analyses (5.2), and finally discuss the results (5.3). This will lead to my final conclusion (6).

2   Theoretical Framework

Within this theoretical framework, I provide an overview of the literature relevant to my research questions and derive the specification of the central concepts as well as the working hypotheses.[10] For that, I draw on the research design that is outlined in Hillenbrand (2020a).[11]

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of religious affiliation (to which religious communities the individuals belong) and social engagement (in which associations/organizations the individuals participate).

10   In line with this article's focus, the literature overview concentrates on quantitative empirical studies (related to the German context). Further publications could analyze what has been researched about the relationship between religious and cohesion aspects in other contexts, or using other (qualitative) methods (for sub-Saharan Africa see, e.g., Hino et al. 2019 and Langer et al. 2017; for Latin America see, e.g., CEPAL 2010, Manrique, Sánchez, and Campa 2015, or the various research of COES: https://ocs-coes.netlify.app/). It is important to keep in mind that the term "social cohesion" was primarily introduced by Western organizations such as the EU, OECD, or the World Bank (Delhey and Boehnke 2018, 36). Further analyses could take into account similar (indigenous) concepts from other parts of the world (e.g., *Buen Vivir* in Latin America or *Ubuntu* in Southern Africa).

11   In Hillenbrand (2020a) I developed a research design for analyzing the role of religiosity in social cohesion from an empirical, cross-country perspective. In this article, I apply the developed theoretical framework to the German context during the COVID-19 pandemic and test it, using primary data.

2.1 *Conceptualizing and Measuring Social Cohesion*[12]

There is no standard definition, nor unified measurement, for social cohesion (Fonseca, Lukosch, and Brazier 2019; Schiefer and van der Noll 2017). Different terms like "social integration" (Schnabel and Grötsch 2012, 2014), or sub-concepts like "social capital" (Pickel and Gladkich 2011; Putnam 2001; Traunmüller 2012; World Bank 2002), are used.

Systematic approaches to comprehensively quantify and measure the concept of social cohesion are still rare and quite recent (Langer et al. 2017, 322). Early attempts to make this construct measurable and thus comparable (across different countries) were made in the 2000s, for example, by the World Bank (Colletta and Cullen 2000), the OECD (2011), or the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC 2007). In addition, engagement with the conceptualization and measurement of social cohesion has increased in academia (e.g., Chan, To, and Chan 2006; Dickes, Valentova, and Borsenberger 2010; Langer et al. 2017). For example, authors commissioned by the Bertelsmann Stiftung systematized the cohesion literature and developed a comprehensive measurement concept which they applied to various countries (first from the West and later from Asia) (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018; Dragolov et al. 2013, 2016; Schiefer et al. 2012; Schiefer and van der Noll 2017). Similarly, a research team at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability has recently been working on a measurement concept for social cohesion that is particularly applicable to the African continent (Leininger et al. 2021).

Despite differences in these approaches, a consensus seems to be emerging on the following key points:

– Social/societal cohesion is essentially about *relationships* between specific actors, groups, and institutions that make up a society (Langer et al. 2017; Leininger et al. 2021; Schiefer et al. 2012).
– Several *relationship levels* can be differentiated. Primarily, a *horizontal level* (citizen – citizen relations) is distinguished from a *vertical level* (citizen – state relations) (Chan, To, and Chan 2006; Leininger et al. 2021; Schiefer et al. 2012).[13]
– Social cohesion is understood as a *multidimensional* phenomenon. However, there is no consensus on the exact number or content of these dimensions.

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12   Comprehensive overviews of social cohesion research and measurement are provided, e.g., by Fonseca, Lukosch, and Brazier (2019), OECD (2011), Schiefer and van der Noll (2017), and Schiefer et al. (2012).

13   Less commonly, a third level is added that refers to relationships with groups/organizations (Fonseca, Lukosch, and Brazier 2019).

Earlier concepts were much broader and also included socioeconomic factors like inequality, poverty, social mobility, etc. These were measured at the macro level using *objective* factors (Colletta and Cullen 2000 ECLAC 2007; OECD 2011). However, the more recent approaches focus on *subjective* variables. This means that social cohesion and the quality of relationships are measured in terms of *perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors* of the society members (toward others/the state). For such a perceptions-based social cohesion index, surveys are usually used (e.g., the European or World Values Survey, the Afro-/Euro-/Asia-/Latinobarometer, etc.) (Hino et al. 2019; Langer et al. 2017; Leininger et al. 2021). Widely recognized pillars of cohesion involve trust, a sense of belonging, and forms of prosocial behavior such as solidarity or civic engagement (Chan, To, and Chan 2006; Leininger et al. 2021; Schiefer et al. 2012).

I follow the latest approaches of IDOS (Leininger et al. 2021), the Bertelsmann Stiftung (2018), Delhey et al. (2018), Dragolov et al. (2016), Langer et al. (2017), and Hino et al. (2019) and concentrate on perceptions-based indicators, i.e., on citizens' attitudes and behaviors – in line with this article's focus on the micro level and survey research. I refrain from blending them with aggregated, objective measures such as a country's poverty/inequality rate. This approach has the advantage of avoiding conceptual overstretching and achieving higher discriminatory power. Moreover, when socioeconomic factors are not included as components but as consequences or prerequisites of social cohesion, further studies will be able to investigate their interdependencies and provide insights into influencing or output variables (Chan, To, and Chan 2006; Dragolov et al. 2016).

Regarding the specific cohesion dimensions, I aim to develop a relatively parsimonious concept that can be broadly applied to diverse (country) contexts in future studies. Therefore, I focus on the core dimensions in which most existing approaches agree. I primarily follow the recently developed concept of IDOS because it brings together the current state of cohesion research and was developed in a profound research process with diverse scholars and development practitioners.[14] Based on this concept, I define four dimensions (or eight subdimensions, depending on the relationship level: horizontal/vertical) which are summarized in table 1 (further argumentations can be found

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14   The definition of IDOS is: "Social cohesion refers to the vertical and horizontal relations among members of society and the state that hold society together. Social cohesion is characterized by a set of attitudes and behavioral manifestations that includes trust, an inclusive identity and cooperation for the common good" (Leininger et al. 2021, 3). In line with other studies (see table 1), my concept further specifies the dimension "cooperation for the common good" with the dimensions "responsibility" and "engagement" in order to make it quantitively measurable.

TABLE 1   Conceptualization of social cohesion

| | | Dimensions of Social Cohesion | | | |
		1) Trust	2) Identification	3) Responsibility	4) Engagement
Level of relationship	**Horizontal (citizen–citizen) Vertical (citizen–state)**	Social trust Institutional trust	Social inclusive identification National identification	Social responsibility Institutional responsibility	Social engagement Political engagement
Arguments (literature)		Trustful relationships as moral resource and fundamental basis for community and connectedness (Chan, To, and Chan 2006, 294; Dragolov et al. 2013, 17; Langer et al. 2017, 325; Leininger et al. 2021, 6–7; Schiefer et al. 2012, 19)	Society members feeling part of higher entity (not only of their specific (homogeneous) subgroups) and accepting one another (in their diversity) as being part of it (Chan, To, and Chan 2006, 293–294; CEPAL 2010, 24–25; Dragolov et al. 2016, 15–16; Langer et al. 2017, 325–26; Leininger et al. 2021, 5–6; Schiefer and van der Noll 2017, 588–89)	Living together in a community presupposes a certain responsibility from its members, e.g., solidarity and helpfulness as well as compliance with a community's basic laws and rules (Chan, To, and Chan 2006, 294–95; Dragolov et al. 2013, 13–17; Leininger et al. 2021, 7–8; Schiefer et al. 2012, 20/23–24)	Engagement in any kind of social or political organization, association, NGO, etc. enables the society members to participate in common life, to belong to the community and to one another (Schiefer and van der Noll 2017, 588; Traunmüller 2012, 56/116)

SOURCE: HILLENBRAND (2020A)

in Hillenbrand 2020a or the literature cited in the table).[15] This results in the following working definition:

> The *cohesion of a society* manifests itself in social and political relationships among citizens (horizontal level) and between citizens and the state (vertical level): the greater the trust, inclusive identification,

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15   All the dimensions specified in this article are to be understood as analytical differentiations, while in reality, interconnections exist, and boundaries are fluid.

   With the dimensions and concept specifications I give in this article, I do not claim to capture the complex phenomena in their entirety, nor to give universal definitions (which lies beyond this article's scope).

responsibility and engagement in a country, the stronger its cohesion,
(Hillenbrand 2020a, 26; see also Leininger et al. 2021, 3)

2.2 *Social Cohesion in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic*

The global COVID-19 pandemic has been an impactful event affecting the individual, social, and political lives of people and societies worldwide. In relation to how crises such as this pandemic influence social cohesion, two possible scenarios have been described in the relevant literature (e.g., Borkowska and Laurence 2021; Delhey et al. 2021; Kritzinger et al. 2021).

The "coming-together" scenario, on the one hand, assumes a unifying effect. An exogeneous shock could bring people in a country closer together, to jointly resist the shared threat or common "enemy" (Delhey et al. 2021, 4; Kritzinger et al. 2021, 1207–08). Collective experiences of hardship (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) could alter people's preferences, encourage the sharing of burdens and resources, and promote prosocial behavior expressed, for example, through trust. This scenario assumes that trust functions as a resource and coping mechanism in situations of uncertainty (Delhey et al. 2021, 4; Goerres and Vail 2021, 6). Part of this scenario is the "*rally-round-the-flag*" effect[16] that is prominent in political science. Threats would trigger powerful emotions and desires, for example, for security, which citizens often seek to obtain from public institutions and officials. Thus, citizens would show greater support for their governments, which they expect will protect them and resolve the crisis (Delhey et al. 2021, 4–6; Goerres and Vail 2021, 5–7; Kritzinger et al. 2021, 1205–08).

On the other hand, the "coming-apart" scenario assumes social cohesion and bonds among society members will weaken through crises. During the Covid pandemic, people would feel isolated and less connected while social interactions are restricted and would develop mistrust and fears (e.g., that every fellow citizen can transmit the virus and therefore poses a potential threat). Trust in public institutions could also decrease, for instance, when mistakes in crisis management occur (Borkowska and Laurence 2021, 5618–22; Delhey et al. 2021, 4).

With regard to these scenarios, and in line with this article's research focus, I reviewed empirical studies analyzing the dynamics of social cohesion during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the German context (e.g., Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022; Borbáth et al. 2021; Brand et al. 2021; DCV 2022; Delhey et al.

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16   "During international crises, trust in government is expected to increase irrespective of
      the wisdom of the policies it pursues. This has been called a 'rally-round-the-flag' effect"
      (Kritzinger et al. 2021, 1205).

2021; Follmer, Brand, and Unzicker 2020; forsa 2022; Goerres and Vail 2021; Höltmann and Hutter, n.d.; Krause, Gagné, and Höltmann 2020; Kühne et al. 2020a, 2020b; Liebig 2021; Schulz and Faus 2022). Most empirical results to date support the "coming-together" scenario, at least for the early stages of the pandemic (in 2020).[17] Often, stronger solidarity, helpfulness, and political trust was found: "[T]here is mounting evidence that the pandemic initially drew societies together rather than apart" (Delhey et al. 2021, 2). From that, I derive my first working hypothesis (as an expected outcome regarding my second research question on the dynamics of social cohesion):

> *H1) The people surveyed in Germany between July 2020 and January 2021 tended to hold together more, i.e., showing higher levels of trust, identification, responsibility, and engagement.*

However, as the pandemic is still ongoing at the time of writing, it remains to be seen how the social cohesion dimensions will develop and change in the long term. Recent data and results from late 2021 and early 2022 paint a less optimistic picture and the results are more ambivalent (e.g., Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022; DCV 2022; forsa 2022).

Moreover, some studies point to the following paradox (Brand et al. 2021; Schulz and Faus 2022). If people are asked about the specific cohesion dimensions (e.g., how much they themselves trust others/institutions, show solidarity, or are socially engaged), the picture is quite positive – and overall, social cohesion in Germany seems to have remained stable over the years and may have even improved in the early stages of the pandemic. However, when people are asked about their assessment/feeling of whether social cohesion has generally improved or deteriorated, the diagnosis is much more negative: More people see social cohesion eroding and society polarizing.

Looking at these empirical studies on social cohesion in Germany in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the religious factor has rarely been taken into account. Very few publications have considered the role of people's religiosity and when they have done so, they only looked at religious affiliation and differentiated between two or three main groups (DCV 2022; Follmer, Brand, and Unzicker 2020; forsa 2022).[18] Contributing to filling this research gap, I investigate religiosity's specific role in the following section.

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17   The "rally-round-the-flag" effect is empirically found, for example, for Sweden (Esaiasson et al. 2020), the Netherlands (Schraff 2020), Austria (Kritzinger et al. 2021), and Germany and Great Britain (Delhey et al. 2021). A comprehensive literature overview on the Covid pandemic and trust is given by Devine et al. (2020).

18   Follmer, Brand, and Unzicker (2020) found that religiously affiliated people have higher values on their social cohesion index compared to non-affiliated people. In the study by

2.3   *The Role of Religiosity in Social Cohesion*

Before formulating hypotheses about the role of religiosity in social cohesion, I need to clarify the terminology – what I mean by "religiosity" in this article and how I specify this variable so that I can empirically measure it. The aim and strength of this study is that "religiosity" is conceptualized in a comprehensive and differentiated way.

First of all, there is no universal definition for "religion" (Pollack and Rosta 2017). In line with this article's focus on individuals as units of analysis, I concentrate on "religiosity" (as a characteristic of individuals), which is defined as a person's beliefs and behaviors toward the transcendent (Sherkat 2015, 377).[19] "Transcendence" relates to a reality that "exceed[s] the differently defined area of the empirically comprehensible" (Pollack and Rosta 2017, 45). What precisely this means is not predefined but left to the interpretation of the individuals who are surveyed about their beliefs within this article's framework of attitude research.

According to my empirical approach, I conceptualize various measurable dimensions of religiosity. For that, I draw on religious dimension research, especially the current systematization by Pollack and Rosta (2017), and important empirical studies (Basedau, Gobien, and Prediger 2018; Olson and Warber 2008; Schnabel and Grötsch 2014) that specify three central dimensions – the widely used "three b's" (see table 2). From this, the following working definition can be derived: "*Religiosity* refers to the beliefs and behaviors of individuals towards the transcendent, expressed in the intensity and contents of their faith (*believing*), religious practices (*behaving*) and religious affiliation (*belonging*)" (Hillenbrand 2020a, 27).

What role do these different aspects of religiosity play in social cohesion? As there is still a lack of current, empirical studies on the specific role of religiosity in social cohesion during the COVID-19 pandemic (see section 2.2), I rely on the general empirical literature about the nexus of religion and social cohesion (for the German context) to derive hypotheses about their relationships (e.g., Pickel and Gladkich 2011; Pollack and Müller 2013; Schnabel and Grötsch 2012, 2014; Traunmüller 2012). Based on this literature, I generally regard "*social cohesion*" as the dependent variable and "*religiosity*" as the independent variable. However, as the survey design applied in this article cannot prove causality

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Caritas (DCV 2022; forsa 2022) around 61% of both Catholics and Protestants say that they have been involved in voluntary work – among the non-denominational group, the figure is only 47%.

19   I focus on the classical area of "religion," whereas broader, spiritual, or alternative forms would need to be explored in subsequent studies.

TABLE 2   Conceptualization of religiosity

Dimensions of Religiosity				
1) Belonging	*2) Believing*		*3) Behaving*	
Religious affiliation (Islam, Judaism, Christianity, etc.)	Intensity of faith	Contents of faith	Private prayer	Service attendance

SOURCE: BASEDAU, GOBIEN, AND PREDIGER (2018); HILLENBRAND (2020A, 2020B); OLSON AND WARBER (2008); SCHNABEL AND GRÖTSCH (2014); TRAUNMÜLLER (2012)

(see section 5.3), I rather speak of "*role/relationships*" than of "*causal effects.*" Given this article's limited scope, the hypotheses will only be briefly outlined in the following. They stem from Hillenbrand (2020a) and should be regarded as working hypotheses for this specific research design.[20]

H2) Belonging dimension and social cohesion

People with a *religious affiliation* are embedded in religious communities, i.e., social networks, where certain values, social norms, and rules of behavior are transmitted to them that also shape their attitudes and behaviors relevant for social cohesion (Preston, Salomon, and Ritter 2014, 161–63; Traunmüller 2012, 61–63). There is no clear empirical evidence on the general cohesive vs. disruptive effects of specific religious groups *per se*. Rather, the status of a religion in the particular society and resulting ingroup vs. outgroup dynamics seem to be decisive. Members of the majority religion may perceive members of the minority group as a threat and devalue them, while minority religious groups may feel excluded and react by forming subgroups (Pollack and Müller 2013; Tausch, Hewstone, and Roy 2009). From this, it follows that (Hillenbrand 2020a, 30):

H2) Religious affiliation is related to social/institutional trust, inclusive social/national identification, social/institutional responsibility, and

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20   As there is no sophisticated theory of the role religiosity plays in social cohesion, and the empirical results so far remain ambiguous, I here summarize arguments and presumptions about possible relations. However, arguments can often be found for both effect directions. In such cases, I choose one side and formulate directed hypotheses – which can be empirically tested (and if necessary revised) in future empirical studies (Hillenbrand 2020a).

social/political engagement (*which constitute the cohesion of a society*).[21]
A religious minority status is negatively related to dimensions of social cohesion.

H3) Believing dimension and social cohesion

According to the widely held *religious prosociality hypothesis*, believers are expected to show stronger prosocial behavior such as solidarity, charity, responsibility, etc. (Galen 2012, 876; for details on the effect mechanisms see Preston, Salomon, and Ritter 2014, 158–63). In contrast, the *religious intolerance hypothesis* considers strong faith to be accompanied by intolerance and the devaluation of members of other religions and non-believers (Batson 2013, 88–100; Berggren and Bjørnskov 2011, 462–63). To examine the direction of this relationship, I follow and test the prominent *religious prosociality hypothesis* with the next working hypothesis (Hillenbrand 2020a, 28):

H3a) The intensity of faith is positively related to the dimensions of social cohesion.

Regarding the *content of faith*, empirical research on religion, especially the concept of *bridging* vs. *bonding* in the social capital literature, points to the importance of inclusive vs. exclusivist beliefs (Pickel and Gladkich 2011, 83/85; Traunmüller 2012, 20/58–61). "Exclusivist" beliefs that place one's own religion absolutely, above other religions and fields (e.g., science, politics, etc.), are obstructive to the cohesion of a country as a whole with its usually diverse groups. Moreover, it is suggested that an image of a loving, benevolent God facilitates prosocial and cohesive behaviors, while a punitive conception of God hinders them. Based on this, I hypothesize that (Hillenbrand 2020a, 29):

H3b) Exclusivist religious beliefs are negatively related to the dimensions of social cohesion.
   H3c) An image of a punitive God is negatively related to the dimensions of social cohesion, while an image of a loving God is positively related.

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21   For reasons of space and better readability, I no longer mention the subdimensions individually in the following hypotheses, but the summary term "dimensions of social cohesion" implies this differentiated proceeding in each case.
      Because I later find divergent effects depending on the cohesion subdimension in my empirical analyses, I recommend further specifying the hypotheses in subsequent studies.

H4) Behaving dimension and social cohesion

The pertinent literature often ascribes different effect directions to *private vs. social religious practices*. Extensive private prayer would consume a lot of time, leaving a person with fewer resources for other sociopolitical commitments (Basedau, Gobien, and Prediger 2018, 1113–17; Traunmüller 2012, 61/126/158). On the other hand, social religious practices such as collective rituals and shared experiences in religious services would socially embed the individuals and connect members of society from various generations and social statuses, strengthening social networks and ultimately the cohesion dimensions (Durkheim 2007, 72–75/625–27; Norris and Inglehart 2011, 192–94; Traunmüller 2012, 41–42/61–63). This leads me to my last set of hypotheses:

> *H4a) Private prayer practice is negatively related to the dimensions of social cohesion.*
> *H4b) Social religious practice (expressed in service attendance) is positively related to the dimensions of social cohesion.*

3 Methods and Data

To answer the underlying research questions, quantitative empirical survey and attitudes research as well as the application of statistical methods represent suitable methodological approaches because they make it possible to include large numbers of cases and examine correlations between the variable dimensions, while controlling for relevant third variables (age, gender, education, etc.) (Lauth, Pickel and Pickel 2015; Pickel 2011).

Primary data from a comprehensive online survey in Germany serves as the data basis (Hillenbrand n.d.).[22] Researchers at the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics" (WWU Münster) conducted this survey in cooperation with the Research Institute of Social Cohesion (RISC) (University of Leipzig). It is important to note that we did not have several waves (no panel data), but there was one survey period from July 2020 to January 2021. Our case selection was not based on a random principle (no representative study) because one of the central goals (and strengths) of our survey was the focus on the religious factor and its comprehensive and differentiated measurement (which

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22   Our online survey, entitled "Our Life in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic," will be cited in the following with "LTCP 2021."

has so far been neglected in the current social cohesion research in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic). We wanted to be able to make comparisons and gain deeper insights into various religious people and groups as well as into different types of religiosity that impact relevant political and social attitudes and behaviors. That is why we, for example, actively mobilized specific religious groups and minorities to participate, including Jews, Muslims, and Evangelicals, so that the case numbers for them would be sufficiently large for statistical analyses. In representative surveys in Germany, the samples for these religious groups are usually not large enough (< 30) for inferential statistics. Moreover, Evangelicals and Protestants are often not distinguished from each other. However, it has been shown that their attitudes can strongly diverge on central sociopolitical attitudes (e.g., regarding their affinity for conspiracy theories in the context of the Covid pandemic; see Hillenbrand and Pollack forthcoming). We wanted to investigate whether this is also the case for the social cohesion dimensions.

For these reasons, we used an online link for our data collection, which was widely distributed, for example, via the broad networks of the Cluster of Excellence in Münster and the RISC in Leipzig (press releases, websites, interviews, research communication, etc.). In addition, we reached out to various religious communities and organizations in Germany (e.g., Zentralrat der Muslime, Zentralrat der Juden, Jüdische Hochschule), which encouraged their members to participate. Moreover, our survey received widespread attention in the media,[23] which also called for participation. In addition, we distributed printed survey forms in, for instance, socially poorer districts and neighborhoods, and handed them out to churches and parishes, who distributed them widely.

