REONTOLOGIZATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE LIQUID AND GLOBAL WORLD

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Abstract

In this article, I intend to highlight the fact that the realities that are being recorded at the morphological level of contemporary societies (the phenomenon of migration, wars, the dynamics of mobility and communication, the economic pace, the health crisis generated by Covid-19) are bringing to the fore the redefinition of *religious identity*. What is undeniably clear is that Western societies have become an ethnic and religious mosaic, a diversity that requires specific regulations in terms of norms in order to avoid conflict. However, this ethno-religious diversity also calls for an interpretation of the relationship between identities. The aim of my analysis is to argue as to whether or not religious identity is an inflexible, immobile reality, static in its representativeness *towards* and *in relation to* other identities representing different religious cultures. In this respect, I will insist on the role that migration plays in the construction of religious identity. Is religious identity decomposing in the context of the *liquid* flow of global society? Are the boundaries of such an identity, as structures of individual, social, cultural validation, desubstantiated in the daily experience of religious diversity and in the dynamics of current societal transformations?

Keywords: identity, religion, borders, globalization, migration.

Résumé

Dans cet article, j'entends souligner le fait que les réalités qui s'enregistrent au niveau morphologique des sociétés contemporaines (le phénomène de migration, les guerres, les dynamiques de mobilité et de communication, le rythme économique, la crise sanitaire générée by Covid-19) mettent au premier plan la redéfinition de l'identité religieuse. Ce qui est indéniable, c'est que les sociétés occidentales sont devenues une mosaïque ethnique et religieuse, une diversité qui nécessite des régulations spécifiques en termes de normes afin d'éviter les conflits. Mais cette diversité ethno-religieuse appelle aussi une lecture des relations entre les identités. Le but de mon analyse est d'argumenter pour savoir si l'identité religieuse est ou non une réalité inflexible, immobile, statique dans sa représentativité envers et par rapport à d'autres identités représentant différentes cultures religieuses. A cet égard, j'insisterai sur le rôle que joue la migration dans la construction de l'identité religieuse. L'identité religieuse se décompose-t-elle dans le contexte du flux liquide de la société mondiale ? Les frontières d'une telle identité, en tant que structures de validation individuelle, sociale, culturelle, sont-elles infondées dans l'expérience quotidienne de la diversité religieuse et dans la dynamique des transformations sociétales en cours ?

Mots-clés : identité, religion, frontières, mondialisation, migration.

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Rezumat

În acest articol îmi propun să evidențiez faptul că realitățile care se înregistrează la nivelul morfologic al societăților contemporane (fenomenul migrației, războaiele, dinamica mobilității și comunicării, ritmul economic, criza de sănătate generată). de Covid-19) aduc în prim plan redefinirea identității religioase. Ceea ce este incontestabil clar este că societățile occidentale au devenit un mozaic etnic și religios, o diversitate care necesită reglementări specifice în ceea ce privește normele pentru a evita conflictele. Cu toate acestea, această diversitate etno-religioasă necesită și o interpretare a relației dintre identități. Scopul analizei mele este de a argumenta dacă identitatea religioasă este sau nu o realitate inflexibilă, imobilă, statică în reprezentativitatea ei față de și în relație cu alte identități care reprezintă diferite culturi religioase. În acest sens, voi insista asupra rolului pe care îl joacă migrația în construirea identității religioase. Se descompune identitatea religioasă în contextul fluxului lichid al societății globale? Granițele unei astfel de identități, ca structuri de validare individuală, socială, culturală, sunt desubstanțiate în experiența zilnică a diversității religioase și în dinamica transformărilor societale actuale?

Cuvinte cheie: identitate, religie, frontiere, globalizare, migrație

The reality of *identity* is widely debated today, whether we are talking about religious, cultural, political, national, social identity, etc. The analyses that revolve around this concept derive from the manner in which man feels the need to perceive himself, to have a *place* and a *meaning* in the network of today's world, a world in constant transition from its old patterns to others that are being shaped by these new trends of adaptability.

