

Borderland Religion

Migration and religion: A mutual impact

How can religion impact migration, does migration impact religion? The visibility of migrant people is evident on all continents today, and the moral, political and theological challenges connected to this visibility is also more than evident. The workshop *Borderland Religion* will focus these issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. What is the new and unforeseen – ethically, politically, theologically – which we might develop in these radically demanding contexts? Do we see new trajectories of a process of Protestantization (Berger in Banchoff 2007)?

We think that the practices and the life worlds on the borders and in the crossing of the borders need to be analysed and interpreted. These places might be spaces where the traditional contradictions between religion and non-religion, religion and politics and the ethical and the emic are contested and reformatted.

Although migration scholars (Spickard and Adogame 2010; Levitt 2004; Marshall-Fratani 1998) have made it clear that religion has almost always been transnational in nature, we have during the last thirty years, not only witnessed the movement of religious traditions and practices across national border (Asad 2009) but also seen the various ways in which migration has spawned new taxonomies of what constitutes religious forms and practices.

As we consider the religious imaginaries of migrants in the US-Mexican border regions, migrants accessing social services in the buildings of a protestant church in Sweden or the massive migration within and out of Africa, we hope to reflect together on how this impacts religion and how, and in which way, religion might impact migration and life in the borderlands.. Machado (2007) reminds us that migrants always live with borders, and with at least two cultures and/or nationalities. She argues that these ‘borders are not [necessarily] only geographical, they may be internal, emotional and social’ (2007, 97). Thus between the legal and theological discourses about migration exist a luminal space.

We contend that both Agamben’s assertion that states of exception are the rule – that migrant people exist outside the law in a kind of non - place, as well as the traditional theological notions of migrants as victims which often render them as without agency fails to account for the luminal space as a productive space. The religious work in this space is made possible by the embodied experiences of migrants who populate and move through borderlands.

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We invite presenters at the workshop, which will take place at Union Theological Seminary and City University of New York from Nov 12 to Nov 14 2015, to ground their papers in concrete cases from the fields developed above. Papers could also elaborate spatial and border concepts in order to discuss the formatting of religion in modern society.