In this way, we reached a total of 2,373 respondents, with sufficient representatives from diverse religious groups in Germany (e.g., Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Muslims, Jews, and spiritual and non-religious people). The survey included items related to social cohesion, COVID-19, and conspiracy theories as well as religion and spirituality.[24]

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23   For example: https://www1.wdr.de/mediathek/audio/wdr5/wdr5-diesseits-von-eden/audio
      -glaube-pandemie-und-verschwoerung-100.html;   https://www.mdr.de/religion/studie
      -religion-verschwoerungsmythen100.html;   https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/umfrage
      -der-uni-muenster-kann-religion-in-der-coronakrise-100.html;   https://zeitung.faz.net/faz
      /feuilleton/2021-01-07/debe4e24ea1837a9153741d280d26329/ (Accessed February 2, 2022).
24   It took around 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire. The survey was administered
      using a standard tool ("SoSci Survey") with an integrated consent form and a note that the
      data would be used for academic research purposes only and be treated with the highest
      discretion and confidentiality in accordance with standard ethics protocols.

4 Operationalization

When operationalizing the variables and creating our questionnaire we were guided by high-quality standard data surveys, especially the World Values Survey,[25] the Bertelsmann Stiftung Religionsmonitor,[26] and the International Social Survey Programme.[27] We were also in contact with an international research team that was carrying out similar surveys on COVID-19 and religiosity in other European countries (Spain, Italy, Finland, and Poland). To facilitate future comparative analyses, we used their wording and coding for some central items. Due to this article's limited scope, I refrain from a detailed description of all the respective items in the text.[28] Instead, I provide overviews by listing them in tabular form. Table 3 displays the operationalization of the cohesion dimensions.[29]

As we did not have several survey waves (and thus do not have panel data or pre-Covid data), we integrated questions about *changes* within the questions so that we could track dynamics and analyze whether the social cohesion dimensions have become weaker or stronger during the COVID-19 pandemic. We let respondents themselves evaluate possible changes that might have occurred. In order to explore the paradox emerging in previous research (see section 2.2), we asked questions about the assessment of the relevant behavior of *others* (e.g., to what extent people (generally) show solidarity or hold together) in addition to questions about attitudes and behaviors of *oneself* (e.g., to what extent the respondents themselves trust others more/less, feel more/less connected, etc.). Figure 1 shows this battery of questions (respondents used a slider to indicate whether the cohesion dimension had increased, decreased, or remained the same).[30]

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25   https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/ (Accessed February 2, 2022).
26   https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/unsere-projekte/religionsmonitor/ (Accessed February 2, 2022).
27   http://www.issp.org/menu-top/home/ (Accessed February 2, 2022).
28   A comprehensive table with the operationalization of all variables used (in the original German wording) can be found in appendix A.
29   Regarding scaling, we mostly adopted the widely used five-point scale, from which a quasi-metric scale level can be assumed (Urban and Mayerl 2011). Here and in the following, I applied explorative factor analyses for the respective (sub)dimensions to check whether the items load on the same factor and can therefore be summarized in one index. The factor analyses for the cohesion dimensions empirically justified the theoretically systematized subdimensions, with one exception: The items for the subdimension *social/ inclusive identification* (2.1) loaded on two factors, so that I differentiate between 2.1a) *social identification* and 2.1b) *inclusive identification*.
30   For the change in social and political engagement, we asked separately how important the respondents consider each of these in their life *since* the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (see appendix A).

TABLE 3 Operationalization of social cohesion

Dimensions of Social Cohesion

	1) Trust	2) Identification	3) Responsibility	4) Engagement
Level of relationship — Horizontal (citizen–citizen)	Social trust 1) *Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?* (2-point scale) 2) *How much you trust: People you meet for the first time* (4-point scale)	Social/inclusive identification a) Feelings of closeness/belonging *How close do you feel to …* (5-point scale) – *Village/town/city* – *County/region/district* b) Acceptance of diversity / inclusiveness: 1) *Which of the following groups would you NOT like to have as neighbors?* (2-point scale) – *people of different race* – *immigrants/foreign workers* 2) *Would you say that cultural life in Germany is generally undermined or enriched by immigrants?* (5-point scale) 3) *To what extent do you agree with the following statements?* (5-point scale) *Even today, the influence of the Jews is too great.* *Muslims should be prohibited from immigrating to Germany.*	Social responsibility *How much is this person similar to you?* (5-point scale) 1) *It is important to this person to do something for the good of society.* 2) *It is important to this person to help the people nearby; to care for their needs.* 3) Degree of agreement with the following statement (5-point scale): *One of the things that makes the most sense in my life is helping other people.*	Social engagement *For each of the following organizations, please indicate whether you are an active, inactive or not a member at all (3-point scale):* 1) *Sport/recreational organization* 2) *Art, music or educational organization* 3) *Environmental organization* 4) *Humanitarian/charitable organization* 5) *Consumer organization* 6) *Self-help group, mutual aid group* 7) *Labor union* 8) *Professional association* 9) *Women's group* 10) *Other organization*

TABLE 3 Operationalization of social cohesion (*cont.*)

	Dimensions of Social Cohesion			
	1) Trust	2) Identification	3) Responsibility	4) Engagement
Vertical (citizen–state)	Institutional trust *How much do you trust the following groups? (4-point scale):* 1) *The police* 2) *The courts* 3) *The government* 4) *Parliament* 5) *Armed forces* 6) *Political parties* 7) *The civil service*	National identification 1) *How close do you feel to …* *(5-point scale)* – *Germany* 2) *Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you move permanently to another country, or would you prefer to continue living in this country? (5-point scale)*	Institutional responsibility *Please tell me for each of the following actions whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between (5-point scale):* 1) *Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled* 2) *Avoiding a fare on public transport* 3) *Stealing property* 4) *Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties* 5) *Cheating on taxes if you have a chance*	Political engagement 1) *For each of the following, indicate how important it is in your life:* *Politics (5-point scale)* 2) *Membership (see above):* *Political party (3-point scale)* 3) *When elections take place, do you always, usually or never vote?* → *Bundestagswahlen (national level)* *(3-point scale)*

FIGURE 1   Operationalization of social cohesion (dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic)
SOURCE: LTCP (2021)

TABLE 4   Operationalization of religiosity

Dimensions of Religiosity

1) Belonging		2) Believing		3) Behaving	
Religious affiliation	Intensity	Images of God	Exclusivist beliefs	Prayer	Service
Which religion/	*of faith*	*In relation to God, deities, or*	*To what extent do you*	*How*	attendance
denomination do	*All in*	*something divine, how often*	*agree with the follow-*	*often*	*How often*
you feel belong-	*all, how*	*do you experience …?*	*ing statements?*	*do you*	*do you*
ing to?	*religious*	*(5-point scale)*	*(5-point scale)*	*pray?*	*attend mass*
1) *Non-*	*are you?*	– *Love*	– *Punishment*	*The only*	*Whenever*	*(8-point*	*or another*
denominational	*(5-point*	– *Comfort*	– *Guilt*	*accept-*	*science*	*scale)*	*religious*
2) *Catholic*	*scale)*	– *Strength*	– *Fear*	*able reli-*	*and*	*celebration?*
3) *Protestant*		– *Accompa-*	(= image of a	*gion is my*	*religion*	*(5-point*
4) *Evangelical*		*niment*	punitive God)	*religion.*	*conflict,*	*scale)*
5) *Muslim*		(= image of a			*religion is*
6) *Jewish*		loving God)			*right.*
7) *Spiritual* (*but no*					
religion)					
8) *Other religion*					

SOURCE: HILLENBRAND (2020A); LTCP (2021)

The operationalization of the independent variable "religiosity" is summa-
rized in table 4.

Finally, table 5 provides an overview of the additional control variables
included in the multivariate analyses.

TABLE 5   Operationalization of control variables

Control variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
Gender	*What is your gender?*	– Female – Male (reference category) – Diverse (not considered as a separate category due to insufficient number of cases)
Age	*How old are you?*	Free indication (in years)
Place of residence	*In Germany, I currently live in …*	*List of 16 German "Bundesländer"* → *dichotomized:* – *Former East Germany (reference category)* – *West Germany*
Education	*What is the highest level of education you have achieved?*	1) No educational qualification 2) *"Volks-, Hauptschulabschluss ohne berufliche Ausbildung"* 3) *"Volks-, Hauptschulabschluss und berufliche Ausbildung"* 4) *"Mittlere Reife, Realschul- oder gleichwertiger Abschluss ohne berufliche Ausbildung"* 5) *"Mittlere Reife, Realschul- oder gleichwertiger Abschluss und berufliche Ausbildung"* 6) *"Fachhochschulreife/Abitur ohne berufliche Ausbildung"* 7) *"Fachhochschulreife/Abitur und berufliche Ausbildung"* 8) *"Fachhochschulabschluss"* 9) *"Hochschul-/Universitätsabschluss"* 10) Doctoral degree
Political orientation	*In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right." How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?*	1) "left" to 10) "right"

TABLE 5   Operationalization of control variables (*cont.*)

Control variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
Belief in COVID-19 conspiracy theories	*Behind the COVID-19 pandemic there are evil, hidden forces.*	1) (do not agree at all) to 5) (fully agree)

SOURCE: LTCP (2021)

5   Empirical Results

In this section, I discuss the results of my quantitative empirical analysis. First, I outline the descriptive statistics regarding central variables and the dynamics of the social cohesion dimensions (second research question). Then, I use multivariate regression models to examine the relationships between the religion and cohesion dimensions (third research question).[31]

5.1   *Descriptive Statistics*

First, it is important to have an overview of the sample composition. As this is not a representative sample for the entire German population (due to our specific research focus; see section 3), certain groups are overrepresented and others are underrepresented.[32] Of the 2,373 respondents, 57% identify as female, 42% as male, and 1% as gender diverse. Persons of younger or middle age, those with higher education and belonging to the lower-middle or upper-middle class, as well as people from western German states, are more strongly represented. In addition, religiously affiliated people (including minority religious groups) are overrepresented, because our study aimed to zoom in on different religious groups and investigate certain forms, types, and patterns in terms of their cultural, political, and social attitudes and behaviors. According to the central limit theorem (see Weigand 2009, 221–25), statistical analyses are appropriate from a case number of 30. We achieved this for the following groups, which can, consequently, be considered in the subsequent empirical analyses: Catholics (999), Protestants (504), Evangelicals (219), Muslims (87),

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31   The LTCP (2021) data will be comprehensively evaluated in the author's doctoral thesis (probably published in 2024).

32   Possible biases regarding this sample composition are discussed in section 5.3.

Jews (48), other religions (67), spiritual persons without religion (92), and non-religious people (314).

The following tables 6, 7, and 8 summarize key descriptive statistics of all the variables integrated in the empirical analysis (independent and dependent variables).

TABLE 6   Distribution of independent variables I (categorical)

Variable	Percentage	N
What is your gender?		2,328
– Female	57.43	
– Male	42.57	
In Germany, I currently live in ...		2,311
– Western *Bundesländer* (Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Hessen, Niedersachsen, NRW, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein)	92.43	
– Eastern *Bundesländer* (Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen)	7.57	
Which religion/denomination do you feel belonging to?		2,330
– No religion	13.48	
– Catholic	42.88	
– Protestant	21.63	
– Evangelical/free churches	9.40	
– Muslim	3.73	
– Jewish	2.06	
– Other religion	2.88	
– Spiritual, but no religion	3.95	

SOURCE: LTCP (2021)

TABLE 7   Distribution of independent variables II

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	N
Age	11	99	45.95	17.58	2,331
Education level	1	10	7.84	1.90	2,307
Social class	1	5	3.55	0.70	2,311
Political orientation	1	10	4.34	1.75	2,346
Belief in COVID-19 conspiracy theories	1	5	1.45	1.09	2,317
Intensity of faith	1	5	3.23	1.32	2,329

TABLE 7   Distribution of independent variables II (*cont.*)

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	N
Exclusivist beliefs I	1	5	1.61	1.13	2,297
Exclusivist beliefs II	1	5	1.90	1.20	2,302
Loving image of God	1	5	3.38	1.35	2,287
Punitive image of God	1	5	1.68	0.71	2,280
Prayer	1	8	5.02	2.67	2,329
Service attendance	1	5	2.91	1.32	2,327

SOURCE: LTCP (2021)

TABLE 8   Distribution of dependent variables

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	N
Social trust	0	1	0.61	0.29	2,310
Institutional trust	0	1	0.56	0.19	2,274
Social identification	0	1	0,71	0,24	2,335
Inclusive identification	0	1	0.87	0.15	2,287
National identification	0	1	0.75	0.22	2,333
Social responsibility	0	1	0.78	0.18	2,335
Institutional responsibility	0	1	0.89	0.13	2,333
Social engagement	0	1	0.19	0.15	2,307
Political engagement	0	1	0.57	0.17	2,226
Social cohesion index	0	1	0.67	0.09	2,086
Dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic					
Social trust	1	5	2.85	0.73	2,331
Institutional trust	1	5	3.16	1.05	2,334
Social identification	1	5	3.36	0.99	2,328
National identification	1	5	4.08	1.17	2,322
Social responsibility	1	5	3.75	0.77	2,332
Institutional responsibility	1	5	3.57	1.01	2,328
Social engagement	1	5	3.83	1.01	2,305
Political engagement	1	5	3.03	1.23	2,304
Assessment of people's solidarity	1	5	3.33	1.00	2,327
Assessment of people's cohesion	1	5	2.83	1.14	2,325

SOURCE: LTCP (2021)

Knowing the sample composition, we now analyze the distribution of the variables related to possible *changes* in the social cohesion dimensions during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to answer the second research question about the dynamics of social cohesion. The relevant descriptive statistics are illustrated in figure 2 and discussed in the following.

We see that social trust remained the same for most respondents (61%), while 26% said that their trust in others decreased and 13% reported an increase. Institutional trust increased for 41% of respondents and decreased for 23% (for 35% it remained unchanged). Social connectedness also increased (for 46%) rather than decreased (for 17%) – for 38% it remained the same. A large majority of 74% were satisfied living in Germany during the pandemic – while only 11% were dissatisfied. Moreover, 64% said they showed more solidarity and helpfulness during the pandemic (only 4% showed less) and around half of the respondents declared that they complied with the legal regulations more (only 11% complied less). In addition, two-thirds of respondents considered social engagement an important area of their life during the Covid period. In comparison, the figure for political engagement was significantly lower at 36%.
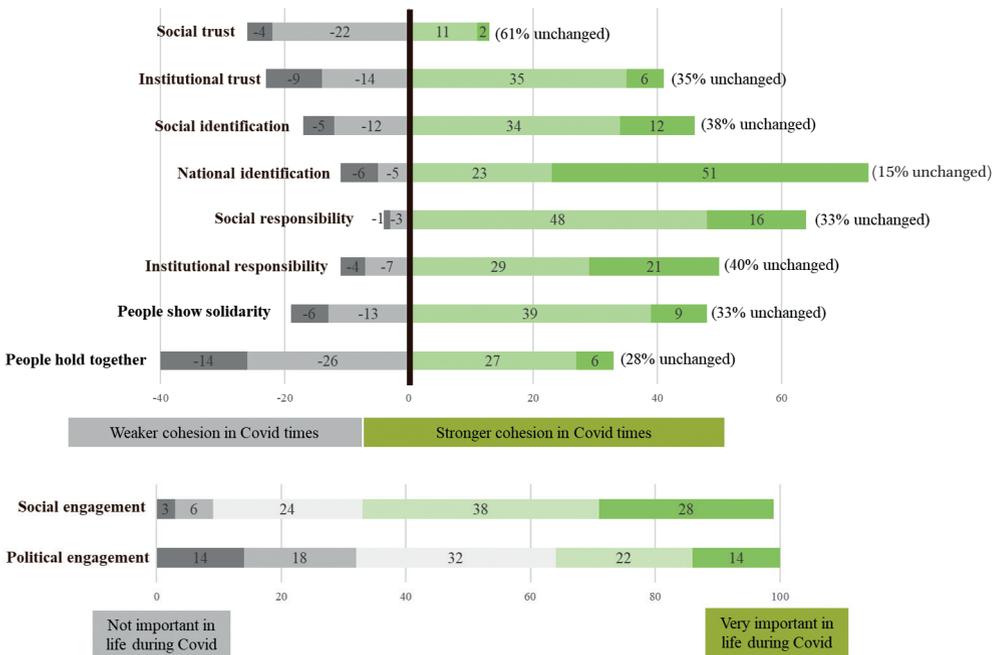
FIGURE 2   Distribution of variables related to the change in the social cohesion dimensions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany
SOURCE: LTCP (2021)

Overall, we can conclude that the people surveyed in our study in the period from July 2020 to January 2021 tended to stick together more (confirming *H1*). This finding fits very well with previous studies that speak of a "coming-together" scenario (Borowska and Laurence 2021), a "rally-round-the-flag" effect" (Kritzinger et al. 2021) or "honeymoon" (Goerres 2022) of social cohesion during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, our survey also reveals that there can be differences depending on the specific cohesion dimension, which is why a differentiated analysis is important. In line with the "rally-round-the-flag effect," it was mainly institutional trust and national identification that were strengthened. We also saw greater solidarity and helpfulness (as found in other studies, e.g., Borbáth et al. 2021; Follmer, Brand, and Unzicker 2020; Höltmann and Hutter, n.d.). Social trust, on the other hand, rather weakened.

In addition to the respondents' statements about their own cohesion-relevant attitudes and behaviors, we asked them about their assessment of the behaviors of others in society in general. In this regard, 48% said that people generally showed more solidarity during the pandemic, 19% perceived less solidarity, and 33% saw no change. In contrast, 40% felt that people were drifting further apart in the pandemic; one-third said that they were holding together more and 28% perceived no change. This points to the paradox cited in the literature (see section 2.2). On the one hand, people generally feel that cohesion is deteriorating and rate the behaviors of others in this regard rather negatively. On the other hand, stability or slight improvement tends to emerge when people are asked about their own attitudes and behaviors that constitute a society's cohesion. Of course, response tendencies such as the phenomenon of "social desirability" could also cause a bias here. This needs to be explored in more detail in further studies.

5.2   *Multivariate Regressions*

To empirically test the hypotheses derived in section 2.3, I conducted multivariate regression analyses (linear ordinary least squares regressions). The detailed regression tables and the distributions of all variables included in the models are presented in the appendix. It is important to note that the dependent variables used for the regression modelling are not the items related to the *change/ dynamics* of social cohesion (which were relevant for the second research question). Instead, the general dimensions of social cohesion (as operationalized in table 3) were used in order to remain congruent with the theoretically derived conceptual specification of social cohesion (see section 2.1) – and because answering the third research question is about the extent to which different

dimensions of a person's religiosity are related to his/her *general* sociopolitical attitudes and behaviors that constitute overall cohesion in a society.[33]

In the following, I present the key results of the regression models, structured according to the hypothesis testing.[34]

With regard to *religious belonging* (*H2*), various significant results for several religious groups become apparent, which in the following must always be interpreted in comparison to the non-denominational reference group. In our survey, both Catholics and Protestants demonstrate higher institutional trust and national identification, but lower social responsibility (than the non-denominals). Moreover, belonging to evangelical or free churches is related to higher national identification but lower social responsibility and social engagement. The identification with Islam is associated with higher inclusive identification but lower social trust and social and political engagement, which is reflected in a lower overall cohesion index. The Jewish people in our survey show lower social trust, social identification, and institutional responsibility, resulting in a lower social cohesion index. Those who report belonging to a religion other than those mentioned have lower identification (in all three areas: social, inclusive, national) as well as lower social and institutional responsibility and political engagement – which translates into a lower social cohesion index. Finally, people who describe themselves as spiritual (but without a religious affiliation) trust other people and political institutions less, help others less, and are less compliant with the legal regulations – resulting in a lower overall index of social cohesion.

All in all, belonging to a religious community seems to make a difference in certain areas of social cohesion. What difference it makes concretely depends on the specific religious identity and the cohesion subdimension. In general, there is a tendency among those respondents belonging to larger religious communities (Christians in Germany) to show stronger ties to the vertical level, especially concerning institutional trust and national identification. Besides

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33 Alternatively, I also computed regressions with the variables related to the *changes* of the cohesion dimensions. However, their presentation would exceed the scope of this article. They can be obtained from the author on request. Overall, similar relationships as in the models reported here are found.

34 I concentrate on the statistically significant results that are relevant for testing the working hypotheses. However, for space reasons, I cannot elaborate on, e.g., the comparison of effect sizes. For that, I additionally computed the standardized beta coefficients (for exact calculation and interpretation see Kohler and Kreuter 2012, 268), which can be obtained on request.

that, several negative correlations emerge, particularly regarding minority groups such as Muslims, Jews, other religions, and spiritual persons.

This supports *H2*), that religious identity indeed makes a difference and that, in particular, the minority status of a religious group is negatively associated with social cohesion dimensions. The reasons for this would require further research and more in-depth study. Other studies have shown that socially disadvantaged (e.g., socioeconomically weaker) groups often feel less cohesion (e.g., Brand et al. 2021; DCV 2022; Follmer, Brand, and Unzicker 2020). This could be due, for example, to experiences of discrimination (e.g., from the majority) or to certain ingroup vs. outgroup dynamics. As a consequence, feelings of exclusion could translate into lower trust, a weaker sense of belonging, and less motivation or opportunities to participate in society (e.g., Pollack and Müller 2013; Tausch, Hewstone, and Roy 2009).

Furthermore, I find that the self-reported *intensity of faith* does not make a significant difference regarding the social cohesion dimensions (no empirical evidence for *H3a*). Instead, the *faith content* proves to be relevant. People who believe that their own religion is the only acceptable one show lower social trust and inclusive identification, which also results in a negative effect on the overall cohesion index. Those who value their religion over science have lower institutional trust. So, *H3b*) about the negative role of exclusivist beliefs can be partly supported. Similarly, *H3c*) finds empirical confirmation for several cohesion dimensions: Experiencing a punishing God relates negatively with social trust, inclusive identification, institutional responsibility, and the overall cohesion index – whereas the image of a loving God goes hand in hand with higher levels of social trust, social and inclusive identification, social responsibility and engagement, and the overall cohesion index.

In relation to *religious practices*, I find that private prayer practice is negatively related to institutional trust, social identification, and the overall cohesion index (*H4a* is partly affirmed). In contrast, service attendance shows positive correlations with almost all cohesion dimensions (except for two insignificant results with social identification and national identification). Thus, there is strong evidence for *H4b*).