An identity's way of *being* involves a conscious and rational act of observing, situating and relating. Today's logic of interaction, based on the premise of elasticity and the dynamism of global interconnectivity, places one (religious) identity *in relation to* another (religious) identity. And each religious identity has its own particularity: the tendency for its defining criteria (its dogmatic belief, cult, behavioral expression, religious affiliation) to be representative. After all, do globalization and migration have a relativizing or articulating effect on religious identities? This is a natural question that calls for a theoretical analysis with statistical arguments. I should point out that my analysis is not strictly sociological, although I do use data from specialized studies. I have instead opted for an interpretative analysis that hermeneutically reflects the complexity of the social construct of religious identity.

1. Social identity and religious identity - conceptual-theoretical approximations

Every concept has a history of its theorization and meaningful application. The significance of *identity* in the course of the development of social thought shows how people thought in the past and how people think today according to the contextual reality in which they are situated. Conceptually, *identity* retains a complexity of nuances and meanings. It is difficult to suggest a definition that summarizes the elements that characterize identity. The plurality of definitions

under which the concept of *identity* is examined requires an interdisciplinary approach, it laying at the intersection of cultural anthropology, social psychology, philosophy and political studies (Izenberg, 2016).

The conceptualization of *identity* is based primarily on the implicit and explicit answers to the questions: Who am I? Who are you? Identity frames not only "who I/we think I/we are" (individually or collectively), but also "who I/we are acting as a being" in interpersonal and intergroup interactions and how I/we are socially recognized by others. As a consequence, the question "Who am I/are you?" encompasses a range of diverse but related contents and processes, which are in turn highlighted by different theoretical and meta-theoretical perspectives (Vignoles et. al., 2011, p. 2).

From a social point of view, *identity* can be understood as the dynamic outcome of a process of subjective self-awareness that results in a self-constructed resource that satisfies the need for belonging and integration within the tendency of giving meaning to life (Zanetti & Gualdi, 2022, p. 179). The construction of identity is therefore the result of a process that unfolds over time, an experience of transformation shaped by the context in which a man is born, grows up, and matures as a subject aware of himself and of the others. In this sense, identity can be defined as the capacity for self-recognition based on continuity, a persistence that is subjected to the flow of time, of everyday experience and psychosocial commitments. Identity marks the state of being of the self in the continuous or discontinuous vector of the rhythm of the world. Thus, the construction of identity takes into account: (a) the passage through the experience of temporality, time having both an internal-subjective and an external-social dimension suggested by the interaction of several social segments and layers, (b) the inseparability of the relationship with the social environment and the particular relationships that man has in the course of his life. On the premise of these elements that factor in the construction of an identity, theorists have developed the idea that identities are not static, fixed, but fluid, i.e. situated in a constant flux of change (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Social-psychological and discursive approaches to identity suggest that personal and social aspects of identity can fluctuate substantially depending on the context in which an individual finds itself. Discursive approaches to identity suggest that individuals shape their identities as they unfold during social interactions (Potter, Wetherell, 1987).

In a series of multilateral clarifications, M.A. Zanetti and G. Gualdi (2022, p. 180) point out the convergent elements that form the definitional profile of identity: (a) identity claims the idea of equality and difference; (b) identity is not a reality or an entity that is forever immobile, fixed, but a constantly changing reality, which continually evolves and is subject to social and cultural influences and transformations; (c) the process of constructing an identity does not take place within the confines of the human interior, in isolated conditions, but materializes in the relationship with others and in a social and cultural context; (d) identity is constructed in the dialectic between *equality* and *otherness*, which responds to the need, on the one hand, for the identification in the resemblance

to the other, and on the other hand, to the need for the affirmation of uniqueness, by distinguishing oneself from the other, by establishing boundaries between our self and the other. The construction of identity in terms of self-perception in relation to otherness is a progressive experience through which one takes rational, cognitive, emotional note of what gives substance to the uniqueness of the self. In a way, the structuring of identity requires each individual to establish, for his or her own stability, permeable boundaries that can be crossed, but at the same time to differentiate cognitively from the other.