With regard to the control variables, higher levels of identification and responsibility in all areas can be found among the women in our survey, while the men trust institutions more and are more politically engaged. Higher education is positively related to social trust, inclusive identification, social and political engagement, and the overall index. Older people show higher levels of social and national identification, institutional responsibility, and engagement at both levels – this also translates into a positive correlation with the overall cohesion index. In contrast, younger people demonstrate a higher

inclusive identification. Political leftist orientations go hand in hand with higher levels of social trust, inclusive identification, social responsibility, and social and political engagement – resulting in a positive correlation with the total cohesion index. In comparison, politically right-wing people feel socially more connected, and both identify more strongly with Germany and are more law-abiding. In eastern Germany, social engagement is lower (than in western Germany). Finally, the degree of conspiracy mentality shows strong significant influences that are mainly negatively related: with both forms of trust, inclusive and national identification, social responsibility, political engagement, and the overall cohesion index. One slightly positive correlation is found with social responsibility.

A final look at the model fit shows that the different models vary in their performance to explain the variance. The adjusted R^2 lies between 0.077 and 0.416 (see appendix B). This means that between 7.7% and 41.6% of the total unexplained variance of the respective dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables integrated in the individual model. The variance explanation for the overall cohesion index, for example, is about 30%.[35]

5.3   *Discussion*

Overall, the empirical findings presented show that people's religiosity does make a difference in terms of their attitudes and behaviors that relate to societal life, even, or perhaps especially, in secular societies like Germany. However, this role becomes apparent, only or primarily, when religiosity is understood as a comprehensive concept of which different dimensions – *believing, belonging, behaving* – are considered. It is, therefore, crucial to analyze and understand what people specifically believe, what their relationship to the transcendent is like, how they practice their faith, and how they construct their religious identity.

The ambivalent empirical results of this and other studies (e.g., Liedhegener et al. 2019; Pickel and Gladkich 2011; Traunmüller 2012; Yendell, Hidalgo and Hillenbrand 2021) stimulate further research, such as on different religious types. For example, with respect to conspiracy theories, Pollack and Hillenbrand (forthcoming) suggest distinguishing between at least two different types of religiosity. On the one hand, an *"exclusivist-privatist-punitive*

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35   In the social sciences, these values can be considered as a moderate model explanation. However, I would like to emphasize that my research aim was not to explain the dependent variables as comprehensively as possible – which would entail searching for as many relevant influencing factors as possible – but to examine the specific relationships between religious and cohesion dimensions.

religious type" refers to believers whose image of God is characterized by fear, guilt, and punishment, who pray intensely in private and who attribute exclusive, absolute truth to their religion. On the other hand, the "*inclusive-social-loving religious type*" involves people who have a primarily loving image of God, are more inclusive toward other religions and areas of life, and practice their faith more socially with others. These types of religiosity need to be explored further, for instance, through cluster or latent class analyses. In addition, the assumption that the first type is negatively related and the second type is positively related to the cohesion dimensions could be further tested.

A great strength of this study was that the religious factor was measured and analyzed in a comprehensive and differentiated manner, including religious minorities, which often do not receive their own consideration in quantitative studies (due to insufficient case numbers). The empirical results presented here indicate that particularly with regard to religious minorities in Germany relevant results (concerning social cohesion) can be expected, and there is need for further research in this area.

However, this study also has several limitations. As our survey is not representative, the empirical results are not to be understood as general statements for the entire population in Germany (even though our empirical results fit well with the relevant research on cohesion aspects during the pandemic in Germany, e.g., Brand et al. 2021; Delhey et al. 2021; Follmer, Brand, and Unzicker 2021; Goerres and Vail 2021). There may be possible biases. Given the underrepresentation of people with lower education, socioeconomic status and from former "East Germany", and that other representative studies for Germany have found more negative or pessimistic tendencies regarding cohesion among socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (e.g., Brand et al. 2021; DCV 2022; Follmer, Brand, and Unzicker 2020), the strength of the cohesion dimensions might be overestimated here. In further research, different socioeconomic and political groups could be considered and compared in terms of the different cohesion dimensions.

Moreover, we face the general drawbacks of quantitative research and survey designs in the social sciences, including omitted variable bias, reverse causation, and the response tendency of social desirability (Gehring and Weins 2009; Kohler and Kreuter 2012). In the absence of multiple survey waves and pre-Covid data, clear links between social cohesion and the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be established (the links are based on self-reported changes). To address these challenges, longitudinal studies, for example, and more in-depth, qualitative (case) analyses could follow, or complex models involving mediations, moderations, or structural equations could be tested.

Finally, I could only provide a snapshot of the different dimensions of social cohesion in the period from July 2020 to January 2021. Most recent studies

suggest that as the pandemic continues, the "honeymoon" period of greater social cohesion fades away and the "coming-apart" scenario becomes stronger (e.g., Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022; DCV 2022). It remains to be seen and further researched how the pandemic will affect the cohesion of societies in the long run.

6   Conclusion

The theory-based empirical analysis undertaken in this article answers the research questions as follows. First, the abstract construct of "social cohesion" can be measured empirically and quantitatively by conceptualizing core dimensions on two relationship levels (horizontal: citizen – citizen / vertical: citizen – state): social/institutional trust, social inclusive/national identification, social/institutional responsibility, and social/political commitment. These can then be operationalized, for example, using survey items, which I did by carrying out a (non-representative) online survey for the German context during the COVID-19 pandemic between July 2020 and January 2021. Based on the key findings I answer the second and third research questions as follows: Regarding possible dynamics of social cohesion in Germany during the Covid pandemic, the results have shown the tendency of strengthening cohesion dimensions; the people surveyed tended to hold together more in the period studied. However, there were variations depending on the cohesion subdimension, which is why it is important to measure social cohesion in a differentiated manner. Strengthening is particularly evident in the realm of institutional trust and national identification, which provides empirical support for the popular "rally-round-the-flag effect" (Kritzinger et al. 2021). Solidarity and helpfulness also showed an upswing – but social trust declined. These empirical findings are in line with other studies on the Covid pandemic in Germany (e.g., Brand et al. 2021; Delhey et al. 2021; Follmer, Brand, and Unzicker 2020; Goerres and Vail 2021). However, this "coming-together" scenario (Borowska and Laurence 2021) can be identified especially for the initial phases of the pandemic. The later developments and final impact remain to be studied.

Finally, multivariate regression analyses have revealed that people's religiosity plays an ambivalent role in social cohesion, thus highlighting the importance of measuring the multidimensional religious factor in a comprehensive and differentiated way. The findings show that a person's religious identity can make a difference in terms of certain cohesion aspects. This depends on the specific religious group and especially on its minority status, which is often negatively related to the cohesion dimensions. Further research is needed, for example, on the underlying reasons or certain ingroup vs. outgroup dynamics.

In addition, the specific content and practices of someone's faith are decisive (rather than the strength of their religiosity). Exclusivist religious beliefs about the superiority of one's religion (over other religions or areas like science) as well as an image of a punitive God and purely private prayer practice prove to be obstacles to social cohesion. In contrast, the belief in a loving God and social religious practices (service attendance) develop cohesive forces.

Overall, with the research design and empirical results for the German context presented here, I have laid out *one* possible way to empirically measure the abstract concept of social cohesion and to explore the role of religiosity in it. However, subsequent studies could explore and compare other ways, also including other country contexts. Ultimately, I aim to stimulate further research in this highly topical, sociopolitically relevant field, on questions of what holds societies together, even in times of crisis, and what role religion plays in this.

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Appendix A

List of all variables in original German wording

Variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
Dependent variables: social cohesion dimensions		
Social trust	*Würden Sie ganz allgemein sagen, dass man den meisten Menschen vertrauen kann oder dass man im Umgang mit Menschen nicht vorsichtig genug sein kann?*	0 (*man kann nicht vorsichtig genug sein*) 1 (*man kann den meisten Menschen vertrauen*)
	Wie viel vertrauen Sie den folgenden Gruppen? – *Menschen, denen Sie zum ersten Mal begegnen*	0 (*vertraue gar nicht*) bis 4 (*vertraue völlig*)
Institutional trust	*Wie viel vertrauen Sie den folgenden Gruppen?* – *Bundesregierung* – *Politische Parteien* – *Bundestag* – *Öffentliche Verwaltung* – *Polizei* – *Bundeswehr* – *Gerichte*	0 (*vertraue gar nicht*) bis 4 (*vertraue völlig*)
Social identification	*Menschen haben verschiedene Ansichten über sich selbst und wie stark Sie sich mit ihrem Umfeld und dem Rest der Welt verbunden fühlen.* *Wie stark verbunden fühlen Sie sich mit …* – *Dem Ort oder der Stadt, in der Sie leben* – *Der Region, in der Sie leben*	0 (*überhaupt nicht verbunden*) bis 5 (*sehr verbunden*)

List of all variables in original German wording (*cont.*)

Variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
Inclusive identification	Welche der folgenden Personengruppen hätten Sie NICHT gerne als Nachbarn? – Menschen anderer Hautfarbe – Ausländer/ausländische Arbeitskräfte	0 (hätte ich nicht gerne als Nachbar) 1 (kann mein Nachbar sein)
	Würden Sie sagen, dass das kulturelle Leben in Deutschland im Allgemeinen durch Zuwanderer/innen untergraben oder bereichert wird?	0 (kulturelles Leben wird untergraben) bis 5 (kulturelles Leben wird bereichert)
	Inwieweit stimmen Sie folgender Aussage zu? Auch heute noch ist der Einfluss der Juden zu groß.	1 (stimme überhaupt nicht zu) bis 5 (stimme voll und ganz zu)
	Inwieweit stimmen Sie folgender Aussage zu? Muslimen sollte die Zuwanderung nach Deutschland untersagt werden.	1 (stimme überhaupt nicht zu) bis 5 (stimme voll und ganz zu)
National identification	Menschen haben verschiedene Ansichten über sich selbst und wie stark Sie sich mit ihrem Umfeld und dem Rest der Welt verbunden fühlen. Wie stark verbunden fühlen Sie sich mit ... – Deutschland	0 (überhaupt nicht verbunden) bis 5 (sehr verbunden)
	Idealerweise würden Sie, wenn Sie die Möglichkeit hätten, dauerhaft in ein anderes Land umziehen, oder würden Sie es vorziehen, weiterhin in diesem Land zu leben?	0 (in ein anderes Land ziehen) bis 5 (in diesem Land weiterhin leben)

List of all variables in original German wording (*cont.*)

Variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
Social responsibility	*Ich beschreibe Ihnen nun fiktive Personen und möchte Sie bitten, anzugeben, wie ähnlich Ihnen diese Person jeweils ist.* – *Es ist ihr (ihm) wichtig, den Menschen um ihn herum zu helfen. Er / Sie will für deren Wohl sorgen.* – *Es ist ihr (ihm) wichtig, etwas Gutes für die Gesellschaft zu tun.* *Inwieweit stimmen Sie folgender Aussage zu?* *Eines der Dinge, die in meinem Leben am meisten Sinn machen, ist es anderen Menschen zu helfen.*	*0 (sehr unähnlich) bis 5 (sehr ähnlich)* *1 (stimme überhaupt nicht zu) bis 5 (stimme voll und ganz zu)*
Institutional responsibility	*Können Sie mir bitte für jeden der folgenden Punkte sagen, ob Sie dies unter keinen Umständen in Ordnung finden, in jedem Fall in Ordnung finden oder irgendetwas dazwischen.* – *Staatliche Leistungen in Anspruch nehmen, auf die man keinen Anspruch hat* – *Kein Fahrgeld in öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln zahlen (Schwarzfahren)* – *Diebstahl* – *Steuern hinterziehen, wenn man die Möglichkeit hat* – *Jemand nimmt Schmiergeld für seine Tätigkeiten an*	*0 (unter keinen Umständen in Ordnung) bis 5 (in jedem Fall in Ordnung)*

List of all variables in original German wording (*cont.*)

Variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
Social engagement	*Bitte geben Sie für jede der folgenden Organisationen an, ob Sie ein aktives oder ein inaktives oder ob Sie gar kein Mitglied sind:* – *Sport- und Freizeitverbände* – *Gewerkschaften* – *Berufsverbände* – *Humanitäre oder Wohlfahrtsorganisationen* – *Selbsthilfegruppen oder Nachbarschaftshilfen* – *Organisationen oder Vereine für Bildung, Kunst, Musik und kulturelle Tätigkeiten* – *Ökologie- und Umweltgruppen oder Tierschutzvereine/-gruppen* – *Verbraucherorganisationen/Verbraucherverbände* – *Frauengruppe* – *Andere Organisationen oder Gruppen*	0 *(kein Mitglied)* 1 *(inaktives Mitglied)* 2 *(aktives Mitglied)*
Political engagement	*Bitte geben Sie für jede der folgenden Organisationen an, ob Sie ein aktives oder ein inaktives oder ob Sie gar kein Mitglied sind:* – *Parteien oder politische Gruppen*	0 *(kein Mitglied)* 1 *(inaktives Mitglied)* 2 *(aktives Mitglied)*
	Wenn Wahlen stattfinden, gehen Sie dann nie, meistens oder immer wählen? – *Bundestagswahlen*	0 *(nie)* 1 *(meistens)* 2 *(immer)*
	Wenn Sie an folgende Bereiche in Ihrem Leben denken – wie wichtig waren Ihnen diese Bereiche (vor Corona)? – *Politik*	0 *(überhaupt nicht wichtig) bis 5 (sehr wichtig)*

List of all variables in original German wording (*cont.*)

Dynamics / Changes of social cohesion dimension during the COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
	Nun haben wir einige Fragen an Sie, die sich speziell auf Ihr Leben in Zeiten der Corona-Pandemie beziehen. *In Zeiten der Corona-Pandemie …*	
Social trust		o (*vertraue ich den Menschen generell weniger*) bis 5 (*vertraue ich den Menschen generell mehr*)
Institutional trust		o (*vertraue ich den öffentlichen Institutionen weniger*) bis 5 (*vertraue ich den öffentlichen Institutionen mehr*)
Social identification		o (*fühle ich mich weniger mit den anderen Gesellschaftsmitgliedern verbunden*) bis 5 (*fühle ich mich mehr mit den anderen Gesellschaftsmitgliedern verbunden*)
National identification		o (*bin ich unzufrieden in Deutschland zu leben / würde am liebsten wegziehen*) bis 5 *bin ich sehr zufrieden in Deutschland zu leben / will nicht weg von hier*)
Social responsibility		o (*zeige ich weniger Solidarität und Hilfsbereitschaft*) bis 5 (*zeige ich mehr Solidarität und Hilfsbereitschaft*)
Institutional responsibility		o (*halte ich mich weniger an die gesetzlichen Regeln*) bis 5 (*halte ich mich mehr an die gesetzlichen Regeln*)
People holding together		o (*driften die Menschen in Deutschland weiter auseinander*) bis 5 (*halten die Menschen in Deutschland mehr zusammen*)
People showing solidarity		o (*zeigen die Menschen in Deutschland weniger Solidarität und Hilfsbereitschaft*) bis 5 (*zeigen die Menschen in Deutschland mehr Solidarität und Hilfsbereitschaft*)
	Wenn Sie an folgende Bereiche in Ihrem Leben denken – wie wichtig sind Ihnen diese Bereiche SEIT Corona?	
Social engagement	– *Soziales Engagement*	o (*überhaupt nicht wichtig*) bis 5 (*sehr wichtig*)
Political engagement	– *Politisches Engagement*	o (*überhaupt nicht wichtig*) bis 5 (*sehr wichtig*)

List of all variables in original German wording (*cont.*)

Variable	Item		Answer categories / scale
Independent variables: dimensions of religiosity			
Intensity of faith	*Alles in allem: Als wie religiös würden Sie sich selbst bezeichnen?*		1 (*stimme überhaupt nicht zu*) bis 5 (*stimme voll und ganz zu*)
Images of God	Loving image of God	*Wie oft erleben Sie in Bezug auf Gott, Gottheiten oder etwas Göttliches …*	1 (*nie*) bis 5 (*sehr oft*)
		– *Liebe*	
		– *Kraft*	
		– *Geborgenheit*	
		– *Weg-/ Lebensbegleitung*	
	Punitive image of God	– *Strafe*	
		– *Schuld*	
		– *Angst*	
Exclusivist beliefs	1: Own religion only acceptable	*Inwieweit stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?*	1 (*stimme überhaupt nicht zu*) bis 5 (*stimme voll und ganz zu*)
		Die einzige akzeptable Religion ist meine Religion.	
	11: Religion over science	*Wenn sich Wissenschaft und Religion widersprechen, ist die Religion im Recht.*	

List of all variables in original German wording (*cont.*)

Variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
Prayer	*Wie häufig beten Sie?*	1) *Nie* 2) *Seltener* 3) *Mehrmals pro Jahr* 4) *Ein- bis dreimal im Monat* 5) *Einmal in der Woche* 6) *Mehr als einmal in der Woche* 7) *Einmal am Tag* 8) *Mehrmals am Tag*
Service attendance	*Wie oft nehmen Sie an Messen oder anderen religiösen Zeremonien teil?*	1) *Nie* 2) *Gelegentlich* 3) *Manchmal* 4) *Oft* 5) *Immer*
Religious affiliation	*Welcher Religion fühlen Sie sich zugehörig?*	1) *Keine Religion* 2) *Katholisch* 3) *Protestantisch* 4) *Evangelikal-freikirchlich* 5) *Islam* 6) *Judentum* 7) *Andere Religion* 8) *Spirituell, aber keiner Religion zugehörig* (*Not considered: Christlich-Orthodox, Anglikanisch, Buddhismus, Hinduismus*)

List of all variables in original German wording (*cont.*)

Variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
		Control variables
Gender	*Welches Geschlecht haben Sie?*	– *weiblich* – *männlich (Referenzkategorie)* *(andere/divers)*
Age	*Wie alt sind Sie?*	*Freie Angabe (in Jahren)*
Place of residence	*In Deutschland lebe ich gegenwärtig in …*	*Liste der 16 deutschen Bundesländer → dichotomisiert:* – *Ostdeutschland (Referenzkategorie)* – *Westdeutschland*
Education level	*Welchen höchsten Bildungsabschluss haben Sie erreicht?*	1) *Kein Abschluss* 2) *Volks-, Hauptschulabschluss ohne berufliche Ausbildung* 3) *Volks-, Hauptschulabschluss und berufliche Ausbildung* 4) *Mittlere Reife, Realschul- oder gleichwertiger Abschluss ohne berufliche Ausbildung* 5) *Mittlere Reife, Realschul- oder gleichwertiger Abschluss und berufliche Ausbildung* 6) *Fachhochschulreife/Abitur ohne berufliche Ausbildung* 7) *Fachhochschulreife/Abitur und berufliche Ausbildung* 8) *Fachhochschulabschluss* 9) *Hochschul-/Universitätsabschluss* 10) *Promotion*

List of all variables in original German wording (*cont.*)

Variable	Item	Answer categories / scale
Political orientation	*In der Politik spricht man von „links" und „rechts". Wie würden Sie ganz allgemein Ihren eigenen politischen Standort beschreiben: Wo auf dieser Skala würden Sie sich selbst einstufen?*	*1 (links) bis 10 (rechts)*
Belief in COVID-19 conspiracy theories	*Inwieweit stimmen Sie folgenden Aussagen zu?* – *Hinter der Corona-Pandemie stecken böse, verborgene Mächte.*	*1 (stimme überhaupt nicht zu) bis 5 (stimme voll und ganz zu)*

SOURCE: LTCP (2021)

Appendix B

Multivariate regression table about the relationships between religious and social cohesion dimensions

		Dimensions of Social Cohesion									
		1) Trust		2) Identification			3) Responsibility		4) Engagement		Index
		1.1	1.2	2.1a	2.1b	2.2	3.1	3.2	4.1	4.2	
H2) Religious affiliation (reference: no religion)											
Catholic		-0.029 (0.027)	0.052*** (0.015)	0.025 (0.022)	-0.009 (0.011)	0.100*** (0.020)	-0.031* (0.017)	0.002 (0.011)	-0.004 (0.012)	-0.016 (0.015)	0.008 (0.008)
Protestant		-0.004 (0.026)	0.039*** (0.015)	0.018 (0.022)	-0.006 (0.011)	0.099*** (0.019)	-0.044*** (0.017)	-0.004 (0.011)	-0.005 (0.013)	0.011 (0.015)	0.011 (0.008)
Evangelical		0.035 (0.035)	-0.015 (0.021)	-0.024 (0.029)	-0.024 (0.016)	0.090*** (0.027)	-0.051** (0.021)	0.019 (0.013)	-0.030* (0.017)	-0.026 (0.021)	-0.004 (0.010)
Muslim		-0.182*** (0.051)	-0.003 (0.029)	0.030 (0.038)	0.059*** (0.020)	0.050 (0.037)	-0.006 (0.026)	0.009 (0.018)	-0.044** (0.020)	-0.122*** (0.028)	-0.034** (0.013)
Jewish		-0.118* (0.061)	0.009 (0.039)	-0.095* (0.049)	-0.019 (0.021)	-0.039 (0.045)	-0.031 (0.030)	-0.063** (0.029)	0.007 (0.032)	-0.027 (0.043)	-0.047** (0.021)
Other religion		-0.043 (0.045)	-0.039 (0.026)	-0.065* (0.038)	-0.049** (0.021)	-0.070** (0.035)	-0.045* (0.026)	-0.046** (0.024)	-0.014 (0.020)	-0.059** (0.030)	-0.042*** (0.012)
Spiritual, but no religion		-0.075* (0.040)	-0.040* (0.022)	0.004 (0.032)	-0.010 (0.017)	-0.016 (0.030)	-0.042* (0.023)	-0.054*** (0.018)	0.004 (0.018)	-0.036 (0.024)	-0.034*** (0.011)

Belonging

Dimensions of Religiosity

Multivariate regression table (*cont.*)

	Dimensions of Social Cohesion									
	1) Trust		2) Identification			3) Responsibility		4) Engagement		Index
	1.1	1.2	2.1a	2.1b	2.2	3.1	3.2	4.1	4.2	
Believing										
H3a) Intensity of faith	-0.007 (0.009)	0.005 (0.006)	0.003 (0.008)	0.002 (0.004)	0.007 (0.007)	0.006 (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)	-0.008 (0.006)	0.001 (0.003)
H3b) Own religion only acceptable	-0.020** (0.008)	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.006 (0.006)	-0.025*** (0.004)	0.000 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.003)	-0.006 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.005)	-0.007*** (0.002)
H3b) Religion over science	0.001 (0.007)	-0.011** (0.004)	0.010 (0.006)	0.002 (0.003)	-0.009 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.000 (0.003)	-0.000 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.002)
H3c) Loving image of God	0.045*** (0.009)	0.006 (0.006)	0.029*** (0.008)	0.008* (0.004)	0.010 (0.007)	0.037*** (0.006)	0.060 (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.006 (0.005)	0.018*** (0.003)
H3c) Punitive image of God	-0.028** (0.011)	-0.007 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.009)	-0.013*** (0.005)	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.003 (0.006)	-0.011** (0.004)	0.004 (0.006)	0.009 (0.006)	-0.007** (0.003)
Behaving										
H4a) Prayer	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.011*** (0.003)	-0.009** (0.004)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.006 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.004*** (0.001)
H4b) Service attendance	0.023*** (0.008)	0.016*** (0.005)	0.010 (0.007)	0.010*** (0.003)	-0.001 (0.006)	0.013*** (0.005)	0.006* (0.004)	0.009** (0.004)	0.010** (0.005)	0.010*** (0.002)

Multivariate regression table (*cont.*)

Control variables	Dimensions of Social Cohesion									
	1) Trust		2) Identification			3) Responsibility		4) Engagement		Index
	1.1)	1.2)	2.1a)	2.1b)	2.2)	3.1)	3.2)	4.1)	4.2)	
Gender (reference: male)	0.005 (0.013)	-0.018** (0.007)	0.018* (0.010)	0.019*** (0.005)	0.030*** (0.009)	0.022*** (0.008)	0.011** (0.005)	0.010 (0.006)	-0.045*** (0.007)	0.005 (0.004)
Education	0.015*** (0.004)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.006 (0.032)	0.003* (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.008*** (0.002)	0.003** (0.001)
Age	0.001 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.002*** (0.010)	-0.001*** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)	0.002*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)	0.001*** (0.000)
Left–right scale	-0.018*** (0.004)	0.004 (0.003)	0.011*** (0.003)	-0.030*** (0.002)	0.013*** (0.003)	-0.016*** (0.000)	0.010*** (0.002)	-0.010*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.003)	-0.003** (0.001)
Place of residence (reference: eastern Germany)	0.018 (0.023)	0.001 (0.013)	-0.031 (0.021)	-0.013 (0.010)	-0.021 (0.018)	0.001 (0.001)	0.010 (0.009)	-0.033*** (0.011)	0.015 (0.014)	-0.008 (0.007)
Belief in COVID-19 conspiracy theories	-0.098*** (0.028)	-0.308*** (0.017)	-0.023 (0.025)	-0.174*** (0.184)	-0.142*** (0.023)	0.030* (0.017)	-0.016 (0.011)	0.010 (0.014)	-0.114*** (0.017)	-0.087*** (0.008)
Constant	0.509*** (0.047)	0.608*** (0.030)	0.485*** (0.041)	1.053*** (0.020)	0.522*** (0.036)	0.703*** (0.028)	0.734*** (0.020)	0.060*** (0.022)	0.532*** (0.029)	0.579*** (0.015)
Adj. R^2	0.098	0.336	0.077	0.416	0.146	0.130	0.168	0.086	0.150	0.298
N	2,114	2,091	2,135	2,097	2,135	2,137	2,135	2,118	2,053	1,942

"+": positive effect; "−": negative effect; ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.1$; robust standard errors in parentheses[36]

[36] Regarding regression diagnostics, I checked for multicollinearity and heteroskedasticity. For all models, no worrying multicollinearity was found via the variance inflation factor. However, since heteroscedasticity (non-constant variance of the error term) was detected, I estimated the robust standard errors in all models because they take this issue into account (Kohler and Kreuter 2012).

Local Faith Actors and the Migration–Development Nexus: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Since the turn of the millennium, the migration–development nexus has gained renewed attention within international organisations' policies and academic debates. However, in these debates, the roles played by faith-based actors in general, and local faith actors (LFAS) in particular, have so far only been marginally addressed. This fails to reflect the growing literature and practice examples of LFAS' engagements with both sustainable development and migration. This article focuses on the key debates around the migration–development nexus to which LFAS' engagements with development and with migration are particularly relevant. The central part of the article outlines existing research and policy documents on LFAS, migration and development that directly speak to these debates. The last section summarises key points and directions to further explore the intersections among these areas of academic research and policymaking. These include research gaps around the role of LFAS in the protection of children on the move, in advocating for the rights of migrants, and in addressing climate-related displacements. Overall, this literature review demonstrates that there is a need for more nuanced understanding of the migration–development nexus and of the many ways in which the two phenomena are interlinked.

Keywords

migration-development nexus – local faith actors – sustainable development goals – religion – faith – displacement

1   Introduction

The migration–development nexus has featured in policy and academic documents for over twenty years (e.g. Skeldon 1997; Van Hearand and Nyberg-Sørensen 2003; Piper 2009; Andersson and Siegel 2019). Scholars have discussed how development can influence the movement of people and how migration can affect social and economic change in sending and destination countries. At policy level, migration is described as a cross-cutting issue to all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the two Global Compacts – the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees – are interlinked with development policies (IOM 2017). However, faith actors, and local faith actors (LFAs) in particular, are only very marginally included in these frameworks, despite the growing literature and focus on localisation, community engagement and the roles of religious and traditional actors in development and migration (e.g. Marshall and van Saanen 2007; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011; Wilson and Mavelli 2016; Tomalin et al. 2019; Wurtz and Wilkinson 2020; Trotta and Wilkinson 2020).

The aim of this literature review is to highlight and establish links between key debates around the migration–development nexus and existing literature on LFAs' engagements with migration and development, through examples from academic and policy resources. The article seeks to contribute to enriching current academic and policy debates on these issues, in particular looking ahead at the post-2030 Development Agenda. In fact, it will provide insights into how and why LFAs can be (further) engaged in policy-making processes around migration and development. This will be crucial in order to achieve a post-2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that properly takes into account the roles of LFAs and the interconnections between migration and development, and that takes further steps towards the implementation of more effective multi-stakeholder and localisation approaches.

2   Methodology

A total of 122 documents have been reviewed, including academic articles and grey literature, meaning reports by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs) and intergovernmental organisations. This selection is the result of multiple searches on different databases. I have used Google Scholar, specific development and migration academic journals and websites, the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) and the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities

resource library. The terms used in various combinations to conduct the searches were "migration", "displacement", "development", "faith", "religion" and "migration-development nexus". Searches were conducted in English, although I also consulted some documents in Italian, Spanish, German and French, where relevant. I used *Zotero* (free and open-source reference management software to manage bibliographic data and related research materials) to store the documents and its tagging tools to categorise them according to the thematic area of focus, carrying out a basic coding exercise. I then conducted the analysis based on the tags and on further elements emerging from in-depth analysis. A similar methodology for literature review articles has been used, among others, by Urinboyev, Wickenberg and Leo (2016) and by Sheikhi et al. (2021).

This article has several limitations. First of all, its scope is potentially much too broad to be addressed in a single publication. However, this review focuses only on those issues within the vast body of work around the migration—development nexus that are specifically connected to the existing literature on LFAs' engagements with migration and development separately. This means that, for instance, within the realms of migration and development, the article does not address specific areas like humanitarianism, mobility, diasporas, brain drain, each single SDG etc. At the same time, some issues like localisation and social cohesion are addressed since they specifically interlace with acknowledged engagements of LFAs with key aspects of the migration—development nexus.

The term "local faith actors" is used in this article in a broad sense. Following Wilkinson, they are understood as ranging "from relatively large national organizations to small groups of individuals, and individual religious leaders with different levels of power and religious affiliation across local and national levels" (Wilkinson 2018, 113). This can also include national or local chapters of international FBOs (e.g. Islamic Relief Worldwide) as well as local members of international faith-based networks (e.g. ACT Alliance). The use of the term "faith actors" rather than "religious actors" intends to expand the landscape beyond established religious traditions and institutions, and to reflect academic literature and policy documents that also adopt it in an inclusive way (e.g. UNHCR 2018; UN IATF 2020; Kraft and Wilkinson 2020).

The article is organised into four sections. The first section is an introduction to the definitions, methodology and limitations of this study. The second section outlines key debates within the migration—development nexus that are relevant to areas where LFAs' engagements have been documented in literature and policy documents on migration and development. These are organised into three sub-sections: first, around the idea that migration is

a "development resource" (Nyberg-Sørensen et al. 2003, 293); second, dealing with the argument that development can be a "solution" to migration; and third, focusing on how migration is understood within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The third section connects these key issues to existing evidence on how LFAs respond to migration and engage in development processes. In particular, it focuses on localisation and other relevant frameworks in migration and international development policy; on how a focus on LFAs can help build a more nuanced understanding of migration and development; on the gender dimension of these phenomena; and on (re)integration and social cohesion. The concluding section summarises key observations and highlights implications for further exploring the intersections among these areas of academic research and policymaking.

3   The Migration–Development Nexus: Key Relevant Debates

3.1   *Migration as a "Development Resource"*

One of the main debates on the migration–development nexus revolves around the theory that migration can and does act as a resource of development, meaning that migration leads to improved economic and social conditions in countries of origin. Since Skeldon (1997) first highlighted that migration and development are deeply interlinked processes, an increasing amount of literature has been produced at academic and policy level on the migration–development nexus. In 2003, the International Organization for Migration published a collection of papers on the nexus featuring three case studies from Afghanistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka (Van Hearand and Nyberg-Sørensen 2003). In the concluding chapter, Nyberg-Sørensen et al. (2003) stress the need for coherent policies and interventions and identify ways in which migrants, in particular diasporas, can act as "a development resource" (Nyberg-Sørensen et al. 2003, 293), for instance through remittances and transnational political and economic activities and, in some cases, through return. A number of international initiatives have sought to track the development of the nexus and to foster cooperation among different actors, most importantly the Global Forum on Migration and Development. Initiated in 2007 as the result of the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (UN 2006), it draws together different intergovernmental, governmental and civil society actors through annual regional meetings focusing on different aspects of the nexus. In the international policy context, remittances have often been referred to as one of the main phenomena through which the positive effects of migration on development could be assessed

(e.g. World Bank 2006). In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report (2009) argued that better, less restrictive admission and treatment policies for migrants would benefit human development. Similar arguments were developed with regards to how migration can be advantageous towards meeting the SDGs (e.g. ODI 2018a), especially through facilitating the growth of remittances (e.g. KNOMAD 2019).

However, scholars have criticised this approach depicting migrants as agents of development from different perspectives. Piper (2009) has illustrated how other aspects of migration and development had been left out of policies and academic debates alike, like South–South migration (as opposed to South–North migration), those who stay (as opposed to those who migrate) and the social dimensions of development (as opposed to economic dimensions). Several academics have also questioned the lack of focus on the gender dimension of debates on the implications of migration on development (e.g. Dannecker 2009; Bailey 2010). In particular, Bastia has illustrated that migration, including female migration, does not necessarily have a positive impact on gender equality, but can rather lead to a reinforcement of existing power relationships (Bastia 2013). Bachan (2018) has added that positive change for women in countries of origin can only become structural if it is supported through systemic policies.

Several scholars have also pointed out the importance of not replicating postcolonial views in approaching the migration–development nexus and the need to take into account the context of globalisation and its often disempowering impact on African states and diaspora communities (e.g. Davies 2007). Faist and Fauser (2011) have criticised the view that migration is beneficial to both countries of origin and of settlement, advocating for a shift in perspective towards a transnational approach that takes into account complex economic, social and political networks and exchanges across borders (Faist and Fauser 2011). Glick Schiller (2020) has further developed this critique by suggesting a multi-scalar approach in which migrants and development institutions are seen as interconnected at various levels and the local and the global are indissoluble. She has also called for a shift from development and migration debates to dispossession and displacement (Glick Schiller 2020).

3.2   *Development as a "Solution" to Migration*

Another key debate about the migration–development nexus focuses on the notion that development leads to a decline in migration. This theory is often based on the assumption that migration is to be seen as a problem to be solved. However, De Haas (2020) argued that the tendency in academia, policy and the media to depict "development as a 'solution' to perceived migration problems"

is fundamentally misleading, since development typically leads to increased levels of migration. Cernea (1990) had called for social scientists to overcome the separation between the study of refugees and of populations forcibly displaced by development projects. Numerous studies have followed and analysed the ways in which development can be and often is a cause of uprooting (e.g. Forced Migration Review 2002; De Wet 2005).

More recently, academics have explicitly critiqued the growing connection between migration control and development cooperation. According to Faist, this connection is "one way of increasing legitimacy for stricter controls because it alludes to mutual benefits for all actors involved in North and South, East and West: the highly skilled are free to circulate and everybody else may – in the long run – stay in their home country" (Faist 2008, 38). In his view, focusing on transnational groups and social spaces allows us to better understand the sometimes contrasting interests that communities in origin and destination countries might have (Faist 2008).

As regards migration management in relation to development, Adamson and Trourapas (2019) have pointed out that, in what they call "developmental migration states", *emigration* is encouraged by nations in the Global South precisely as a strategy towards further development. This change of perspective from the Global North to the Global South thus allows for a further critique to the theory that more development leads to less migration.

3.3 *Migration and the 2030 Agenda*

Migration is addressed in the 2030 Agenda as a cross-cutting issue relevant – directly or indirectly – to each SDG (Migration Data Portal 2019; ODI 2018a). Within SDG 10 (Reducing Inequality Within and Among Countries), target 10.7 directly prescribes the "facilitation of orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies" (UN 2016b, 25). The 2030 Agenda also recognised the need not to overlook migrants' rights and the vulnerabilities they often face and to enhance migration governance and improve cooperation between development and migration actors, aimed at more coherent policies (IOM 2017; Migration Data Portal 2019; ODI 2018a).

A particularly important and relevant dimension of the 2030 Agenda for this article is that of localisation. At the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General called for the humanitarian agenda to be "as local as possible, as international as necessary" (UN 2016a). This is reflected in the priorities set by global initiatives like the Grand Bargain (2016) and the Charter4Change (2016). The engagement of "faith actors and leaders", including those belonging to networks such as Caritas and ACT Alliance, is

also mentioned as part of the localisation process. At the same time, there is a need to consider the plurality of ways in which "local actors" are understood and defined across different documents and initiatives, and subsequently conduct thorough assessments of existing capacities at local level and how to sustain them (ODI 2018b). However, "local actors" are understood and defined across different documents and initiatives in a variety of ways that can range from national to community level, as reflected by the terminology used in this article.

Overall, critiques to the assumptions that migration leads to development or that development prevents unwanted migration push towards a more nuanced, more articulated understanding of migration and development as multifaceted, complex and contextualised phenomena, as does the 2030 Agenda with its localisation strategy. This is also the rationale of Andersson and Siegel (2019), who highlight the need to address not only the economic but also the social dimensions of development in a more holistic way, as well as "migration aspirations, failed migration attempts and involuntary immobility" (Andersson and Siegel 2019, 34).

In these policy documents and academic debates, there is very limited focus on the roles played by faith actors in general, and by local faith actors in particular. The next section will therefore highlight some of the ways in which LFAS have engaged and do engage in aspects of migration and development policy and practices that are relevant to these discussions.

4   LFAS, Migration and Development

4.1   *LFAS and National/International Policy Frameworks on Migration and Development*

While none of the SDGs explicitly refer to faith communities, in 2016, a Special Summit of the World Humanitarian Forum focused on religious engagement, affirming that they "have a unique comparative advantage in humanitarian contexts: they have an established relationship of trust and familiarity with local communities in which they are embedded" (World Humanitarian Summit 2016). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has collated a number of "impact stories", highlighting how the agency engaged faith-based and local community organisations within the framework of their sustainable development programmes, for example on reconciliation in Sri Lanka and social cohesion in the Central African Republic (USAID 2019). However, as Haustein and Tomalin (2019) pointed out, the participation of faith actors in consultation processes preceding the formulation of the SDGs

and in their implementation has been uneven and mostly confined to the international realm, while local communities' needs, faced with local politics and administration, remained separated, at least to a certain extent.

Following the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) 2012 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection, faith actors have also lobbied and organised to engage in the drafting and implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and of the Global Compact on Refugees, and partially succeeded in the inclusion of "faith-based organisations" as "relevant stakeholders" in the Compacts (IOM, n.d.; UNHCR 2018), for example regarding resettlement and social cohesion for refugees and local communities. On the other hand, Wurtz and Wilkinson (2020) have provided a reading of the Global Compact on Refugees from the perspective of Southern and local faith actors, highlighting how the Global Compact's framework fails to appreciate the different ways in which they support forced migrants, for example through addressing their spiritual and psychosocial needs, through the civic engagement of local communities and through supporting self-reliance in displaced populations beyond international interventions.

Engaging LFAs in international development and migration policies can be seen as part of the localisation process, a key approach of the 2030 Agenda. A Forum focusing on the role of FBOs in Localising Response to Humanitarian Needs (2017) issued recommendations on how to support the engagement of LFAs in development, including addressing chronic underfunding and providing capacity-building for faith *and* for development actors to enhance two-way literacy and foster cooperation. A recent edited volume collects examples and reflections on the complexities of engaging LFAs in international development (Kraft and Wilkinson 2020). In it, Duff et al. outline some of the main mobilisation strategies (e.g. through dialogue based on religious texts and through addressing both the spiritual as well as the scientific dimension of developmental issues) but also the main challenges (e.g. risk of instrumentalisation and politicisation of LFAs' engagement). In fact, LFAs are not exempt from power dynamics and, as Carpi has noted, engaging them does not necessarily mean improving the effectiveness of support to local communities. In her words, "localising means neither presupposing – or over-emphasising – the socio-emotional proximity of displaced populations to the local church or mosque, nor institutionalising all local forms of support; nor does it mean imagining local religious authorities as being best placed to ensure successful aid provision, regardless of contextual specificities."

There is also evidence that LFAs can influence national legislation in several areas of social development, including with regards to migration and long-term

solutions to displacement. For example, Polese (2013) has described the ways in which Catholic groups in Italy have historically advocated for more inclusive migration policies by directly lobbying political parties and mobilising public opinion. Although their advocacy efforts were not always successful, there is evidence that they did contribute to making sure, for instance, that in the "Bossi-Fini" Law No. 189/2002 "a regularisation programme for domestic and care workers was introduced and, after the bill became law, [it] was massively extended to all the other categories of workers" (Polese 2013, 215). Similarly, in Brazil (Moreira 2017) and in the US (Ray 2018) national religious organisations have played important roles in pushing governments towards improving their resettlement policies.

Furthermore, in the European Union, LFAs have been at the centre of initiatives to establish safe and legal routes to refuge that are complementary to governmental resettlement programmes, like private sponsorship programmes. In Canada, private sponsorship started in the late 1970s and has been mostly implemented by LFAs (Hyndman et al. 2017), including by small groups of faith community members (Tito and Cochand 2017). Another example of alternative safe and legal routes to resettlement is that of the "humanitarian corridors", an ecumenical initiative established in 2016 in Italy and run jointly by the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Waldensian Church and the Italian Federation of Evangelic Churches. The initiative was made possible by the level of trust between governmental institutions and the LFAs involved, and by their ability to advocate and find appropriate legal and political grounds (Trotta 2017; Collyer et al. 2017). The initiative has since 2016 expanded to include corridors to France and Belgium (Humanitarian Corridors, n.d.). In some cases, LFAs have even challenged legal frameworks around migration, as in the case of church asylum (*Kirchenasyl*), a network of churches in Germany and elsewhere which are ready to host migrants at risk of deportation (Hillgruber 2018).

Although the initiatives described in the last two paragraphs are mainly migration-related, they nevertheless demonstrate the LFAs' potential to influence national policies and legislation in ways that are or can be relevant to meeting the SDGs, for instance in terms of supporting decent work for all – SDG Target 8.8 "Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment" – and reducing inequalities among countries – SDG Target 10.7 "Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies" (UN 2016b). The examples also show that the engagement of LFAs in national and international development and migration policies calls for greater, more context-related scrutiny and

invites a deeper understanding of local dynamics that can help rethink secular Northern- and Western-centric frameworks. As suggested by Carpi's call for "contextualisation" rather than "localisation" (Carpi 2018), and in consonance with some of the key points around the migration–development nexus outlined at the beginning of this article, there is also a need for more nuanced understandings of migration and development, and of the links between the two phenomena.

4.2   *Towards a More Nuanced Understanding of Migration and Development*

Investigating the roles of LFAs in migration and development processes can be helpful precisely in reaching a more holistic way to understand and approach migration- and development-related issues and policies. As partly discussed in the previous section, LFAs often engage in supporting and even enabling long-term solutions to displacement and they advocate for and implement resettlement programmes, private sponsorship programmes and humanitarian corridors. LFAs can also play key roles in enabling return, as in the case of Machazians in Mozambique after the civil war. In fact, as Lubkemann (2002) reported, displaced Machazian people's traditional beliefs made them reluctant to go back to their homes, since they thought that loose spirits of dead soldiers who had not been buried were still present in the area. Local communities and churches organised ceremonies to "send home" these spirits and allow for return. This shows how LFAs can play important roles in facilitating the implementation of long-term solutions to displacement by taking into account religious and traditional elements that are deeply connected to migrants' experiences and choices.

In fact, people who are forced to leave their home are also forced to find new ways to understand and engage their cultural identity and traditions. Oliver-Smith argues that cultural identity, including faith-related traditions, are often at the core of individual and collective resistance to abandon one's place of origin (Oliver-Smith 2005). This is exemplified by the case of the Chinantec and Mazatec religious or traditional leaders in Mexico who played prominent roles in the community and adapted traditional symbols to reflect the fight against threats of forced resettlement (Oliver-Smith 2005).

Even remittances, which are central to debates on the migration–development nexus, can be better understood if we take into account the roles played by LFAs. Garbin has illustrated how moral economies and religious belongings at different levels are intertwined with the process of collecting and sending money "home", in this case between Kimbanguist communities in the diaspora and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). For instance,

> In the Kimbanguist church, what is given and how it is given is perceived to impact the efficacy of spiritual, and to some extent material, rewards. For instance, increasing rivalry about the rightful "ownership" of a chicken farm development project ended up dividing one of the London parishes, creating a conflict about money collections associated with the project. Eventually the farm was set up in Nkamba, but when the electricity was switched on, part of the infrastructure caught fire. The accident was seen by many as a divine response to the fact that the *nsinsani* money funding the project embodied negative spiritual forces linked to distrust and jealousy. (Garbin 2018, 4)

At the same time, sacred remittances can also reflect power dynamics between different diaspora groups and between diasporas and communities in the country of origin. As Garbin puts it, "sacred remittance, 'global money', may generate a diversity of transnational linkages between donors and recipients, but they remain embedded in landscapes of status and power" (2018, 14). Furthermore, some LFAs in countries of origin, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria, substantially contribute to the foundation and growth of their networks in the diaspora (Adedibu 2016). These examples clearly show how remittances are not a one-way mechanism, and provide clear evidence as to why taking into account LFAs and their roles can enhance policymakers' and academics' understanding of key issues at the intersection of development and migration.