Identity can be defined on three levels: *individual, relational, collective* and *material* (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). Although the distinction between these three types of identities can be understood as a distinction between different forms of identity content, it is widely seen as referring to different types of processes through which identities are formed, maintained and changed over time. *Individual* or *personal identity* refers to aspects of self-definition at the level of the individual person. These include goals, values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, standards of behavior and references for decision-making, self-esteem and self-evaluation, desires. *Relational identity* refers to a person's roles in relation to others, framing how these roles are defined and interpreted by the individuals that assume them. In this relational setting, identity is defined and located within interpersonal spaces, family and other social settings (Bamberg, 2004, pp. 366–369). Such an identity requires the recognition of a social group. *Collective identity* refers to people's identification with the social groups and categories to which they belong and the meanings that derive from this identification with them, involving the idea of belonging in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender (De Fina, 2007). However, I am not wrong if I also bring into the discussion a *material identity*, which is suggested by the frameworks we are provided with in our lives: clothes, cars, houses, etc., but also a *digital identity* projected in the space of online communication on various social media platforms, which does not necessarily correspond to our concrete physical identity. And, to complete the definitional framework of identity, we have to talk about the multiple aspects of a person's identity, aspects that intersect and interact in our day-to-day experience (Amiot et al., 2007). According to A. Sen every individual, as a person, has multiple identities, and the relative importance of a selected identity can change depending on the context or the priorities of the person under changing circumstances (Sen, 2002).

We are now in a better position to understand religious identity, which is at its core a social identity in conjunction with the conformity to the precepts of a religious tradition. According to Sarah Azaransky, religious identity describes how a person or group understands, experiences, shapes and is shaped by the psychological, social, political and devotional aspects of religious membership or affiliation (Azaransky, 2010, 631). Given this plurality of elements that go into the makeup of a religious identity, what is its substance? It is very difficult to formulate an answer to this question.

Religious identity is a molded identity, constitutive of man, but which develops in its content under the influence of a number of factors. Religious institutions and the family are most often mentioned as the structures that play a providential role in the formation of religious identity. These institutions provide several sets of beliefs, moral perspectives through which an individual can understand and legitimize his or her identity from a religious point of view. Cultic acts, social-religious actions, religious communities provide material and concrete opportunities for an individual to confirm and reaffirm aspects of their religious identity. But N. T. Ammerman has insisted that religious identity is never confined to a religious institution or kept within private boundaries. It lies in the tension of expansion, of openness, of communication. Religious identity does not imply rigidity, but an act of presence in relation to an otherness. For this reason, the construction of religious identities is a dynamic process in which a person is shaped by other identities that intersect within his or her life experiences. He concluded that religious identity is the result of an ongoing and fluid negotiation between dominant narratives, institutional authority and individual agency (Ammerman, 2003).

L. Peek identified three stages in the development of religious identity: *religion as ascribed identity*, *religion as chosen identity* and *religion as declared identity* (Peek, 2005). *Religion as ascribed identity* describes the religious identity of most people during childhood and adolescence. In this time frame, religious identity is accepted and represents an everyday norm in behavioral expression. It cannot be debated, as the cognitive and rational resources to understand the relevance of religious identity are lacking. In the course of intellectual development, people come to digest and interpret the relevance of this identity, and therefore come to understand that they have the ability to choose their own religion, which corresponds to the second stage - *religion as chosen identity*. The third stage - *religion as declared identity* - suggests an awareness of the relevance of religious values as a publicly expressed existential and social meaning.

Therefore, the background of religious identity is a complex *system* of psychological, cultural, social, historical, ideological elements, articulated, like any other identity, in a logic of distinction between the universal and the particular. Reflecting on the scriptural text of the *Epistle to the Galatians* (3:28: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"). Miroslav Volf (1996) pleads for emphasizing the religious identity situated in a transition of becoming to the extent of the reconciliation of all identities in which selves are situated at a given moment, concluding that, for a Christian, identity means a shift of allegiance from particular identities to a universal identity in Christ. This kind of religious identity requires the privileging of a transcendental ideal over historical identities or of the universal over the particular. Daniel Boyarin (1994) has interpreted this scriptural text as suggesting a radical call for a non-hierarchical, undifferentiated humanity, given that in the ancient Roman Empire, as well as in the contemporary world, society was organized along hierarchies of

nationality, class and gender. Ethnic and political distinctions were recognized by the Apostle Paul, but for those believers incorporated into the horizon of the Christic community, these distinctions no longer mattered.

For Jeffrey Carlson, religious identity is a dynamic process that involves selecting, appropriating and internalizing elements from a wide range of possibilities, even if a person understands themselves to have developed their religious identity from the pool of resources of a single tradition. Religious identity is a composite of various elements brought together in the midst of a cultural and linguistic frameworks that limit and make possible an identity. We thus speak of a syncretic religious identity, elastic beyond its formal, fixed, stable frameworks (Carlson, 2000).