Through their research on African Initiated Christianity, Öhlmann, Gräb and Frost (2020) have demonstrated that the perspectives of religious communities from the Global South can contribute to sustainable development and also be key to reframing Western and Northern notions of development, towards a decolonisation of development and beyond functional, instrumental engagements of LFAs. In the recent edited volume by Öhlmann et al., *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonisation of Development*, one of the authors argues that "the moral and spiritual basis for a new concept of development can only come from bodies which reach deeper than secular governmental agencies, as fundamental values and spiritual orientations are at stake" (Werner 2020, 57). Here, the author specifically refers to environmental challenges and their consequences on forced displacement (both within Africa and to other continents). Interestingly, the author also stresses the need for cooperation between African Initiated Churches and other faith actors in Africa to provide a joint response to these challenges and warns against the idealisation of African Initiated Churches and their engagements with sustainable development (Werner 2020, 66–67). This resonates with the calls for "contextualisation"

rather than generalisation about the roles of LFAs mentioned at the end of the previous section.

4.3   *LFAs and the Gender Dimension of Development and Migration*

Discussions around the gender dimension of development and migration typically consider faith-based actors as a traditionalist force, generally hindering efforts to advance women's empowerment and LGBTIQ rights. While there is evidence that some LFAs refuse to condemn practices like forced marriage or marital rape or to engage in certain aspects of sexual and reproductive health service provision (e.g. Women's Refugee Commission 2016), many are engaged in promoting gender equality and combating violence against women and girls, as in the case of the Southern Africa Development Community's Interfaith Briefs on sexual and reproductive health and rights, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence (SADC 2020). In Kenya, Parsitau (2011) described how internally displaced women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence were supported by LFAs, including local churches. Most notably, they mobilised their own faith not only to cope with the trauma, but also to build a collective process of empowerment. As she puts it,

> These vulnerable women used faith, texts and scriptures to reinvent and redefine what it means to be an internally displaced Christian woman living in a camp within a country that failed to protect its own people; they have ultimately used these tools, resources and metaphors for empowerment to reclaim their place in society. (Parsitau 2011, 509)

A recent study on LFAs supporting survivors of gender-based violence among internally displaced persons in Colombia also highlighted that religion is a "defining characteristic, shaping their motivation as well as way of responding" (Le Roux and Cadavid Valencia 2020, 244), and is therefore not to be overlooked or marginalised, but rather taken into account "in the design and funding of programming". Moreover, the study reinforced already existing evidence that female religious leaders and lay leaders are particularly active in responding to issues like sexual violence, often more than formal religious leaders (head pastors in this case).

Indeed, we need to maintain an awareness that women of faith, including those who lead women's groups, educational and other activities in churches, mosques etc. are less publicly visible than male religious leaders in many contexts. Muslim women in particular are often overlooked by international organisations because they are not perceived as conforming to a Western notion of empowerment. In such cases, while women of faith are mostly engaged in

peacebuilding activities at local level, away from formal arenas, their contributions are often key to "shaping religious traditions and their community's religious response to conflict and peace" (Marshall and Hayward 2011, 16).

A study by the Organisation for Refuge, Asylum and Migration (ORAM 2012) showed that there is no significant difference between faith- and non-faith-based NGOs in how they approach some gender issues. It concluded that "those who said that their religious or spiritual beliefs guided their work were as willing to serve LGBTIQ refugees as those whose motivations were not faith-based" (ORAM 2012). A significant example in this area is La 72, a shelter on the migration route in Mexico, close to the border to Guatemala. Inspired by Franciscan values, they offer accommodation and spiritual, legal and psychosocial support to migrants and refugees, with programmes specifically targeting LGBTIQ people (Olayo-Méndez 2017). For instance, they offer separate accommodation, promote LGBTIQ participation in religious gatherings and other community activities and offer gender- and sexuality-sensitive counselling and healthcare (Wurtz and Wilkinson 2020, 152). La 72 works in collaboration with UN agencies but receives no funding from the government, in order to keep their independence from local authorities and international organisations (ibid., 151). Another interesting example is that of the Refugee Ministry at the Metropolitan Community Church in Toronto. In this case, the Metropolitan Community Church developed a digital storytelling project with LGBTIQ refugees who were able to share their experiences with each other and with other members of the church community, provided they were willing to do so (McGuire 2018). While this project required the mobilisation of considerable resources and its results were not widely disseminated due to the sensitivity of the topic, it raised important questions about the positive and negative effects of working on and sharing refugee trauma narratives through digital storytelling.

At the same time, religious and gender identities can also be used by LFAs to mobilise development aid. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014) analysed the ways in which the Polisario Front – the authority of the Saharawi people who have been displaced in the Western part of the Sahara desert since 1975 – has developed and propagated a discourse representing Saharawi women as independent and powerful as a result of conflict and displacement (the opposite of the stereotyped refugee victim and the subjugated Muslim woman) to mobilise development aid from specific NGOs and FBOs. The Polisario, as illustrated by this study, developed a "gynocentric politics of international relations" as politics of survival (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014, 10). This, however, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh holds, can lead to the exclusion from aid of "non-ideal" refugees who do not fit in that particular discourse.

Although secularism can often be associated with processes of development, especially from a Western and Northern perspective, this is not always the case. In Bangladesh, for example, Malaysia was perceived as a role model, a fellow Muslim country where the process of Islamisation coincided with better economic development than in Bangladesh (Dannecker, 2009). However, the identification of Islamisation and development had different meanings for different groups of migrants. Female migrants who moved from Bangladesh to Malaysia to seek employment started to oppose the association between religious values and women's oppression in their country of origin, for example by supporting other women who wished to leave and pointing at the Malaysian example of coexistence of Islamisation and greater female empowerment. At the same time, many male migrants, once returned, used the link between Islamisation and development in Malaysia as a tool to justify more restrictive approaches to women's rights and contributed to the growth of Islamic parties and organisations, which has, in turn, reduced opportunities for women to work outside the house and to migrate (Dannecker 2009). It is evident here that communities of faith can and do build their own systems of values and meaning connected to religion, development and migration, and that these can be very diverse even within the same faith community and regarding the same issue, in this case gender-related power imbalance. Once again, it becomes clear that taking a closer look at the roles played by faith and LFAs is key to achieving a more thorough understanding of gender-related aspects of development and migration.

4.4   *LFAs Engaging in Processes of (Re)Integration and Social Cohesion*

Social cohesion, integration and reintegration processes are key areas of the migration–development nexus (e.g. Hong and Knoll 2016; Nyberg-Sørensen et al. 2003). In particular, they are key themes of SDG 16 and areas of the Global Compacts where faith actors' roles are explicitly acknowledged (UNHCR 2018; IOM, n.d.). LFAs are important actors in these processes in many contexts, both on their own and in partnership with other secular or faith actors. For instance, the work of La 72 with local communities, national and local authorities and newcomers mentioned in the previous section focuses not only on the rights of LGBTIQ migrants, but also on addressing tensions between different groups and ways to open up spaces of dialogue between them (Olayo-Méndez 2017). In Sweden, the "Good Neighbours" project – a collaboration between the Stockholm Mosque, the Katarina Parish, Islamic Relief, the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Negashi Mosque – constitutes a very interesting example of how a multi-religious initiative can provide support to integration processes through complementary social, cultural and linguistic assets and contribute to creating bridges among communities (Lyck-Bowen and Owen 2018).

Fostering local integration of displaced communities often means facilitating their access to services like birth and marriage registration, healthcare and schooling as well as to the job market. For instance, in Turkey, the Vaiz of Bursa contributed to the integration of Syrian refugees by mobilising the local faith community based on religious and ethical values of empathy and assistance towards refugees (Jacoby et al. 2018). Nicholson (2018) described the roles of faith-based actors in supporting migrants' entrepreneurship and access to healthcare in the United States of America. For example, LFAs often mobilise to provide health-related information and services to migrant communities through their networks, which often include volunteering doctors and caregivers. These activities are particularly significant when they target individuals and/or groups who would otherwise not be able to access these services, including undocumented migrants (Nicholson 2018).

As regards migrants' entrepreneurship, for instance, Jewish Vocational Services and Lutheran Social Services partnered to offer loans and training to refugees who had resettled in Boston, Massachusetts (Nicholson 2018). In Bogotá, there is evidence that small Pentecostal congregations, and their religious leaders in particular, offered paths for resocialisation to internally displaced Colombians (*desplazados*) who had lost their own networks as a result of forced displacement (Borda Carulla 2007). While these paths lead to increased work opportunities and less isolation, they also deserve careful scrutiny, as they are in this case often linked to conversion, proselytisation and the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches (ibid., 45). On the other hand, Amores, a local interfaith forum based in Zamboanga, the Philippines, addressed employment discrimination and tensions between religious groups by developing a business where Christians and Muslims would work side by side to show how peaceful coexistence at the workplace is possible and does not necessarily lead to one group attempting to convert the other one (Kraft 2020, 230).

A study on building social cohesion between Syrian refugees and host communities in cities in Lebanon and Jordan called for more in-depth analysis of the impact of faith-based actors on tensions between established communities and those experiencing protracted displacement (World Vision 2017, 30). Trotta and Wilkinson (2019) illustrated the complexity of LFAs' engagements with peacebuilding and social cohesion. Through a background review and the analysis of four case studies, the study highlighted the importance of engaging not only high-level religious leaders but also local-level leaders (including female and youth leaders), according to the context and the strategy used to address peacebuilding issues. Moreover, the study showed how LFAs often use media to counter hate speech and xenophobic narratives and pointed out that a combination of online and offline activities can be key to engaging all

communities, including marginalised minorities who might more easily access one or the other platform.

The work on social cohesion is often key to addressing issues related to reintegration after return as well as root causes of migration. For instance, Mercy Corps has worked since 2014 in Northern Nigeria to counter extremism, including to prevent youth from joining Boko Haram through radio programmes, working with leaders from different faith communities (VOICE 2019). In the same region, the Allamin Foundation has worked with Muslim scholars to develop religious messages of acceptance and empathy towards girls returning after abduction by extremist groups (UNDP and ICAN 2019). At the same time, engaging religious leaders to work with returnees from conflict and extremist groups can be counterproductive due to the instrumentalisation of religion that violent extremist groups present (UNDP and ICAN 2019). In fact, explicitly addressing religious issues in contexts where they are charged with high political tensions or even used to justify conflict can have a negative impact on peacebuilding processes, while shifting the focus onto other issues that affect local communities of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds alike proved to be more effective (Trotta and Wilkinson 2019, 52). On the other hand, different examples indicate that peacebuilding efforts that ignore the religious dimension of social tensions and fail to engage LFAs can also fail to reach their goals. This is true, for example, in the context of reconciliation in post-war Sri Lanka, between predominantly Muslim communities who had experienced displacement during the war and returned to the northern cities of Jaffna and predominantly Tamil communities who stayed in the city. In this case, Duncan and Cardozo (2017) argued that informal peacebuilding activities conducted by local organisations and directly addressing interreligious dialogue were more effective than formal peacebuilding education carried out in schools. This shows the importance of critically considering LFAs' engagements in building social cohesion and reconciliation in post-conflict and post-displacement contexts.

5   Conclusion

This literature review has provided some insights on the roles of LFAs at the crossroads between migration and development. It has focused on key aspects of the migration–development nexus in which LFAs' engagements have been extensively documented: the integration of development and migration policies; localisation; remittances and economic development; the gender dimension of migration and development; long-term solutions to displacement

(i.e. resettlement, return and (re)integration); and social cohesion. Overall, this literature review has made the point that LFAs' roles are and can be crucial to working towards the SDGs and towards building better and more coherent migration and development policies for the post-2030 agenda. Furthermore, these examples have clearly demonstrated that looking at LFAs' initiatives provides material for a more nuanced understanding of migration and development and of the many ways in which the two phenomena are interlinked.

At the same time, this review has also found that there are several gaps in the existing literature on LFAs' engagements with the migration–development nexus. For instance, as regards the protection of children on the move, there clearly is scope for further investigations on the roles of LFAs in facilitating the provision of services like birth registration, family reunion, education etc. in transit or arrival countries. There is also a gap in research about LFAs' contributions to guaranteeing migrants' rights, such as healthcare, access to work and dignified work conditions, both through the implementation of specific programmes as well as through policy and advocacy campaigns. Although LFAs are also increasingly engaged in climate-change-related initiatives, there is currently a lack of studies looking at how these engagements relate to climate-change-driven migration.

As several examples included in this article highlighted, in order to better understand the roles LFAs play in these realms, it is important to avoid generalisations and essentialisations regarding faith actors – including that they are more conservative than secular actors and that local faith actors automatically represent local communities' interests and needs. Equally, it is necessary to consider that LFAs, like all other actors, are not exempt from politicisation, and that they can be engaged in an instrumental way by other actors who seek to pursue their own agenda.

Looking ahead, these key points should be taken into consideration by policymakers when planning and carrying out partnerships and consultation processes with LFAs. In particular, there is a need to contextualise LFAs' contributions and to enhance their visibility and participation through thorough research and sustained, open dialogue.

Acknowledgement

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BRILL | SCHÖNINGH

Religion, Mission, and Development: The Catholic Church as a Religious Infrastructure in Kafa, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The Catholic Church, along with other denominational groups, is an important part of the religious landscape in the Kafa region of southwestern Ethiopia. In addition to pastoral activities, the Catholic Church is particularly involved in the provision of social infrastructure facilities such as schools, kindergartens, or hospitals as part of the Human Integral Development approach to its mission. This article therefore examines the role of the Catholic Church and its mission on the everyday life of the people in the Kafa region. Drawing on ethnographic research, the article conceptualises the Catholic Church as a religious infrastructure – a notion that sheds light on the socio-material processes and entanglements that enable the anticipation of ideas about the future and about development. In addition, the article explores the role of the Catholic Church in sociocultural transformation processes through this infrastructural approach, thereby contributing to a subject that has been hitherto neglected in anthropological studies of religion and Christianity.

Keywords

1   Introduction

It was a cloudy and yet warm day in early April 2021 in Hamany, a small hamlet on the old road to Jimma, when my fieldwork became decisively affected by a discussion with a group of people. Just some weeks before my arrival in the Kafa region of southwestern Ethiopia, almost all of the people from that village converted from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church[1] to the Catholic Church. After a friendly welcome at the roadside, I joined some of the converts walking up a small hill past false banana and coffee trees and spotted a small, oblong hut with a thatched roof. The hut happened to be the community's makeshift chapel, with only a small, wooden cross in the middle of the structure to indicate this fact as I took a look inside. I was eager to understand more about the reasons for these people's conversion to the Catholic Church. While it slowly began to rain outside, we took shelter in the chapel, sitting on unadorned benches made of bamboo poles.

One of the parishioners spoke about his reasons for converting to the Catholic faith in an agitated manner:

FIGURE 1   Makeshift chapel in Hamany
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEXANDER CHENCHENKO

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1   Tewahedo, as a Christological term, can be translated as "being united as one" and refers to the unified nature of Christ.

> This Catholic faith is in our region and area since the beginning, it is *Kaffi-Kitenno*.[2] My grandfather and the other elders told us from father to child the witness in what to believe. I had the chance to hear that, so I decided to join the Catholic faith with the other villagers here. I also see that the Catholic Church is not only providing the teaching of the holy gospel and preaching, but in some places, the Church is even building schools or kindergartens. We wish that this would be done to us. The catechism and teaching of the Catholic Church makes us strong to believe and practise faith to respect our families, and to love each other and to live in peace. But they also provide for our development (Interview with Ato Hailemariam).

Alongside the description of the Catholic Church as *Kaffi-Kitenno* – the attribution of the Catholic Church as the Christian Church of Kafa – the parishioner highlighted the religious and pastoral practice of the Catholic Church, as well as the possibility of anticipating the village's development together with the Catholic Church, for example through access to social infrastructure such as schools or kindergartens. The mission of the Catholic Church cannot therefore be reduced to aspects of religious or pastoral practice alone, because people in the Kafa region negotiate a range of different and interrelated issues in their everyday lives. Just as Christian institutions engage in various forms of service in the context of social, cultural, and political-economic dimensions (Haynes 2014, 364), they can be described as sites of social transformation (Jenkins 2012, 473). The question remains open as to what exactly the Catholic Church affords through its mission in the Kafa region, how these facilities are assessed, used, and negotiated by people, and how social transformation ultimately occurs within the Catholic Church. This is significant because anthropological research addressed the role of Christian institutions in social transformation processes concerning Protestant and Pentecostal movements, but not yet sufficiently in Catholic traditions (Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008, 1152). This becomes even more apparent insofar as anthropological research on religion has increasingly focused on urban milieus and cities (Burchard and Westendorp 2018, 160). This article aims to highlight the role of religious dynamics in rural contexts such as the Kafa region by approaching the Catholic Church as a religious infrastructure.

Mentionable anthropological works on infrastructure that move beyond mere physical structures are for example Abdoumaliq Simone's conceptualisation

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2 The term *Kaffi-Kitenno* can be translated from Kaffi-Noonoo to English as "the Christian Church of Kafa" (Yoshida 2021, 11).

of "people as infrastructure" in urban Johannesburg (Simone 2004), Brian Larkin's analysis of infrastructures as sites of semiotic and aesthetic encounters (Larkin 2013), and Rosalind Fredericks' research on labour, urban transformation, and pollution through approaching the infrastructure of waste management in Dakar (Fredericks 2018). Benjamin Kirby's work on forms of Muslim sociality and livelihoods in urban Dar es Salaam (Kirby 2020), as well as Yanti Hölzchen's research on the dissemination of religious knowledge in Kyrgyzstan and its influence on Muslim concepts of sociality and selfhood (Hölzchen 2021), among others, indicate that the infrastructural consideration of religion can be used as a fruitful ground to approach the entanglements of religious affiliation, resources, and buildings with concepts of morality, sociality, and societal transformation.

Following this newly emerging research trajectory, this article examines the role of the Catholic Church in the everyday lives of people in the Kafa region. It does so by describing the Catholic Church, its mission, activities, and institutions, and examining everyday negotiations by people. Considering the influence of the Catholic Church through its religious and pastoral activities, but also through its provision of socio-infrastructural facilities as illustrated by the interview with the Hamany converts, I argue that the infrastructural lens helps to uncover the social and material interconnections and relations that shape the everyday lives of people, as well as enable the anticipation of ideas about the future and development for Catholic Christians in contemporary Kafa of southwestern Ethiopia.

2   Methods

The analysis in this article is grounded on qualitative and ethnographic approaches to understanding the role of the Catholic Church in the everyday lives of people in the Kafa region. Data used in this article are based on three months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the first half of 2021 in Addis Ababa, Jimma, and Kafa. The qualitative methods used in the research are (narrative) in-depth interviews with various dignitaries of the Catholic Church such as priests and members of various congregations and religious communities on the one hand, and with Catholic and non-Catholic people and families from various towns and villages in the Kafa region such as Bonga, Wushwush, Gojeb, Modeyo, and Shaapa. For conducting these interviews, I strongly relied on students and scientists from Bonga University, who translated the interviews on the ground. Furthermore, I performed a large number of participatory observations and collated a lot of field notes, sketches, and photographs.

In addition to these primary data, I also utilised a range of secondary data such as church publications (journals, newspapers, encyclicals, and official congregational correspondence), letters, contracts, and recorded videos and photographs of festivities, rituals, and pilgrimages. The epistemological approach of the study was not to impose theoretical assumptions on empirical relations, but on the contrary to foreground the empirical quality. According to Tim Ingold's demand for correspondence with people and consequently the attitude of learning from social interactions with people themselves, the ethnographic approach I chose does not stand for a purely descriptive or documentary approach, but for an emic and holistic formation of anthropological knowledge (Ingold 2014, 387, 390).

3   Historical Perspectives

3.1   *The Kafa Region*

In the same vein that Ethiopia can be described as a multi-ethnic and multi-denominational state (Fiquet and Feyissa 2015, 15), categorising the Kafa region is by no means an uncomplicated task due to its complex history, changing social relations, and different ethnicities and confessional groups. Geographically, the Kafa region is located in the southwest of the country in the Ethiopian highlands, bordering the Oromia region to the north and the South Omo Zone to the south. The historical basis of the Kafa region is the Kingdom of Kafa, which emerged in the 14th century and developed into a large, centralised state during the 17th century. The administration of the Kingdom of Kafa was subject to various clans, which held land rights and performed various political functions.

The conquest of Kafa by the invasion of Emperor Menelik's troops in 1897 brought the kingdom's existence to an end (Fiquet and Feyissa 2015, 44). Within the society of Kafa, the clan structure of the former Kingdom of Kafa is still of great relevance today, because people identify themselves not only ethnically or religiously, but also along their status group as, for example, Kafa or Manjo. Various studies describe the social hierarchy in the Kafa region as similar to the caste system, with the Kafa at the top of this hierarchy, followed by occupational groups such as the blacksmiths (Qemmo), weavers (Shammano), bards (Shatto), and potters (Manno), whereas the Manjo as hunters stood at the lowest level of this hierarchy (Orent 1970; Lange 1982; Yoshida 2009). Many Manjo today face social discrimination due to stereotypes associated with their status group (Gezahegn 2003, 90; Yoshida 2009, 301). As various Manjo communities in Kafa negotiated their marginalised status by converting to

Protestant Churches (Yoshida 2009) or by claiming new policies and jurisdictions (Barata 2019), this article will explore the extent to which Manjo communities renegotiate their status in Kafa society through engagement with the Catholic Church.

3.2 *The Catholic Church*

A starting point in considering the complex history of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia is the mission of Portuguese Jesuits in the 16th century, which, however, was unsuccessful for several reasons and ended in the exile of the missionaries in 1632 (Cohen 2009, 6–9; Forno 2013, 59; Ngetich 2016, 109–11).[3] In the wake of the renewed interest of the Catholic Church to engage in missionary activities in Ethiopia in 1839 (Dumont 1958, 680), the mission of the Italian Capuchin Guglielmo Massaja, in particular, was crucial for the establishment of the Catholic Church in the Kafa region (Forno 2013, 136–38). Massaja's mission at this time can be described as a modern missionary approach, as Massaja was convinced that the Church had to adapt to local contexts in the sense of inculturation (Forno 2013, 123, 196). In the process, masses were held in Kaffi-Noonoo, and cultural elements were incorporated into the church liturgy (Orent 1970, 279), leading to the designation of the Catholic Church as Kaffi-Kitenno – the Christian Church of Kafa. Due to the growing influence of the Catholic Church, the construction of a large number of churches, and the conversion of many people, the missionaries were expelled by King Taye Sherocho in 1861. The remaining converts in Kafa were persecuted in the following years, while many endured martyrdom if they refused to renounce their newly adopted faith (Orent 1970, 291).[4]

After the exclusion of the Catholic mission from Kafa in 1861 and the collapse of the Kingdom of Kafa in 1897, different Catholic religious congregations returned to the Kafa region over the next decades for a resumption of the mission (Yoshida 2021, 4). In the mid-20th century, the Catholic Church established new missions, which, in the wake of new missionary approaches brought about by the processes of the Second Vatican Council, focused on pastoral activities as well as the construction and provision of social infrastructures such as kindergartens, schools, and hospitals (De Potter 1973, 5–7,

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3   The failure of the mission resulted from a lack of respect for the traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and rigorous methods of preaching (Forno 2013, 70), but also from the isolation of the mission by Turkey's military activities in the Red Sea (Ng'etich 2016, 112).

4   The story of the martyrdom of the Catholic Christians was orally transmitted over time. The tomb of the martyrs was discovered about 22 years ago near the village of Modeyo during agricultural activities. Today, it serves as an important pilgrimage destination and is in the process of being canonised.

19–20).[5] In the last 20 years, the Catholic Church has seen a rapid increase in affiliation in Kafa: from about 10,000 Catholics in 2000 to 47,900 Catholics in 2020, with over 30 priests serving in more than 53 parishes (Cheney 2020).

4   Theoretical Considerations

As has already become apparent, the main concern of this article is to conceptualise the Catholic Church in the Kafa region of Ethiopia as a religious infrastructure and thereby draw conclusions about the role of the Catholic Church in the everyday life of the people. The conjunction of the terms religion and infrastructure bears a conceptual peculiarity, as both terms are conventionally regarded as dichotomous to each other (Tonkiss 2013). However, it is precisely the analytical potential of an empathic consideration of both terms that my research focus is grounded upon.

For the synthesis of an infrastructural approach to religion, I would like to begin by exemplifying different anthropological considerations of infrastructure. Infrastructures can be described as physical structures and materialities, just as the totality of buildings, properties, and spaces of religious groups have been described as religious infrastructures in this more "conventional" sense (Hölzchen, Yanti, and Kirby 2020, 2). However, infrastructures can also be understood as relational networks that link social and material dynamics, as well as political aspects (Harvey, Bruun Jensen, and Morita 2017, 3), while other scholars sought to emphasise the semiotic or cultural dimensions of religious phenomena (Larkin 2013; Fredericks 2018). This is evident, among other things, in the fact that infrastructural projects, similar to development projects, have an anticipatory state around which people revolve their promises and hopes and negotiate aspirations and development (Hetherington 2017, 40; Appel, Anand, and Gupta 2018, 3–4). In this sense, the concept of infrastructure cannot be dissociated from a concept of modernity or discourse on development, as infrastructural projects indicate the expectation and failure of modernity through their success or failure (Appel, Anand, and Gupta 2018, 26). Here, questions about the overarching negotiation of the mission of the Catholic Church gain considerable importance, as it explicitly focuses not only on pastoral activities but also on so-called Integral Human Development – the

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5   For further information on the history of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia and the Kafa region during the Italo-Ethiopian War, the Second World War, the political entanglements of the Catholic Church within Italian colonial endeavours, and the socialist regime, see Sbacchi (1998), Asante (1974), and Yoshida (2021).

socio-material, holistic consideration of human development in social, economic, and political dimensions (Müller 2002, 109; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2022).

Also, infrastructures refer to the conjunction between centres and peripheries by bridging and connecting space and spatiality (Apell, Anand, and Gupta 2018, 17), thereby decisively influencing and shaping accessibility to various resources for people (Harvey, Bruun Jensen, and Morita 2017, 17). The provision of social infrastructural facilities through the mission of the Catholic Church may be evaluated in that regard, such as medical stations being built in remote areas where people have no or limited access to these facilities and services of everyday life. However, as scholars sought to analyse infrastructures as semiotic and aesthetic instruments irrespective of their function or goals (Larkin 2013, 329; Fennell 2015) and as sites of a productive encounter between aesthetics, meaning, and materiality (Appel, Anand, and Gupta 2018, 27), the conceptualisation of a religious infrastructure grounds on theories of the material consideration of religious practices and dynamics. Here, religion is not only understood as an expression of a purely cognitive concept but the tactile, audio-visual, and material side of religious practice is brought to the centre of attention (Keane 2008, 123; Bräunlein 2016, 370). The phenomenological perspective on embodied forms of religious experience is particularly central here (Plate 2015, 2–3), whereby it is primarily media-theoretical considerations through which religious infrastructures can be seen as part of the mediality between immanence and transcendence (Meyer 2008, 126–29, 143).

In all, these various references on thinking religion infrastructurally can be used as a productive analytical tool for the consideration of the role of the Catholic Church in the everyday lives of the people of the Kafa region. This becomes evident especially because references of anthropological engagement with infrastructures point to important insights in the domains of development, modernity, and the negotiation of notions of the future and accessibility to resources.

5   Social Infrastructure and Development

Tesfaye picked me up at the main roundabout in Bonga town and together we walked up the stairs of a large building complex, past restaurants, shops, and offices, while women roasted green coffee beans in the hallway. When we reached the top floor, we headed to the office of the Kafa Development Association, for which he had been working for several years. We began by discussing the various religious groups and their influence in the Kafa region.

When asked about the role of the Catholic Church, Tesfaye's expressions changed abruptly:

> I am very much attracted by the Catholic religion! Not by the religion theology, but by the Catholic way of development. Since my childhood, I was seeing that the Catholics are not fanatics. And they are not more theocratic with the preaching and so on. They are more silent in religion and preaching but they are more committed to development. Even many elites from Kafa who are for example in Europe and America are Catholic students. Even when you attend a Catholic school, they don't preach to you, they don't try to duplicate themselves ... and it is even almost for free! (Interview with Tesfaye).

I was particularly interested in this statement because Tesfaye neither emphasised the religious and pastoral practice nor the direct conversion efforts of the Catholic Church (*they don't duplicate themselves*), but rather refers to the issue of development – here illustrated by the example of school education. The Catholic Church is in fact involved in the area of school education as part of the social infrastructure, especially in Bonga, but also in other areas that cover this topic. The Catholic Church in Bonga finances and operates several primary and secondary schools and is currently in the process of establishing a higher education institution. In order to show how exactly the Catholic Church is able to provide such a variety of educational facilities, as well as to describe the mission of the Catholic Church as a key factor for people's negotiation of development and future aspirations in Kafa, I would like to discuss two examples in the following.

First, I illustrate how the Catholic Church, through its extended network of international institutions and organisations, is able to provide low-cost education, taking Martyrs Primary School in Bonga as an example. The primary school was opened in 2020 by the Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Jimma-Bonga and financed through various charity events by the Maltese organisation Missionary Movement Jesus in Thy Name. As was confirmed in various conversations, there was a close relationship between the Vicariate of Jimma-Bonga and a clergyman from Malta who travelled many times to the Kafa region and, through the organisation he led, financed various institutions and projects – including a home for mentally and physically impaired children, kindergartens, and the just-mentioned Martyrs Primary School. In addition to this possibility of financing mission projects in the Kafa region, the Catholic Church can rely on financial resources of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Addis Ababa and the Congregation for the Propagation of the

Faith – the central Vatican authority for missions worldwide – as well as various NGOs such as Caritas International. In numerous conversations about Catholic educational institutions in Kafa, my interlocutors not only referred to the low tuition fees, but also to the comparatively high-quality education, which would not be feasible without the national and international network of organisations of the Catholic Church to finance such projects. One of my interlocutors from a small village near Bonga found particularly fitting words on the importance of these educational institutions for negotiations of the future:

> In the Catholic school there are very good teachers who are themselves highly educated. And at the same time, it is not that expensive for the children to go there! The same is true for the kindergarten here. For example, it is very important that children don't have to go far so they can be in time and also accidents don't happen. Children should have the best future possible, and I think the Catholic Church knows this (Interview with Abera).

Secondly, the numerous international congregations play a decisive role in the area of Integral Human Development of the mission and exert an important influence on the everyday life of many people in the Kafa region through their work. About two years ago, Sister Yemesrach and Sister Bezawit of the

FIGURE 2   Martyrs Primary School
            PHOTOGRAPH: ALEXANDER CHENCHENKO

Daughters of Charity opened a competence centre in Bonga, where IT courses and haircutting training are being provided. In line with the charism of the congregation, which focuses on women's empowerment, the education programmes and training courses of the competence centre are specifically aimed at supporting unemployed girls and women. Through the cooperation with an Australian NGO, the two sisters were able to acquire funds for the purchase of the land and the establishment of the competence centre, whereby the state office for women's affairs as the representative of the competence centre's stakeholders was also decisive for the completion of this project. During a visit to the competence centre, I was able to talk to women taking part in a haircutting course. The statement of a young woman was essential for understanding the importance of this opportunity to participate in vocational training:

> I want to learn the skills of hairdressing and after that start a hairdressing business myself or find a job as a hairdresser. It helps me get better job opportunities … I am orthodox, but I have no problem coming here because it is just about hairdressing. Actually, what I see is that the Catholic Church is providing in many ways. Generally, the Church is on the side of the poor. That's what I observed and have seen during my stay here (Interview with Meheret).

FIGURE 3   Hairdressing class inside the competence centre
             PHOTOGRAPH: ALEXANDER CHENCHENKO

Given that the development activities of the Catholic Church can be assumed to provide benefits for people's social lives (Obasi 2008, 216), I propose considering the development activities of the Catholic Church in the Kafa region, especially the establishment of social infrastructure facilities. These facilities are mainly found in areas where there is a lack of state-funded and structured alternatives. As I was able to discuss with many interlocutors, people negotiate notions of the future with and through these facilities provided by the Catholic Church: they wish to become gainfully employed through skills training; to provide a good future for their children through education; they describe difficulties of access to social services and emphasise the proximity of Catholic institutions. In this regard, I develop the first part of the conceptualisation of the Catholic Church as religious infrastructure because there is an inherent anticipatory state to its social infrastructure projects around which people revolve promises and hopes and negotiate aspirations (Hetherington 2017, 40; Appel, Anand, and Gupta 2018, 3–4). Just as Christian churches can be seen as sites of social transformation (Jenkins 2013, 473), I also interpret the Catholic Church in the Kafa region as a site of such social transformation, but rather one that results from bringing about positive change in people's lives through the use of social infrastructure projects. Just as notions of the future and hopes for prosperity are closely linked to the teachings of Protestant churches (Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008, 1150), in the following discussion I would like to use the example of a Catholic Manjo community to consider the significance of the value and moral teachings of the Catholic Church for social transformation processes.

6   A Peripheral and Central Concern

As mentioned above, the clan structure of the historical Kingdom of Kafa is still of great relevance for society within Kafa today, because people do not only identify themselves ethnically or religiously but also along status groups. The Manjo thereby ranked at the lowest level of the hierarchy of status groups (Orent 1970; Lange 1982; Yoshida 2009), with many stereotypical descriptions established in relation to their status group (Gezahegn 2009, 90). Stereotypes and prejudices predominantly refer to Manjo's historical role as hunters within society, with "unclean" eating habits of wild animals and "poor" hygiene practices among the most common stereotypes. Because of these, many Manjo are still affected by social discrimination today, which manifests itself, for example, in the fact that children from Manjo communities cannot be taught in the same classrooms as children from Kafa communities (Yoshida 2009, 301).

However, as my fieldwork has indicated, in addition to this dimension of social discrimination, spatial discrimination and exclusion is also a significant factor determining and affecting the lives of many Manjo. Most Manjo families live in remote areas, far away from city centres, and have limited access to education, medical facilities, or markets. Following this spatial dimension of discrimination (Pankhurst 2003, 17), I argue that Manjo through this find themselves in a peripheral situation, which I use to illustrate the mutual entanglements of spatial and social forms of discrimination.

At this point, I continue with the conceptualisation of the Catholic Church as a religious infrastructure and discuss the extent to which Manjo communities negotiate issues of social and spatial discrimination through the mission of the Catholic Church. We find ourselves in Gogema, on the compound of a Catholic Manjo community. The Kafa administrative zone handed over the compound 12 years ago. Today, a church, a community centre, and a well are situated here. However, most of the church compound is used as farmland on which the community engages in agricultural activities. The priest of the community supports the people by providing agricultural equipment, ploughs, and seeds. In various conversations with parishioners from Gogema, it became clear that it is precisely the possibility of agricultural use of farmland and the promotion of related practices on the part of the Catholic Church that is of great importance, as one interlocutor told me:

> The Catholic Church has given me land, which I can now plough, and with this, I can take care of my life and my family. For this, I am very grateful. Before that, I did not have land to plough. Now we can sell the products in the market. With the money, I hope that we will be able to build a kindergarten here in the village together with the Church (Interview with Zelalem).

Interestingly, this statement relates to findings that many Manjo have given up hunting and engage in subsistence farming, which can be described as a strategy by Manjo people to end social discrimination. It avoids the stereotypical associations with hunting practices, but also aligns with the way of life of Kafa people, who conduct subsistence farming as their main source of income (Yoshida 2008). To the same extent, I believe that the provision of land by the Catholic Church for undertaking agricultural activities is a key factor for Manjo to renegotiate their status. But as can be seen through the statement of the interlocutor in Gogema, who wishes to build a kindergarten together with the Catholic Church, negotiations for the future through the possibility of acquiring access to social infrastructure facilities are taking place, too. This once

more highlights the aspect of anticipatory negotiation of the infrastructural perspective of the Catholic Church described in the previous chapter. Another parishioner from Gogema, who converted to the Catholic Church only a few weeks prior to my arrival in the Kafa region, also highlights the proximity of the Catholic Church to the village:

> Before I was in another Church. In our old Church when someone passed away, we were asked to pay a lot of money for burial. And not only that, but we also had to take the bodies such a long way. This now all changed because the Catholic Church is here in our village and helping the village (Interview with Ato Haile).

Infrastructures shape accessibility to resources of various kinds (Harvey, Bruun Jensen, and Morita 2017, 16) and in this sense bridge space and spatiality (Apell, Anand, and Gupta 2018, 17). I interpret that the Catholic Church can also be discussed in these terms, but more so in the connection between central and peripheral concerns. The presence of a Catholic Church and the plot of land given to the parishioners create a new centre in what actually might be described as a peripheral situation. According to the statements of the interlocutors, they no longer have to travel long distances to bury their dead; they use the farmland of the Catholic Church to grow agricultural products and sell

the produce; they take the opportunity to use this money to carry out social infrastructure projects (such as the construction of a kindergarten) together with the Catholic Church in the future. However, not only the spatial dimension of discrimination is actively and consciously transformed by the Manjo community in Gogema, but also the social dimension, as I will describe in regard to negotiations of the moral and value teachings through the pastoral dimension of the mission.

When the priest and I said goodbye to the remaining parishioners from Gogema after the mass and we shook hands, some people passed by next to us. The situation turned critical; they shouted words at us in Kaffi-Noonoo and the priest's usually very friendly smile turned into a stern and serious expression. Only when we had returned to the car and the situation had calmed down a lot did I ask him what had just happened: indeed, the group of people had seen us and insulted the Manjo present as "unworthy". We drove with some community members on the loading ramp of the jeep to the house of the family who had invited us. In the chill and dark living room, we took seats next to each other and chatted while fresh coffee was served to those present. I took the opportunity to apologise for what had just happened and a discussion about discrimination arose. A parishioner shared insights about his conversion to the Catholic Church and the changes he anticipated through conversion:

> I converted to the Catholic Church because I was seeing what good it will bring into my life. My wife and I became Catholic, we received Holy Communion and after believing in the Catholic Church and the Holy Saviour in Jesus's Name, nothing bad happened to me any more. I am not even sick! And now I can plough the land and provide for my family … In my old Church I was not accepted very well, but here in the Catholic Church I am very much so. I am treated equally and with respect. And I can even die here and be buried here for free. Here I stay and here I will die (Interview with Bereket).

In addition to the narratives about the health gained through the parishioner's conversion and the opportunity to support his family by conducting agricultural activities, the parishioner's statement particularly foregrounds the equal rights and equal treatment of people in the Catholic Church. Another parishioner emphatically agreed and said:

> Our families they were always living like cast-outs. But the Catholic Church does not exclude anyone! And the younger generation they already know because of this that we are equal to everyone else. We feel

that we are equal, we are all children from Adam and Eve (Interview with Haptamu).

Just as the Catholic Church's understanding of Integral Human Development refers to the interconnection of body and spirit and the holistic view of the human being (Müller 2002, 109), it is clear from the example of the situation and discussions presented here that Manjo not only utilise social development work for the renegotiation of their status in Kafa society. In addition, value and moral teachings of the Catholic Church (the pastoral dimension) also play an essential role in the negotiation of belonging and, above all, equality in the everyday lives of Manjo.

The interlocutors presented here show that they mainly anticipate an intrinsic equality, feel part of an equal community, and feel a sense of empowerment (*the younger generation they already know because of this that we are equal to everyone else*). Unlike other studies that have shown that Manjo intend to attain a kind of coexistence with most orthodox Kafa through their conversion to Protestant congregations (Yoshida 2009, 307), my findings show that the renegotiation of their status with and through the Catholic Church tends to develop independently from the Kafa and the underlying asymmetrical power relationship.

However, these findings do not contradict the description of the formation of new centres in peripheral situations already elaborated above through the infrastructural approach of the Catholic parish in Gogema. Just as infrastructures can be described as places where aesthetics, meaning, and materiality meet (Apell, Anand, and Gupta 2018, 27), people experience and feel concerns central to their peripheral situation through the pastoral dimension of the Catholic Church, such as meaning (the absence of illness), but also social belonging (equality) in relation to the socio-material negotiation of their social status through conducting agriculture. It is precisely this entanglement of different possibilities and affordances through which Manjo are able to renegotiate their social and spatial form of marginalisation that is central to the analysis of the Catholic Church as religious infrastructure. However, as the statements of the interlocutors from Gogema suggest (*I am not even sick! / We feel that we are equal*), it is also the embodied experiences through which the entanglements are internalised and processed. In the context of thinking religion infrastructurally, I consider the Catholic Church as a site of aesthetic negotiation (Fredericks 2018, 15) that leads to the development and shaping of visions of the future and ultimately social transformation.

7   Religious Infrastructure and Competition

The infrastructural approach of the Catholic Church in the Kafa region and
its missions, activities, and involvement demonstrate that the entanglements
between dimensions of materiality (church properties, schools, social infra-
structural facilities) and related notions of the future and ideas and percep-
tions of development are of central importance in understanding the role and
influence of the Catholic Church on the everyday life of local people. The inter-
view statements indicate the significant role of the Catholic Church in social
and societal transformation processes. Unlike Protestant groups, where ideas
of the future and hopes for prosperity are closely linked to religious beliefs
(Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008, 1150), the holistic view of the Catholic
Church's Integral Human Development is reflected precisely in the multitude
and interconnectedness of different religious and non-religious affordances,
which relate to ideas of development, access to resources, and social partici-
pation and inclusion. In this perspective, the infrastructural analysis of the
Catholic Church demonstrates that references to infrastructures can not only
be applied as an effective analytical tool but can also be extended and comple-
mented. The Catholic compound of the Manjo community in Gogema is an
example of this. The theoretical references of a central and peripheral infra-
structural consideration could take up aspects of the realities of spatial discrim-
ination faced by the Manjo, and the empirical references – the establishment
of new centres in currently peripheral situations – may in turn be applied fruit-
fully to subsequent infrastructural considerations of religious influence.

Indeed, while the influence of the Catholic Church on the everyday life of
the people in the Kafa region is of decisive importance, other religious groups
in Kafa can also be conceptualised as religious infrastructures that have a
non-negligible influence on social transformation processes. For example, in
addition to the Catholic Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is
currently acquiring a number of properties in the Kafa region for the construc-
tion of churches and socio-infrastructural facilities, or for the establishment
and expansion of places of pilgrimage, such as holy water springs. Islamic and
Protestant communities are also active in this regard in the construction and
expansion of houses of worship and income-generating facilities such as
guesthouses and holiday homes. Traditional religious groups (such as Eqqo
or Qollo) also play a special role due to the drastic social change of the last
decades, because they not only provide religious practices, but also knowl-
edge about cultural practices of the Kafa region (Yoshida 2021, 4). I argue that

an infrastructural approach to realms of religious influence is able to reveal how the religious groups are interacting with each other, precisely through the possibility of analysing infrastructures not only as physical structures of mere material objects, but rather as relational entanglements through which people anticipate imagined futures and negotiate ideas of development (Larkin 2013, 329; Harvey, Bruun Jensen, and Morita 2017, 16; Hetherington 2017, 40). Against the background of contemporary religious competition in Ethiopia, the strengthened role of Islam and various Christian churches, the hitherto dominant Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is experiencing a decline in church membership (Flemmen and Zenebe 2016, 27). In this sense, I argue for the connection of the infrastructural perspective with Bourdieu's reflections on field theory as a productive means of addressing this issue. By examining the holistic negotiation of religious and secular needs, but also the competition for religious legitimacy by the different groups as suggested by Bourdieu in his discussions on the "religious field" (Bourdieu 200, 11), the dynamics of different religious groups can be conceptualised as interacting with each other through their respective religious infrastructure. Indeed, in his latest article, Terje Østebø proposes an intriguing analytical lens for understanding religious dynamics and change in contemporary Ethiopia as negotiations of space in the first place, highlighting the "intersected and mutually constitutive processes of expansion, protection and reclaiming of space" (Østebø 2023, 4–5).

Foregrounding religious dynamics as mutually constitutive, intersected, and related to each other, the increasing religious influence of denominations and religious groups through the construction of churches and places of pilgrimage and the provision of social infrastructural facilities, embedded in premises of the constantly shifting religious field, leaves many questions open for future research on the role of religion in contemporary Ethiopia: what strategies of influence do different religious groups adopt? How do they gain influence within the population? In which areas of everyday life do these activities make themselves perceptible? How can an infrastructural approach to these religious forms provide answers to questions of accessibility to resources and the negotiation of sociality and development – especially through a comparative approach that takes the mutual constitutiveness and intersectedness of religious influence seriously?