2. Global fluidity and transition from *closed identity* to *open entity*

And yet religious identity has a presence in society. The society of the 21st century also differs radically from the society of previous centuries. The determining factors that have reshaped today's society are modernity and globalization. Somehow, globalization is the consequence of the progress brought forth by modernity. I will not dwell on this issue. What I am interested in is whether or not religious identity is still a fixed, stable, self-centered reality in the context of globalization.

Ronald Robertson (1992) is certainly one of the most renowned theorists of the phenomenon of *globalization*; a phenomenon synthesized in a defining formula as a "compression of the world", i.e. "the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole". Interdependence is the global norm that engages all aspects of life. The relationship between time and space has been altered by globalization. Time has another reference in human perception: the instantaneous, the speed with which we move from one place to another, the speed with which we communicate digitally. And space has somehow been diluted in its physical aspect, in the sense that people from different parts of the world take part instantaneously through the internet, the media in global events. What was once at a great physical distance away is now simultaneously accessible and localized, in the sense that the local becomes the experience platform of the global. This, of course, does not imply that the material reality of space and time has changed, but that globalization produces a different kind of perceptual experience. Events, things that take place at great distances on the map of the world, are at the same time condensed into the everyday experiences of man as their observer, but also as their participant. This leads Mark Davis (2008, p. 139) to speak of a "phenomenology of contraction" of space and time through globalization. The rhythm of life is accelerating, which dictates new formulas for adapting to this unfolding of daily experiences. Globalization is the flow that connects cultures of ideas, goods and people with unprecedented speed, scale and quantity, creating a transnational arena in which religious identity is engaged in new experiences of the dual relationship of *I - you, we - you.*

In this context, I find the sociological perspective on globalization put forward by Zygmunt Bauman (2007) to be providential. He introduces the concept of *liquid modernity*, which denotes contemporary reality from a sociological and political point of view and describes the condition of constant mobility and change in relations, identities and the global economy in contemporary society. This metaphor of a "liquid modernity" suggests the re-stratification of the world's population into those who are free to move globally and those who are condemned to a life lived locally. In this dynamic, life itself becomes *liquid* in the sense of prevalent fear and insecurity at both macro and micro levels in the global spectrum. In today's fast-paced society, people enjoy many more facilities to travel, irrespective of the motivations for such travel. Whether they are economically motivated, in order to achieve a better standard of living, or whether they are undertaken for cultural or social entertainment, travel flows reconfigure the status of identity. Regardless of where one is, hundreds or thousands of kilometers away from the geographical space of their birth or where they live, one maintains contact with the familiar space of home and even with multiple places simultaneously. This is achieved through digitized communication, which though virtual, the act of its presence in the communication circuit is real.

For these reasons, these new mobility schemes, in which migration plays a defining role, make the transition from the logic of *enclosed entities*, exclusively circumscribed by their native space and culture, to the flexibility of *open entities*. However, it should be noted that re-localization and implementation in the substrate of a new society entails the immediate consequence of diminishing mobility, as it has become easier to maintain a concrete link with one's country of origin while living elsewhere. It could therefore be argued that national identities and national communities are increasingly becoming *transnational identities* and *transnational communities*. Identity has become somewhat ubiquitous in its virtual aspect projected into the network of digitized communication. Consequently, it is no longer appropriate to conceive the world of the 21st century in terms of "rationally organized hierarchies of sharply bounded territorial containers" (Houtum, 2012, p. 406). Travelling people, migrants/immigrants cross their own borders, both national and cultural, experiencing other geographical spaces, other mentalities, and other cultural ways of life, they being neither here nor only there, but mentally, virtually and digitally in many places at the same time. This process of mobility has important consequences for the conceptualization of borders, identities and nations.

3. Redefining the parameters of identity: from "solid borders" to "liquid borders"

The term *border* suggests the construction of one identity distinct from another. A *border*, in the etymological sense, indicates the end, the extreme limit that separates one domain of any kind, territorial, linguistic, social, cultural, religious, from another (Zanetti & Gualdi, 2022, p. 181). The border specifies the edge of our identity, separating the content of "what is inside" from the sphere of

"what is outside", but perceived as a relationship, and similarly marking the distance of particularities and circumscribing the content of that identity, whether we are talking about national, cultural or religious identity. However, the clearly defined demarcation of the world's religions is particularly problematic where eclecticism, syncretism and inclusiveness create a complicated pattern of overlapping and intertwining traditions within the same territorial perimeter, as is the case in the Indian zone, where the experience of religious interaction and pluralism is millennia old (Geaves, 1998). Geopolitical, cultural and social borders can no longer be understood as fixed and dichotomous. This reality has given an impulse to the theoretical re-dimensioning of the concepts of *border*, of *identity* in their new meanings, moving from the study of the delimitation of borders as static, well-articulated geometries to the examination of the continuous construction of borders in the global dynamics of interconnectivity (Parker, 20090.

Thus, the border is, in a theoretical formulation, the framework of the presence and continuity in a space of an identity reality, objectified in everyday social, political, cultural and religious practices. In this order of ideas, the concept of border as a territorial demarcation line has been re-dimensioned in the meaning of border as a differentiation of mental landscapes, identities and socially constructed meanings (Wilson & Donnan, 1998). A border is not a self-contained entity, detached from other territories or societies, but a constructed and ever dynamic socio-spatial configuration of social relations and networks. Today borders are no longer seen as fixed, linear, stable boundaries delimiting identities, territorial frameworks. The conscious and rational experience of man as an *entity-in-relation-with-others* goes beyond the formal framework of identity and territorial boundaries. In the global dynamic, the interconnection that frames the *place-granularity-man* in the same equation is re-ontologised. Territorial boundaries are practically transcended, territorially de-substantialized. They are rethought in terms of man's everyday experience as interferences with otherness, as interfaces between people that reveal themselves contingently.

Global dynamics, whether we accept them or not, lead to processes that extend *cultural homogenization* or to processes that create *cultural heterogeneity*, with religion incorporated into the content of culture (Plüss, 2011). *Cultural homogenization* occurs when the cultural characteristics of one region are established in another region, without them being modified as a result of the new cultural environment. This process rearranges the locations of borders by extending them transnationally. Transnationalization leads to the proliferation of new and reformulated borders as spheres of culture, ethnicity, language and religion (Lehman, 2002), but it does not transform the essential substance of culture, ethnicity, language, religion. A double consequence of such a rearrangement of borders can be noted: it intensifies cultural, ethnic, religious diversity in the host space for immigrants (with its positive and negative consequences), and connects people by establishing transnational interactions. *Cultural-religious heterogenization* occurs when the migration of cultural and religious characteristics from one region to another creates new cultural and

religious forms that embody the characteristics of several regions simultaneously and creates *hybridity* by combining the cultural-religious characteristics of these regions. *Heterogenization* transforms human beliefs and practices when they come into contact with another religious culture.

In the absence of an accelerated experience of interconnectedness in past centuries, since the 20th and 21st centuries, the pattern of representing spaces and people as separate entities and borders as two-dimensional lines on a map needs to be overcome. The current complexity of transnational reality and the multiplicity of human life calls for a new formulation of borders. Sandro Mezzadra proposes the formula of *liquid borders* as a representation with multiple and ambivalent meanings. This on the one hand, indicates the mobility and heterogeneity of borders, and on the other hand, it suggests their reception today, in the sense that they are rather elusive formations, no longer encapsulated by the solidity of a wall, which is only a possible instantiation of the border. Their multiple components, legal and geographical, political and cultural, linguistic and religious, are not necessarily bound together by a 'line drawn in the sand', but by particularities of identity. "Liquid borders" is a metaphorical construction involving notions such as mobility, flexibility, heterogeneity and even the elusiveness of borders (Mezzadra, 2021).

4. Migration and the construction
of a new metamorphosed religious-cultural identity

We have mentioned the fact that the phenomenon of migration is a consequence, but also an agent of globalization, which, together with the modernist tendencies of secularization policies, is prefiguring the visibility of religious diversity. What interests me is to decipher how migration plays a key role in the construction of the identity of young generations, a perishable identity, open to new horizons of reception of religiosity, or rather of spirituality.