8   Conclusion

This article proposes an infrastructural approach to the study of religion and religious dynamics, with a particular focus on the Catholic Church in the Kafa

region of southwestern Ethiopia. The outline of the Catholic Church's mission in Kafa through the provision of social infrastructure facilities such as Martyrs Primary School or the competence centre highlights the material, social, and affective dimensions of religious infrastructure. Here, my interlocutors pointed out that they negotiate ideas about the future, but also issues of their own personal and professional development for themselves and their families through the utilisation of these social infrastructure facilities. This also becomes apparent in the ethnographic account of the Manjo community in Gogema, who, however, regard the church property itself as a place of renegotiating their marginalised status in Kafa society. By drawing on conventional theoretical references from anthropological research on infrastructures, I was able to show how material connections and relations (conducting agriculture and making use of pastoral activities within the Church) directly shape the everyday life of the Manjo and how they use this to anticipate a reconfiguration of their social status. From a conceptual point of view, the ethnographic account of the Catholic Church as religious infrastructure therefore links the mission of the Catholic Church not only to faith-based matters, but also, and perhaps primarily, to negotiations of development, access to resources, and social participation and societal status. In this perspective, the Catholic Church, taking Kafa as an example, has a significant impact on sociocultural and social transformation processes – a topic that has been hitherto neglected within the anthropology of Christianity (Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008, 1552).

Just as conventional references to infrastructure are reduced not only to their physical structures and materiality, but as relational entanglements through which space and spatiality can be bridged and people anticipate futures and negotiate ideas of development (Larkin 2013, 329; Harvey, Bruun Jensen, and Morita 2017, 16; Hetherington 2017, 40; Apell, Anand, and Gupta 2018, 4, 17), they can be productively applied, modified, and extended to the intricacies of religion, mission, and development through the example of the conceptualisation of the Catholic Church as religious infrastructure.

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Policy and Practice Notes

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Effective Faith Partnerships during COVID-19: Lessons Learned from Development Practitioners

Policy & Practice Note

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Abstract

COVID-19 heightened interest in faith partnerships as governments and international agencies sought rapid behavior change to reduce the spread of the pandemic. It illuminated the unique capacity of local faith groups to reach people quickly, effectively, and relevantly. To increase resilience to future crises, the qualities of effective, ethical partnerships must be identified and developed.

To support this effort, the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities facilitated a learning process that explored key success factors and barriers to effective partnerships for eight faith actors (national and international organizations and networks) who responded to COVID-19, 2020–2021. Four themes recurred. Firstly, there were mixed views about the quality of partnerships with international agencies, some feeling instrumentalized in times of crisis. Secondly, where colonial exploitation has left mistrust of Western "experts," effective programming with faith communities to counter misinformation requires either skilled, long-term investment in relationships or supporting faith groups already trusted by local communities. Thirdly, many of the most effective responses to COVID-19 emerged when local faith groups took the initiative and responded using their own assets. Finally, although technology facilitated connection, it also excluded, mediating the kinds of partnerships that were possible.

The participating faith actors identified the need to build and sustain trusted relationships with local faith groups, increasing resilience by equipping them with asset-based approaches to take the initiative in their own context. They call on international agencies to value their complementary capacities and develop long-term structures for cross-sectoral engagement, supported by flexible funding.

1   Introduction

The intense pressures of COVID-19 strengthened existing partnerships, forged new connections, and revealed hidden flaws. For faith-based organizations and networks responding to the crisis, two key groups of partners were national governments and international agencies (such as the World Health Organization or other United Nations agencies) with vital expertise, resources, and coordinating power and local faith groups and their leaders, often influential and deeply embedded within communities. The need to influence behavior change at scale strengthened governments' and international agencies' commitment to faith partnerships; however, many missed their full potential, using them as short-term channels for communication but not exploring deeper and more equitable partnerships. The same need illuminated the unique capacity of local faith groups to reach people rapidly and effectively in their context, accentuating approaches to faith engagement that were working well and exposing important gaps.

To support better preparedness and increase resilience to future crises, the qualities of effective, ethical partnerships must be identified and developed, both with local faith groups and with international agencies and governments. The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), an international collaboration to develop and communicate evidence on faith actors' roles and contributions to development and humanitarian action, partnered with eight faith-based organizations and networks (hereafter "participating faith actors") to learn together what worked well in partnerships and what challenges were exposed in the response to COVID-19.

2   Background

Appreciation has recently grown for the importance of faith partnerships in development and human rights, an issue that long suffered "systematic neglect" (as cited in James 2011, 110). UN initiatives to engage faith leaders have

proliferated[1] and various governments have researched how to partner more effectively with faith groups (see le Roux and Bertelink 2017; USAID 2020). COVID-19 accelerated interest as many governments and international agencies including WHO and UNICEF turned to faith actors, seeking rapid, effective partnerships that could support their response to the crisis (see WHO n.d.; Brown 2021).

Significant evidence has been generated about the role played by faith actors, both positive and negative, in responding to COVID-19. In March 2020, the JLI, the Berkeley Centre for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, and World Faiths Development Dialogue launched a project to gather and share religious responses to the pandemic, now with over 1,000 resources (Cooney 2022). Studies highlight the positive role many faith actors played, such as encouraging their members to follow government guidelines (Yoosefi Lebni et al. 2021; Wijesinghe et al. 2022), providing services (Rachmawati et al. 2022), and tackling the indirect impacts of COVID-19, including gender-based violence.

The negative impact of faith leaders has also been well documented, further underlining the need for effective partnerships. Studies highlight the role that faith leaders played in spreading misinformation (Yoosefi Lebni et al. 2021), including telling followers that they must rely on God alone to protect them (Lee et al. 2021), or framing the pandemic as divine punishment (Rivera and Paulo 2020). Mahmood et al. (2021) found evidence of the crisis being manipulated for political ends. However, Łowicki et al. (2022) caution against sweeping generalizations about faith groups and conspiracy theories, finding correlation only among certain "fundamentalist" groups and misinformation, and not with those who hold faith as central generally. Likewise, Sibanda et al. (2022) find that, while some religious leaders have blocked public health messaging, more supported effective responses.

Despite their key role in responding to the pandemic and the diverse partnerships that were formed (Santibañez 2022; El-Majzoub 2021), there is little analysis on the quality of these partnerships or how to make them most effective. In recent years, concerns have been raised that initiatives often instrumentalize faith leaders "to achieve a predefined end without engaging them as equal partners on their own terms" (Le Roux, Bartelink, and Levinga 2017, 4). In a working paper, Marshall and Wilkinson affirm a "concern during the pandemic that public authorities simply instrumentalize or use religious leaders to achieve their goals, without meaningful exchange and participation"

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1   For example, the Global Forum on Strengthening Partnerships with Faith-Based Actors; Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development; "Faith for Rights" framework.

(Marshall and Wilkinson 2022, 4). The gap in evidence around what makes an effective faith partnership is vital to fill.

3   Learning Process: Objectives and Approach

Notwithstanding this body of evidence, JLI was aware that many lessons were not being documented in the speed of the response, particularly around more intangible questions like partnership qualities. This learning review aimed to help fill that gap through facilitating a collaborative learning process for eight faith actors (faith organizations and networks, national and international). It sought to understand their experiences of partnerships, create space for inter-faith learning exchange, and consolidate findings to share with external partners to strengthen faith engagement in the COVID-19 response and beyond.

The learning process began with a document review (internal and published on websites) and semi-structured interviews with 30 key informants affiliated with the eight participating faith actors, some at global level and some from local partners and national teams: Islamic Relief Worldwide, Soka Gakkai International, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Humanitarian Forum Indonesia, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance, Anglican Alliance, and Corus International with the Africa Christian Health Associations Platform. Emerging patterns were identified using qualitative data software (Atlas.ti) to code documentation and interview transcripts, and quantitative analysis was carried out using the average frequency across organizations with which each code was mentioned, adjusted to account for differing amounts of documentation.

JLI facilitated participatory feedback sessions with each faith actor in September 2021, creating space for them to reflect on key themes emerging and to identify areas of interest. Representatives from all eight faith actors and some of their partners came together virtually in December 2021 to share learning, explore new ideas, and cocreate recommendations for external audiences. Finally, in March 2022, JLI hosted a webinar to share the findings and recommendations with current or potential external partners at regional and international levels and facilitate dialogue between representatives of participating faith actors and external partners.

4   Findings

Four of the strongest themes across the eight participating faith actors connected to partnerships. Some of these themes related to partnerships with

international agencies, governments, and other potential donors, some related to partnerships with local faith groups, some to partnerships within the faith-based organization (FBO) or network, and some to all three. These themes initially emerged with high frequency in data coding and were then developed in the participatory feedback sessions as areas of key interest across the participating organizations. These four themes were:

– Shared goals and mutual respect: challenges and good practices in secular-religious partnerships
– Tackling misinformation: effective approaches to engaging local faith communities
– Balancing power and localization: resilience, the locus of decision-making control, and value of local solutions
– Technology and inclusion: the influence of technology on shifting power dynamics

While shared learning emerged across the four themes, it was enriched by faith actors' differing contexts and experiences and the diverse solutions they found to common issues.

COVID-19 made partnership indispensable. According to a national FBO staff member, "[the] situation is so bad … we need everyone's help to be able to go into the communities." Partnerships roughly fell into four categories – other faith actors, international development agencies, governments, and the private sector – with most of the participating faith actors connected to some partners within each, although to different extents. The scale of need and shared purpose brought opportunities for beginning new partnerships and for strengthening existing ones. Many interviewees commented that preexisting, trusted partnerships enabled faster, more effective responses – both with local faith groups and international agencies and governments. One staff member in a global role commented on the challenges engaging national faith actors: "Trust isn't something you can easily build during the crisis."

4.1 Shared Goals and Mutual Respect: Challenges and Good Practices in Secular Partnerships

While some participating faith actors welcomed the increased opportunities for partnerships with non-faith international agencies, others remained skeptical. Several interviewees perceived secular agencies' desire to engage them as rooted in pragmatism, rather than appreciation of their full potential as equal partners who could bring their values, capacities, and unique ways of working to the table. As one national FBO expressed: "Donors [have] not really that much appetite to work on the faith-based COVID response. But they see that we have a strong network, we have many resources …" Some faith actors saw improvement through the pandemic, one global staff member of an

international FBO stating that "early on … faith leaders [were used] as channels distributing UNICEF and WHO expertise … [We are now] beginning to see faith groups as partners and co-developers." However, another interviewee (now in a global role, but from and with many years' experience in a majority-world country) identified little improvement: "There's a lot of instrumentalization of us … we are doing something for them without really that feeling of cooperation, partnership, and respect." This greater cynicism often reflected more years of experience with these agencies' waxing and waning interests in cycles of stability and disaster. Without deliberate change, they felt the increased engagement would be restricted to the crisis context and not lead to sustained partnerships.

New avenues for government partnership were also viewed as pragmatism. One interviewee in a regional role pointed out that "with COVID continuing to become a challenging intervention for governments, they started to include faith." For many participating faith actors, the lack of a pre-pandemic partnership created significant challenges with coordination, including wasted resources and duplication of efforts. Although some national task forces created space for shared planning, others did not. One national faith network felt that their "biggest challenge is working with the Ministry of Health … we don't get what they will be doing."

Challenges with funding reflected similar themes of donor priorities over mutual decision-making. Although most participating faith actors found new funding opportunities during COVID-19, these were mostly inadequate to the scale of the need. Additionally, important funding for other areas of work decreased as local priorities were subsumed by the international focus on COVID-19. Much institutional funding had tight restrictions and was tied to tangible COVID-specific outcomes. According to one national FBO staff member, "[donors] want very tangible outcomes … not how we can help the community for a very long time." For flexibility to respond to the needs they saw, faith actors often relied on funding from within faith groups, supplemented with the private sector – pre-existing donations could be more easily moved around, and individuals and institutions responded generously to the crisis.

4.2   *Tackling Misinformation: Effective Approaches to Engaging Local Faith Communities*

A shared challenge for participating faith actors was partnering with local faith communities to tackle misinformation. Interviewees noted how colonial exploitation has left deep mistrust of Western "experts" in many contexts, meaning that health messaging from the WHO and others are often not taken as authoritative. Participants did not discuss the extent to which their organizations (if based in ex-colonist countries) were included within this mistrust,

but it could be an important area for future study. Instead, discussions focused on local faith groups' unique position to counter misinformation with their influence and authority. A national staff member commented: "[The] Islamic community … will hear religious leaders if they talk about COVID-19 … [and] follow the ideas." Approaches varied, but faith actors agreed that effective programming with faith communities to counter misinformation requires either ongoing investment from skilled staff to build close relationships before a crisis or supporting actors already trusted by local groups (often of another faith), rather than engaging them directly. As one interviewee from a national faith network pointed out, "these communities … don't accept a lot of outsiders …" Otherwise, where relationships with faith leaders did not exist, countering misinformation was challenging. Although they shared the same faith, another interviewee from an international FBO noted there was "no compulsion amongst faith leaders to automatically pick up our messages" as "we do not have any theological or religious authority." As an organization, not a faith leader or institution, trust had to grow through relationships, not religious authority.

To overcome residual mistrust from faith leaders and the challenges of distinguishing misinformation, one faith actor created guidance material that equipped faith communities to find accurate sources for themselves by establishing objective standards for trustworthy information. Two other faith actors recognized the role that faith could play in improving individual decision-making. One noted that spiritual reflection can redirect anxiety into positive activity and focused on encouraging people to act. The other recognized how misinformation flourishes in fear. An interviewee described how "people are scared so they tend to listen to whatever … [faith brings] that sense of peace … They can hear this information and not get overly worried, actually be able to analyze and to understand which information is correct … " They found that spiritual support calmed people so that they were able to use health information to make sensible decisions and increase their resilience to misinformation.

4.3   *Balancing Power and Localization*

To respond quickly and relevantly in a crisis, every organization experienced the importance of the balance of power in partnerships. COVID-19 enforced localization and shifted decision-making control for each faith actor, although to different extents and in different ways – the localization of international FBOs looked very different from decentralized chapter-based organizations. For some, localization was limited to greater input from national staff and partners due to restrictions preventing head office staff from traveling or the need for contextualized solutions. One international faith actor chose to disband

their initial nine-person expert team in favor of regional hubs to share learning: "No longer experts, everybody's in this mess together." Others set up global task forces to influence strategies, instead of concentrating decision-making in a headquarters. Another international FBO saw significant shifts within their own organizational decision-making. According to a global staff member, "[We] rapidly had to develop the capacity of our colleagues in-country. Some of them already had that, they were now just being afforded the opportunity." However, other faith actors saw little or no change or were unsure about the practicalities of further shifting decision-making control. Existing systems were often linked, with the same interviewee noting how the control of funding remained "very much centralized," meaning "where we would get a grant, we would be the ones held accountable." While positive about localization in theory, some felt it impossible within their current structures. Moreover, although COVID-19 often accelerated the localization of decision-making, other factors were also key, such as pre-existing strategies and relationships that COVID launched into the foreground.

The experiences of the faith actors most committed to localization suggest that national-level localization is not enough and that decision-making control needs to shift to local faith groups. They reported that many local faith communities felt a disconnect between global north "expertise" and their realities, one interviewee describing how "lockdowns and social distancing [were] out of touch with the way of life within those impoverished communities." This underlined the importance of holistic, contextualized approaches that support communities to reflect on their own context and find their own solutions, instead of them being imposed from outside. One regional staff member explained how they "received emails from people [asking] 'how do we "save" Africa?'" They described their frustration that "people think that they have the solutions for us." Conversely, where local faith groups felt able to take the initiative, responses were quick and relevant. An interviewee witnessed how "communities … didn't have to wait for manna from above. They just went into action." This was especially true where faith groups were trained and already engaging communities in asset-based approaches that broke mindsets of dependency and enabled them to recognize the resources that they had.

4.4 Technology and Inclusion: the Influence of Technology on Shifting Power Dynamics

Technology played an important role in increasing connection and facilitating wider partnerships, but it also mediated the kinds of partnerships that were possible, excluding some. It facilitated the shift to shared or decentralized decision-making. Several faith actors found that it equalized their internal relationships, allowing more frequent meetings which people from around the

world could join. One global staff member in an FBO felt it was "very equal-izing for us as an organization – we all meet and none of us are in a hub." There was also the potential for widened external interactions, although there were concerns about maintaining work-life balance in the expectations to be involved in as many forums as possible.

Where faith actors set up structured channels to connect and spiritually support members when in-person meetings could not happen, technology also supported mental health. This was not limited to group meetings but included one-to-one interactions – for example, encouragement to contact at least one person by message and calling every day. Hotlines enabled a greater level of support where required and helped to reach more isolated areas. An international FBO staff member explained how emotional support even occurred through global meetings if they were "relational as well as functional" and allowed people around the world to "discuss stories ... [and] draw strength from each other."

However, while technology increased the accessibility of information and connection for many, faith actors were concerned about further marginaliza-tion through digital inequality. While anyone could theoretically come to the table, internet access and engrained power imbalances shut many out of global conversations. In the words of one interviewee with a global role in an inter-national FBO: "[We] can't take things for granted: connectivity, internet ... the smallest voice can come to these tables, [but] who actually comes?" Disabilities create a further barrier if specific efforts of inclusion are not made. According to one interviewee, "members ... who can't hear are now struggling with having online meetings – they need ... sign language interpreters." Many also noted a generational divide, with older members finding it hard to connect.

To increase digital accessibility, participating faith actors came up with a variety of ideas, including sending money for airtime, setting up WhatsApp groups to share ideas and audio recordings (less bandwidth than Zoom), or creating hubs where people could join meetings from the same laptop. One faith actor taught elderly people to use the internet, through in-person classes where possible or newspapers and phone calls where not. Nonetheless, greater innovation and proactive effort is needed to reach the most vulnerable and to prevent technology continuing to divide.

5   Conclusion

COVID-19 created space for reflection, forced prioritization, and raised exis-tential questions. It has opened windows for change in approaches to faith partnership, if those involved have the courage to act. As one interviewee from

an international fbo expressed: "We want profoundly to be shaped by this experience … we do not want to go back to normal … It would be a tragedy if everyone just got on with that."

Very similar qualities emerged in defining effective partnerships, whether participating faith actors were considering their relationship with international agencies where they felt they did not have power, or their relationships with local faith groups, where the imbalance was skewed the other way. Firstly, a partnership cannot be short-term, issue-based, and limited to times of crisis. To build trust, it must be long-term, founded on mutual respect, and working on shared priorities. Secondly, decision-making needs to move to those who have most knowledge of their context and are trusted by communities: from global to national offices, and then to local faith groups. Finally, capacity needs to be developed and resilience built during times of stability so that local faith actors can respond in their own contexts with their own resources. Many of the most effective faith actor responses to COVID-19 emerged when local faith actors felt able to take the initiative using asset-based approaches.

In terms of internal changes to their structures and processes, faith actors identified the need to develop the capacity of their national staff to work with local faith actors on complex social and theological issues, establish trusted relationships and work together on long-term shared goals, and local faith communities to respond to issues using the assets that they have. They want to listen more deeply to marginalized voices through supporting local advocacy fora, valuing the skills of the young, establishing hubs in areas without internet, and specifically accounting for those with disabilities.

For international agencies and national governments who want to build effective faith partnerships, faith actors emphasized the need to set up long-term structures for cross-sectoral faith engagement, not just ad hoc partnerships at times of crisis. Moreover, to build in resilience, funding mechanisms need to give flexibility for local faith actors to invest in relationships, develop local capacity, and fully mobilize local resources. Finally, secular agencies and faith actors need to uncover complementary capacities through open dialogue and work together to build equitable relationships.

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Book Reviews

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Tides of Empire: Religion, Development, and Environment in Cambodia, by Courtney
Work. New York: Berghahn Books, 2020. Pp. 178. Hardback: $120.00/£89.00,
ISBN 978178920772.

Courtney Work's *Tides of Empire: Religion, Development, and Environment
in Cambodia* is set in the village of Sambok Dung, a fictional name given to
preserve anonymity, located in Kampong Chhnang Province in the south
west of Cambodia. After visiting the region for the first time in 2006, Work
returned for PhD fieldwork, living in Sambok Dung for one calendar year from
September 2009 and visiting for ten weeks in both the years 2011 and 2012, and
it is this fieldwork on which the book is based.

In the introduction, Work sets out two framings that underpin much of
the book's analysis: tides of empire, or imperial tides, and contact zones.
Throughout the book, Work uses tides to symbolise various movements,
governments, systems, and forces that have washed over Sambok Dung, and
uses their incessant ebbing and flowing 'to complicate the unidirectional,
destination-oriented ecologies … of development …' (p. 4). Additionally,
Work conceptualises contact zones as junctions, both material and immate-
rial, 'where the unstable boundaries of multiple imperial projects and mul-
tiple ways of being … are in close proximity' (p. 15). With this, Work is able to
identify multiple contact zones at myriad scales, including religion and poli-
tics in Cambodia, village and forest, and Sambok Dung itself. Following this,
it is Work's placing of other-than-human power, or Chthonic energy (from the
Greek meaning 'earth') at the centre of the analytical stage that sets this book
apart. In combining these three analytical frames – tides, contact zones, and
other-than-human power – Work seeks to elucidate how development, envi-
ronment, and religious practice are animated by non-human forces at the cen-
tre of social and spatial production in Sambok Dung.

Chapter 1, 'Shaping the Space', begins by introducing readers to *neak ta*,
or 'immaterial, agentive entities recognised as the Owner of the Water and
the Land …' (p. 11). In lay terms, *neak ta* (explored further in chapter 3) are
Cambodian earth or ancestral spirits closely linked to the surrounding land
and water, offering, *inter alia*, protection, healing, and guidance to worship-
pers. Work then segues into thick descriptions of both the people and place
of Sambok Dung. Here, Work foregrounds the importance of the surrounding
environment, noting that 'everything that creates (social) life comes from the

forest' (p. 13), viewing it both as a site of resources for the reproduction of daily life, but also as a place where 'one encounters powerful and capricious entities' such as *neak ta* (p. 13). The second chapter, 'A Roadology', explores how local transportation infrastructure intersects with and at times reproduces existing religious divides between Khmer Buddhists and Cham Muslims. Work also attends to distinctly non-human factors that shape road-building projects such as the flooding monsoon rains and influence of non-human teachers, or *kru*, that at times shape participation and power dynamics.