Migration is a reality that is constantly increasing in numbers. According to the *United Nations - Department of Economic and Social Affairs* (UN-DESA) report, there will be 280,600,000 international migrants in 2020.
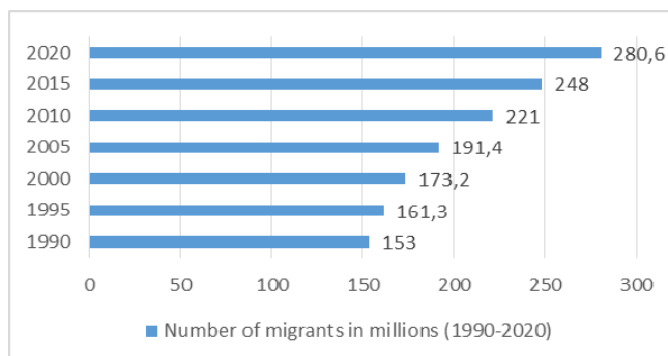

Figure 1. Number of migrants 1990-2020

Through the flow of migration, the population of each Western metropolis has become "an aggregate of ethnic, religious, lifestyle enclaves in which the borderline dividing the *insiders* and the *outsiders* (foreigners) is a hotly debated issue for political, national, economic, social reasons. Throughout history, migration has been a constant reality. Zygmunt Bauman mentions three different phases in the history of migration in the modern era, which were generated by the dynamics of societal transformations: (a) the first wave of migration followed the logic of the tripartite syndrome: territoriality of sovereignty, *rooted identity*, gardening posture. This was migration from the 'modernized' center. (b) The second wave of migration was generated by the dismemberment of colonial empires, when a number of indigenous people followed their colonial superiors back home. (c) The third wave of modern migration, which is still in full swing, led to what Zygmunt Baumana called the "age of diasporas": "a global archipelago of ethnic/religious/linguistic settlements" articulated by the need for global redistribution of living resources (Bauman, 2011).

We can also mention a fourth wave of modern migration, generated by political and religious conflicts in some Middle Eastern countries. Thus, the *Pew Research Center* (2016) notes that in 2015 the number of applications for political asylum in the European Union reached a record high: 1.300.000. Of these, most asylum applications came from three countries - Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq - where religious conflicts caused by radicalized Muslim militants have led to a major wave of global migrants. Refugees from Syria numbered 378.000 in 2015, accounting for 29% of all asylum seekers in Europe - the largest share. This was up from 125.000 in 2014 and 49.000 in 2013. 193.000 refugees were from Afghanistan (up from 23.000 in 2013 and 39.000 in 2014) and another 127.000 from Iraq (up from 9.000 in 2013 and 24.000 in 2014).
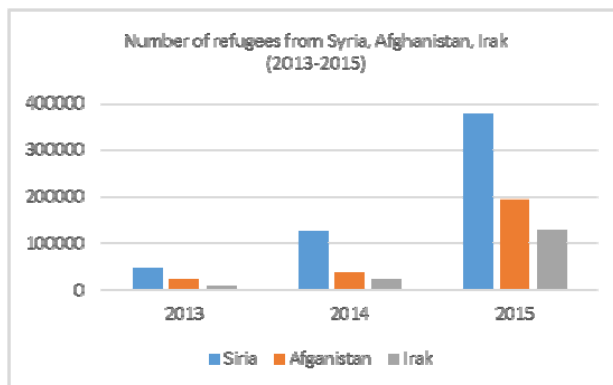
Figure 2. Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Irak (2013-2015)

Migration, as a phenomenon that actualizes a constant new map of people's interaction in different places and different cultures, entails in Kay Deaux's view two theses in the analysis of *identity*: (a) the reality of a *multiplicity of identities*, representing different aspects of the self that may vary in importance/ prominence and relevance/evidence for a given time or place; (b) the concern with the processes of choice and change that reveal the flexible and dynamic characteristics of identity (Deaux, 2020). Through migration, identity is taken out of its context and re-located in a foreign space, a land that causes it to change and reformulate its structural patterns. For the immigrant, the questions concerning the definition of the identities with which they relate, the interpretation of compatibility or incompatibility between different identities and the consideration of changes in their own identity structure are inevitable. Most immigrants arrive in their destination country with a strong sense of their national and ethnic identity. This is the first phase of experiencing the new social framework in its complexity. However, once the immigrant is settled in the destination country, a new option emerges for them, namely a new national identity. Existing identities, such as ethnicity and religion, often continue to be essential for the immigrant, but at the same time the meaning and acceptability of those identities may be subject to new challenges and new frameworks for their certitude and legitimation need to be established. Consequently, the immigrant's identity structure may be redefined in the experience of these new conditions. What we have to mention is that the climate of the host country has a major influence on the composition of immigrants' multiple identities (Burke & Stets, 2009, pp. 130-154), or more correctly on the different variables of the same identity, as this climate ranges from expressing discrimination against the immigrant, either ethnically or religiously, to a positive attitude of hospitality that encourages incorporation and adoption of a new national identity.

Here we should point out a clarification that reflects the realities in different countries of the world. For example, in the case of France. Immigrant assimilationist strategies aim to minimize cultural differences in order to maximize social unity at the level of the state. The state is indivisible, secular, ensures the equality of all citizens before the law, regardless of origin, race or religion, and respects all beliefs. If the State, as an abstract entity, can claim to be neutral, it is not self-evident that the people who constitute the State and society will behave in the same way. Discrimination is present in France in all spheres. An example of this is the failure of 'les cités', the apartment blocks built in the suburbs of cities all over France, originally conceived as an area where everyone would eventually become culturally French, but which have turned into ghettos, notorious areas where the law is sometimes unenforceable because of the high crime rates. At the opposite end of the French spectrum are the multicultural strategies in which diversity plays a key role. Cultural communities are allowed to form and flourish. The state does not impose a single model or set of values. It protects the general freedom to live according to one's own cultural and social norms, as long as no one abuses their freedom or interferes with someone else's

lifestyle. However, even this project of multiculturalism is showing its limits in countries such as the UK, where terrorist attacks by radicalized British Muslims are evidence of the failure of their integration and of their promotion of pluralism (Zucca, 2009)

After these theoretical clarifications, I would like to focus on one fact: the way in which young generations experience their own identity, and, more articulately, I would like to elaborate on the situation of the young immigrant. This is because tomorrow's generations will relate to religious, cultural and national identity in different ways. Young generations, in this global context that unpacks religious traditions creating a psycho-market of demand and supply of religiosity, a plurality of options, are much more prone to a reinterpretation of the identity and legitimacy of a religious identity. They experience the daily intersection of religious diversity and it is much easier for them to endorse their preference for something that is more transparent, offering, diluted in content than something that has consistency. They perceive the boundaries that mark identities with great difficulty because interaction, experienced at all levels, is the defining trait of our modern society. Why is this the de facto state? The answer is a complex one involving psychological and social factors. Identity formation in immigrants is a much more complex process as they have to reconcile different identity options: ethnic, personal and cultural, which are often in conflict. The construction of the immigrant's identity focuses on the relationship between the individual, their culture of origin and the receiving culture, i.e. the culture into which they come. This is all the more complicated in the case of teenage immigrants, as they undergo a double transition: the transition from adolescence to adulthood, on the one hand, and the experience of a society that is completely alien to the framework in which they were born and psychologically formed as teenagers, on the other. Situated at the junction of two different cultural worlds, they have to define themselves by overcoming the feeling of alienation from their own identity culture and the status of 'stranger' in a world to which they do not belong ethnically, nationally or religiously. In order to adapt interculturally, the young immigrant can use various cognitive resources, assisted by social integration programmes developed by the public authorities, private institutions or human rights NGOs which seek to respond as quickly and as coherently as possible to the immigrant's lack of horizon.

Unfortunately, the encounter of two different cultures in the consciousness and perception of a young immigrant can cause significant transformations. The feeling of stability, of one's self becomes more difficult to identify, as they have to learn to manage dissonant cultural contexts. They become aware of the national and ethnic boundaries that surround them and are therefore required to incorporate more rules, values and expectations according to the 'rules of the house'. All of this leads to a situation of greater instability, which causes and intensifies the conflicts that adolescents experience and which are often not so much attributed to fundamental issues such as moral, political or religious issues, but rather to issues of lesser significance and more connected to day-to-day life.