The third chapter, '*Neak Ta*', aims to disrupt the classification of *neak ta* as religion. Work does this by analysing *neak ta* through the lens of religion, and in this way argues that relegating *neak ta* to the category of religion overlooks its relational qualities amongst those who live in Sambok Dung. Indeed, while people in Sambok Dung were 'not deeply concerned with religious doctrine', *neak ta* proved to be 'inextricable from daily life' given that it is 'of the forest and of the village, of … bureaucracy, of agriculture, and of subsistence …' (p. 68, 80). Chapter 4, 'The Cham', switches the analytical focus to the Cham, an ethnic group descendant from the Champa kingdom in Vietnam. The focus of this chapter is the contact zone of religious practice, in this case Islam, and the coming tide of global Islam and international Islamic aid organisations and their shaping power on local religious practice in Sambok Dung. Well evidenced and clear, Work demonstrates both material and immaterial connections to the tide of global Islam through accounts of increased access to resources (infrastructure, education, etc.) upon conforming to 'a purified practice of Islam' (p. 96).

'Merit in Motion', the final empirical chapter, explores Buddhist notions of merit and practices of merit-making in Sambok Dung. Specifically, Work focuses on the ways in which temple offerings and building projects not only make merit, but also 'inform social hierarchies and projects of political power' (p. 107). Additionally, Work highlights the merit-making strategies among different classes in Sambok Dung by contrasting the merit-making practices of a poor grandmother and those of local politicians and wealthy business people (p. 115). Towards the end of the chapter, Work links the tides of imperial projects and practices of merit-making to the Buddhist doctrine of dependent arising, noting that in this case 'Invoking Buddhist theory … deepens academic theory, but more importantly, better situates that theory into the social context of the actors in this study' (p. 123). Work concludes the book by pointing to what could become the next tide to wash over the village, sustainable development, and the climate change policies and projects that will inevitably make their way to Sambok Dung.

In *Tides of Empire*, Work illuminates the ways in which religion, development, and environment merge to produce place and power in Sambok Dung. Work's acknowledgement and analysis of other-than-human actors, from monsoon rain to *neak ta*, is commendable, and in this regard, it would behove future scholarship at this intersection to follow in Work's methodological footsteps. Perhaps my favourite moment in the book was Work's notion of Buddhist theory deepening academic theory drawn out in chapter 5. Here, Work makes a novel contribution to this body of scholarship and this, in my opinion, is a practice that can and should be integrated into a field that is largely secularised. One thing notably absent from this book is an in-depth discussion of Work's own positionality and how this shaped her research. Work clearly and admirably states in the introduction that she is the 'construction manager' of the narrative, and that this requires her to be transparent about her position (p. 7). Despite this, in my opinion, there is little in the way of critical reflection on positionality, especially, and critically, on Work's own budding Buddhist faith alluded to in the introduction. Similarly, Work consistently refers to her interlocutors as 'friends', and while to me this is largely unproblematic, little unpacking is done on the boundaries between friendship and research. This boundary presents an interesting 'contact zone', and could link well to a critical reflection on the ways in which positionality works in mediating the boundary between friendship and research.

As someone not trained as an anthropologist, but whose work frequently takes him to the periphery of the discipline, I found this book somewhat challenging to read. The level of theoretical discussion can be deep, leaving someone unfamiliar with the theoretical ins and outs feeling, at times, lost. Nonetheless, *Tides of Empire* is an ambitious book that links the sometimes siloed arenas of religion, development, and environment. For an anthropologist familiar with the Cambodian context and religious landscape in Southeast Asia, this book is sure to be of great insight and benefit, and will nonetheless provide interesting points of departure for those unfamiliar with the study context but whose work intersects themes of religion, development, and environment.

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Dena Freeman, *Tearfund and the Quest for Faith-Based Development*. London and
    New York: Routledge, 2019. Pp. 208. Hardback: £96. ISBN 9780367360214.

Freeman's ethnographically grounded work invites readers to join her in explor-
ing the work of Tearfund, the largest Evangelical faith-based organization
(FBO). Overall, the book offers an engaging and teachable account of Tearfund's
global engagement in selected countries. Formed in 1968, with offices in more
than 50 countries, Tearfund has an annual income of £72,000,000, it engages
with 3,000 churches, and has a Board and staff who are practicing Christians.
Freeman moves the debate from typologies of "secular" or "religious" toward a
historically contextualized analysis that locates Tearfund between the secular
and Evangelical development sectors.

    In chapter one Freeman introduces Tearfund and highlights historical
changes within broader faith-inspired work that occurred alongside the indus-
trialization of Europe, 20th century global conflicts that prompted Evangelicals
to engage in development as part of their mission to promote humane rela-
tionships, and the early 20th century movement of mission organizations
promoting education and health around the world, culminating with the for-
mation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. In this chapter, Freeman
guides the reader through the formation of the League of Nations and of the
United Nations, to the expansion of humanitarian work led by Christian mis-
sions in the 1960s with the creation of the British "Big Five": the British Red
Cross, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Save the Children, and the British Ministry of
Overseas Development.

    In chapter two, Freeman traces humanitarian and development organiza-
tions from the 19th century onward, discussing religious and secular actors
in action, noting that religious actors promoted work that improved people's
lives. Voluntary societies in the UK addressed poverty, and faith organizations
also received funds from the state to address poverty. Several mission societies
were formed after the Great Awakening and several denominational initiatives
promoted preaching of the gospel, translating the Bible into local languages,
education, health, and development.

    In chapter three, Freeman focuses on the work of Tearfund between 1968
and 1993, a crucial period for the development sector. During this time, the
global refugee crisis motivated Evangelicals to donate funds to address the
situation in Hong Kong and East Asia, and along with other actors they raised
funds for rural development, water, food, and health services. Tearfund created
a unit to focus on evangelism and Christian education under the leadership
of Morgan Dereham. On May 19, 1968, Evangelical Alliance Relief announced

a development fund for "world poverty and Christian responsibility" with the creation of an ad hoc committee, which would ultimately become Tearfund. Tearfund supported missionary agencies, sent workers and specialists to undertake relief and development work, sponsored children, promoted local handicrafts, and embraced what Christians from the Global South called an "integral mission," an approach further elaborated in two plenary addresses at the 1974 Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization. The 1983 "Wheaton Statement" on theology of action grounded Tearfund's development work into the principles of transformation and kingdom theology. Tearfund expanded its services to cover disasters, providing technical expertise and specialists to undertake humanitarian work.

In chapter four, Freeman discusses Tearfund's work in the 1990s, when the NGOization of development thrived and faith-based development organizations grew in the US and the UK. During this period Tearfund restricted its own area of intervention through the "10/40 approach," which consists of the identification of an area between Africa and Asia "located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator where most non-Christians live" and focused its support on 300 organizations across 60 countries. This more targeted approach of intervention was particularly supported by the promoters of the "integral mission," with leaders like John Stott envisaging a holistic mission practice to their development work. Tearfund continued the conversation between Stott and René Padilla and grounded its projects on "spiritual passion and professional excellence." In 1998, René Padilla brought a "South-focused perspective" that encouraged Tearfund to expand its work in the area of micro-finance, food security, addressing conflicts, social issues, and the environmental crisis. The Rwandan genocide prompted Tearfund to prioritize local partnerships with operational expertise in disaster management and promoted standards and codes of conduct adopted by humanitarian NGOs.

In chapter five, Freeman discusses Dewi Hughes, who wrote *Tearfund: Mission, Beliefs, Values*, a publication that anchored Tearfund's Evangelical beliefs. René Padilla who became the head of Tearfund, promoted "integral mission," and linked missions to a rights-based development approach that was promoted through the Micah Network, an idea grounded on the text in Micah 6:8, which states that God required people to "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." With *Paths out of Poverty*, Tearfund articulated a theological vision that stressed sustainable livelihood in local communities through an approach aimed at overcoming weaknesses of the secular development approaches that have previously failed. Tearfund emphasized the relationship between structural inequalities and poverty and developed the idea of Church and Community Mobilization (CCM) based on the work that Gladys Wathanga

had done with World Vision in East Africa. This approach promoted evangelism and development at the time of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Freeman devotes chapter six to the analysis of local and global advocacy campaigns designed to combat poverty and inequality. In the 1990s, Tearfund joined the global campaign addressing structural inequality and global imbalance in trade. Tearfund also embarked on a campaign for climate change called *Whose Earth?* Tearfund joined the Jubilee 2000 campaign to end international debt and raised donations toward debt relief through its Global Action Network to campaign against poverty on biblical principles. Tearfund gathered signatures, mobilized protesters at the G8 summit, and directed talks with British officials about the impact of the debt on the people in Zambia. The Jubilee campaign largely succeeded as world leaders wrote off $130 billion of debt owed by poor countries. Tearfund continued with other campaigns such as Water Matters, mobilization around HIV/AIDS, and global conversations on ethical tourism.

In chapter seven, Freeman discusses the institutionalization of faith-based development and the internal push that Tearfund experienced to become "a more professional organization meeting the needs of poor people in the most efficient way possible" through the work of local churches promoting "a deeper, holistic faith-centered type of transformation." Under the new leadership of Frost, Tearfund expanded its work to include Bible reading and community mobilization, as well as promoting behavioral change in fighting sexual and gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS while receiving more funding from the Global Fund and PEPFAR. During this time, they also expanded their CCM methodology, that had by then been adopted by other religiously inspired development organizations. In this chapter Freeman offers a detailed analysis of different case studies investigating the scrupulous work of Tearfund in disaster management, with examples from Africa and Latin America highlighting internal tensions and external problems, such as clashes with local communities where Christianity was a minority religion. The chapter also gives space to Tearfund's advocacy work in the UK and in the UN, especially around discussions on climate change. Overall, between 2006 and 2015 Tearfund worked to release 50 million people from spiritual and material poverty worldwide, mainly achieved through localized action, putting churches at the center of their development work.

In chapter eight, Freeman discusses the further movement of Tearfund toward "mainstream" international development, from 2015 onward. Nigel Harris, the new CEO, developed a new strategy "to see people freed from poverty, living transformed lives and reaching their God-given potential." In his publication *Overcoming Poverty Together* he made the case that transformation

could only take place if local and international collaborators would see human flourishing as the end-game of this transformative process. In line with mainstreaming conversations in the development sector on the need to better monitor and evaluate development work, during this time Tearfund developed the "Light Wheel," a tool to assess the effects of Tearfund's work based on a theology of restored relationships between people, God, and the environment that stressed stewardship of the environment.

Freeman's well researched and compelling book is full of insights on how Tearfund embraced public advocacy and development work while balancing its Evangelical ethos. The book is enriched with many personal accounts of Tearfund actors. For example, reading about René Padilla and John R. W. Stott's frequentation at the Lausanne Conference, one is left wondering whether the relationship with Padilla influenced Stott's later publication *Preaching as a Social Act*, which I believe was a groundbreaking book for Evangelical preaching. Freeman's book has the great merit of enriching critical discussions within the international development sector with historical details and insights on theological battles that reminds the readership of the complicated history of Evangelical social action. I highly recommend this book for courses on religion and development.

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Butinage. The Art of Religious Mobility, by Yonatan N. Gez, Yvan Droz, Jeanne Rey, and
    Edio Soares. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021. Pp. 231 Paperback: $ 45.00,
    ISBN 978-1-4875-0880-7.

With "Butinage. The Art of Religious Mobility," the social anthropologists Gez,
Droz, Rey, and Soares present a comparative empirical study of the religious
mobility of believers and situate lived religion in its mobility and dynamics
between religious belief, individualization, and social normativities.

The core argument of the book is that religious identity is no longer designed
along formal and exclusive church affiliation, but it must start from the lived
religion of individuals. Further, religious identities are seen as "fluid, circum-
stantial, and somewhat personalized" (p.11) and the practicing believer as a fun-
damentally mobile one, which becomes the "fundamental way of being" (p.15).

Their observations are illustrated by drawing on the previously developed
metaphor of "butinage" (Soares 2009; Gez et al. 2017) to introduce a concept
for describing religious mobility that challenges fixed church affiliations and
supersedes the classical, Pauline concept of "conversion". Using the metaphor
of "butinage," the everyday hustle and bustle of bees, the "continuous to-ing
and fro-ing" (p.13) between religious communities is described as a "default
state" (p.13) of believers, but also influenced by the beehive, i.e., related to the
sociocultural environment. The "butineur" ultimately becomes, with reference
to Aristotelian philosophy, a "peripatetic practitioner" (p.143), a wandering
practicing believer.

With this monograph, Gez et al. connect to discussions of religious mobil-
ity and conversion (Hervieu-Léger 1999; Goreen 2010), belonging (Davie 1990),
belief (Ashforth 2011; Kroesbergen 2019), and, of course, to questions about
theological implications of the phenomenon of religious mobility (Kroesbergen
2019), offering many points of connection with the metaphor of "butinage".

After a critical examination of religious normativity, the authors provide four
field studies (conducted in Brazil, Kenya, Ghana, Switzerland) that are selected
in a contrastive manner both geographically and linguistically. Guiding the four
cases was a "triangular relationship [...] between religious-institutional scripts,
social norms, and individual agency" (pp.141), each differing in the accentua-
tion of the individual factors. In the third part, Gez et al. offer a systematization
of the theoretical considerations on the metaphor "butinage" and try to offer
a practical tool beyond the metaphor. The authors comprehensibly present a
toolbox by means of which different forms of religious identities are desig-
nated, which are independent of institutional affiliation and are measured by
the intensity of practice.

With a further development of "butinage," lived religious practices and "contradictions, ambivalences, and inconsistencies between scripts and practices" (p.34) as well as the "embeddedness of religion in the broader spectrum of social practices" (p.32) can become visible. In this way, religious experiences and practices outside of religious institutions become recognizable, and the intertwining of individual, institutional, and social factors becomes clear.

The basis of the publication is a cross-country comparative ethnography of four countries which, while exemplary, bear witness to deep expertise based on many years of research by the authors. Data was collected from in-depth, semi-structured biographical interviews and from participant observation in religious services and analysed along the iterative process according to the principles of Grounded Theory Methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967). In selecting interviewees, a variety of criteria, snowballing procedures, and random selection of people in public spaces were used in an attempt to achieve the greatest possible diversity. With this spectrum, the researchers examined "what people actually mean when they conceive of religion and religious practice" (p.43) and are in this way open for putting to the test a Western conception of religion that suggests a necessary connection between religion and belief.

Despite the specifics of the mobility pattern in the different countries, the authors can identify "key trends" (p.141) in the mobility behaviour of believers through comparative ethnography. A convincing "typology of butineurs" (p.143) is elaborated, which can be divided into the categories "polyfloral", "monofloral" and "monochromatic", thus illustrating "varying degrees of dynamism" (p.145). While "monofloral" and "polyfloral" butineurs tend to be exceptions, the majority of believers are more likely to be "monochrome mobility," that is, moving within certain given "territories" (p.147). While it would be interesting to explore the reasons for mobility, the authors shy away from doing so due to methodological and conceptual difficulties. Nonetheless, the authors identify three perspectives of mobility logics, which they divide into "practical, social, and inclined" (p.155). In this way trends in the reasons for movement are highlighted.

Finally, the authors develop the model of "Religious Repertoires" (p.171; also Gez 2018), which allows religious mobility to be understood "as an integral part of a vibrant identity" (p.177), of religious identities and to bridge the gap "between the institutional and the lived religion perspectives" (p.178).

As proven experts on the respective countries, the authors present a concise description of regional practiced religious mobility. Based on the observation of lived religion, the authors criticize the Western concept of membership, shaped by the mainline churches, which no longer corresponds to the reality of many

believers, both in the global North and South. Starting from the actual lived religion, the authors look with a "critical eye toward Eurocentric, Abrahamic conceptions of religious affiliation" (p.21) and criticize a Western-influenced concept of religion. A definition of religion via "belief" and institutionalized commitment is questioned, which needs to be challenged for many regions of the world and thus calls for further research.

This approach becomes the decolonial strength of the work when Western-formed, often seemingly normative conceptions are not imposed on other cultural realities, and voices of local people are heard.

With this publication, the authors enrich the current scholarly discussions about concepts of mobility and belonging, religion and belief, which are of utmost relevance – not only in ethnological discourse. With the concepts of "butinage" and "religious repertoire", religious practice is taken seriously without neglecting institutional religiosity and integrating social normativity. The findings are important and further-reaching for theological approaches that pose the question of the conception of church and start from people's lives in a way that is sensitive to the present and does not stop at church boundaries.

The book's findings are highly relevant and connectable to social anthropology, religious studies, and theologies and is recommended to anyone interested in lived religion between religious institution and individualism.

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Learning Morality, Inequalities, and Faith: Christian and Muslim Schools in
   Tanzania, by Hansjörg Dilger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.
   Pp. 266. Hardback: GBP 75.00, ISBN 978-1-316-51422-1.

On Sunday, December 20, 2015, Tanzania's daily newspaper *The Citizen*, was
adorned with the headline "Tuition fees in private schools 'unaffordable'." The
news reporter brought to readers' attention that for many years "tuition fees
charged by owners of private primary and secondary schools have remained
unregulated" and that the owners should be condemned for "exploiting their
fellow Tanzanians on the pretext of providing education to their children" (*The
Citizen*, Sunday, December 20, 2015). In 2018, following an increased public
outcry, the Principal Regulator of the Quality of Schools ordered all heads of
private secondary schools to provide their school fees "to update government
statistics" (*The Citizen*, Tuesday, November 6, 2018). But private school owners
objected to the order, arguing that it would slow down education standards in
the country (ibid.).

   The complaint over the fee structure of private schools and the government's
intervention indicates the inequalities engrained in schools, creating binaries
between the rich and poor in urban Tanzania. They are also symptomatic of
how people move their children between schools to pursue a better life for
them. The aspirations of many parents, notwithstanding the annual increment
in school fees, echoes Hansjörg Dilger's book *Learning Morality, Inequalities,
and Faith*. In delving into the entanglements of faith, morality, and the edu-
cation market, Dilger shows how Christian and Muslim schools have gained
prominence in the public sphere and among parents as important targets of
the quest for "good life" – which entails among others a happy and prosperous
life with a decent job. The "failure of public schools" in 1990s Tanzania elevated
Christian and Muslim schools in Dar es Salaam and appealed to the growing
urban and middle class from Christian and Muslim backgrounds (p. 1). Thus,
amidst "the failure" of public schools, religiously owned schools "offered refuge
from the state" and "became a contingent survival strategy" for parents' and
students' quest for the better life (Giblin 2006, 55; Lal 2010, 2).

   The book centers on Dar es Salaam, a sprawling city whose Christian and
Muslim population has increased over the past two decades in response to
the challenges of "modernity" and globalization (cf. Dilger 2007), to show that
people's everyday quest for a "good life" is shaped by learning and teaching,
moral self-hood, and effective orientation of teachers' and students' "moral
ways of being in the world" (pp. 14–15). The work is based on ethnographic
research conducted in six religious-oriented schools between 2008 and 2010,

covering nine months of fieldwork. Dilger's selection of schools centered on schools' different levels of education and socioeconomic background in the city's educational market. But all schools in which ethnographic research was carried out followed similar government curricula and were committed to teaching moral values. Results from these schools, envisioned by Dilger, would help to explain how students' and teachers' pursuit of "good life" could be explained within the context of Tanzania's entangled histories of education, religious differences, and social inequalities (p. 226).

In probing into the subject matter, the book grounds itself in "morality," "moral becoming," "good life," and "inequalities" as analytic categories to show how they are embodied in the everyday lives of students and teachers in faith-oriented schools. These terms are also used as "marketing feature[s]" to distinguish "the educational setting and the way of life practiced by its staff and students" (p. 22). For both Christians and Muslims, "moral becoming" embodies, among others, honor, dress, and bodily comportment, and the highest discipline. It also entails notions of order and discipline, national belonging, and physical conduct. The book shows that these pointers of moral becoming are accommodated in the everyday lives of Christian and Muslim schools. They shape relations between students, teachers, parents, and the community. In the end, the indicators of moral becoming prepare students to find positions as "good Muslims" and "good Christians" in an urban setting engrained in spiritual, moral, and material challenges (p. 139).

With moral becoming and the aspirations for the good life at the core of faith-oriented schools, students' education setting fosters what Dilger terms "a sense of academic and moral belonging" that is evident through networks of local, national, and international belonging between students and teachers (p. 119). Moral belonging, writes Dilger, reinforces among students and teachers a sense of being connected to, identifying with groups and localities within and beyond schools, and becomes "acts of solidarity and care" (ibid.). These networks build relationships of belonging forged within the school's environment and inextricably linked to the "material and immaterial aspirations" of students and parents, amounting sometimes to identities and practices (pp. 119–120).

Indeed, the book is elegantly written, lucid, and intellectually enriching on the entanglements of faith, morality, and the education market of Christian and Muslim schools in urban settings. Dilger deserves an accolade for producing a *magnum opus* on the development of religion and education in urban Tanzania. Academics, researchers, and students in anthropology, history, development studies, education, and religious studies will find this book

informative in advancing the frontiers of their academic and research agendas. Although education development in Tanzania has attracted much scholarly attention (cf. Buchert 1994; Ishumi & Anangisye 2014), no work offers readers glimpses into morality, inequalities, and faith in faith-oriented schools. This book, therefore, has attempted to fill that void by looking at ways in which Christian and Muslim schools established in the wake of privatization provide refuge from government schools and are therefore sought by families and students because they combine "high-quality education with the moral (self) formation of the young people" (p. 2).

The quality of the book also rests on Dilger's success in skillfully putting a comparative analysis of Christian and Muslim schools into a single volume. It shows that the moral becoming of students and teachers in the metropolis of Dar es Salaam ought to be understood in the context of "the unequal positions" that the schools occupy in the education market and Tanzania's public sphere (p. 19). Dilger's comparative analysis of the subject matter builds on literature that calls for the study of Christian and Muslim ideas, practices, and organizations in sub-Saharan Africa in general and Tanzania in particular "as part of overarching historical configurations and within a single analytical framework" (p. 21). The extensive fieldwork involving a collection of the voices and lived experiences of individuals, teachers, and leaders of the schools' administrations makes the work a most comprehensive, informative, detailed, thought-provoking, and intellectually engaging piece. The range of data collected from fieldwork inspires Dilger to show how schools become "distinct cultural spaces" where "overarching values of a society or nation state are taught and embodied in specific ways" (p. 22).

Dilger's magnificent work contributes knowledge to networks of local, national, and international belonging among students and teachers to the enhancement of "moral and academic belonging" in urban Tanzania (p. 119). Thus, a discussion on "fictive" or "networked" kin relations within and beyond the milieu of the school is worth noting in showing ways in which teachers and students in faith-oriented schools create "affective communities" based on shared experiences (cf. McMahon 2013, 196; Prichard 2017, 4). These networked kin relations are essential in probing the admission of students, the employment of teachers, and extended networks of teachers, students and parents in churches and mosques.

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