For these reasons, establishing the religious boundaries of one's identity is a much more complex process, as it involves an experience of reconciliation between two systems of cultural values and beliefs (the new context and their family context of origin) in an act of psychosocial balancing. In this process, there are major risks of slipping towards depersonalization, towards radicalization of young immigrants, as the feeling of uncertainty and non-belonging becomes a filter in the everyday experience. The meaning that identity claims in its structure is suggested, even through manipulation, by negative agents that place the young immigrant in a state of conflict with himself, but especially with the foreign culture, distortedly projected as a reality contrary to his values (Ilie, 2007). This is the situation of many young Muslims who are radicalized by some religious leaders in order to serve a supposed cause of religious justice. Sociological data indicate that most of those who commit terrorist acts in the West are either teenagers or young adults (TE-SAT, 2021, p. 16).

In this context, young immigrants are not only confronted with changes related to their development and cognitive-social maturization, typical of their age, but also with those related to their location and integration in a social organization and cultural tradition very different from those of their family's origin. They find themselves in this condition of "multi-belonging", or rather "combining" different belongings (Valtolina & Marazzi, 2006).This psycho-social situation is reflected in the process of redefining this fluctuating identity between three scenarios: (a) "neither here nor there" - neither identifying with the culture of their new space, but neither connected with the culture of the original space in which they were born; (b) "here and not there" - adapting to the new cultural context, but breaking away from the context of the place from which they left; (c) "not here, but there" - not adapting to the new social and cultural context, but in a continuous tension with it, and tributary to the culture and context in which they were born. From this point of view, there is a risk that the integrity of their identity being shattered under the pressure of the norms that enter the flow of society, but also under the pressure of fragmentation in terms of discernment, choice, belonging.

5. Conclusions

From what has been presented in the previous sections of this study, we can conclude that identity, and particularly religious identity, is a processual construction engaged in a continuous search for balance and stability between different values, rules, beliefs, patterns of different places. The outer layer of identity, which provides coherence and substance to the sense of self, becomes more permeable and sensitive to external and internal changes and influences in everyday social experiences. The process of constructing identity is relationship-dependent, strongly influenced by social and psychological contexts, all the more so in today's global and liquid society. Migration, the unpacking of local traditions and accelerated mobility create a transnational space that stretches the boundaries of identity. The 21st century human being taking part in this

experience is situated between the tension of defining himself in this world and the concrete experience of religious diversity, which offers several religious options. This may imply what Charles Taylor calls the "fragilization" of human identity (Taylor, 2007), in the sense that religious identity is drawn into new social realities dictated by the fluid transition of the rhythm of life, the plurality of cultural-religious versions, the synthesis of the global into the local.

However, identities that are indebted through their belonging to traditional religions remain intact in their structure, although they are socially and humanly "obliged", in the context of contemporary challenges, to a permeability, a relational elasticity. At stake here is the human potential of each religious tradition to overcome the state of isolation and exclusivity that creates walls and barriers. Dogmatic boundaries can be overcome in their irreconcilable notes through dialogue. Acceptance of difference is a constructive and uplifting aspect of supporting tolerance. If we were to explore the ethical and moral underpinnings of each religion, we would discover the values of unity, fraternity. For example, *love* of one's neighbor (Matthew 22:39) goes beyond the proper boundaries of Christian identity. In practice, Christian identity is not a static reality, but a relational one, and here the dimension of the concept of the person is relevant. Love takes you out of the context of your own boundaries, be they social, political or cultural, and places you inside the experience of humanization.

I conclude with a text that seems to me to excellently punctuate my intentions expressed in this study: "Every discrete identity is marked by boundaries. Some things are in, others are out; if all things were in or all things out, nothing particular would exist, which is to say that nothing finite would exist at all. No boundaries, no identity, and no finite existence. The same holds true with religions. Though necessary, boundaries need not be imper-meable. In encounter with others, boundaries are always crossed, even if only minimally. People and communities with dynamic identities will have firm but permeable boundaries. With such boundaries, encounters with others do not serve only to assert our position and claim our territory; they are also occasions to learn and to teach, to be enriched and to enrich, to come to new agreements and maybe to reinforce the old ones, and to dream up new possibilities and explore new paths. This kind of permeability of the self when engaging another presupposes a basically positive attitude toward the other- an attitude in sync with the command to love the neighbor and, perhaps especially, to love the enemy" (Volf, 2007, p. 278).

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