



Diasporas,
migration
& identities

The role of religion for migration and integration

June 2011, Brussels



What I'm going to talk about

- What is religion?
- Why is religion so important in the migration process? What is distinctive about it? A brief resumé of the academic debates.
- What does religion do? What cultural, social, temporal and spatial resources does it provide?
- How do individuals, groups and wider societies draw on these in relation to migration, settlement and integration?
- Positive and negative attributes and resources?



Religion, migration, integration: my background



- Hindus and Hinduism in Leeds
- Religion, identity and migration
- Community Religions Project (particularly South Asian religious communities in UK)
- Religion, community and locality
- Institute of Religion and Public Life
- A spatial approach for the study of religion
(*The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*, 2005)
- 'Religion and Society' research programme
- Director of 'Diasporas, Migration and Identities' research programme





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AHRC strategic initiatives

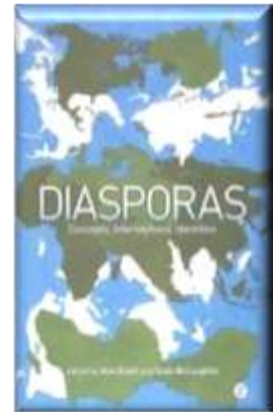


- ‘Diasporas, Migration and Identities’ was one of the first strategic interdisciplinary research programme to be funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.
- The purpose of such programmes is “to invest in areas where there is a sense of intellectual urgency and where a concentrated stream of funding may be needed in order rapidly to advance the field”.
- The programme ran from January 2005 to May 2010 with a total budget of £6.3 million (more than 7mil Euros), and 49 projects.

Diasporas, Migration and Identities Programme



- Programme website, www.diasporas.ac.uk.
- Final programme report available on website.
- A programme book, *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities* (Sept 2010, Kim Knott and Sean McLoughlin eds).
- Director's Impact Fellowship (*Moving People, Changing Places*)





What is religion? (The abridged version)

- “Religion”: History of a concept
- Is religion just an aspect of identity?
- How does it differ from ethnicity, and from culture?
- Religion and community
- Religion and the secular
- Another useful concept: The “sacred”



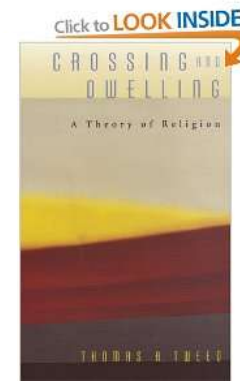
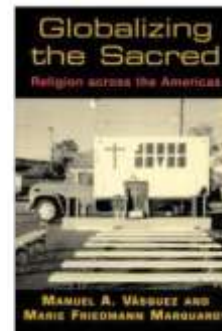
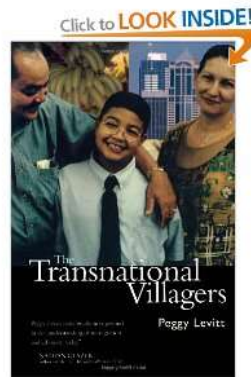
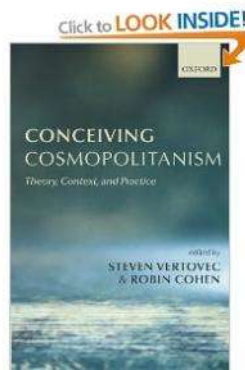
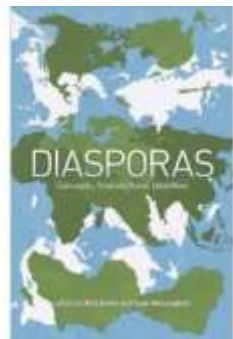
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What is distinctive about religion
for migration and diasporas?

A brief historical resumé

Selected resources for reflection

- Mol: Identity and religion
- Knott: religion, migration and diasporas
- McLoughlin: religion and diasporas
- Vertovec: differentiating migration, transnationalism and diaspora; focus on ethnicity, religion, cosmopolitanism and superdiversity
- Levitt: Transnationalism, religion and integration
- Tweed: Crossing and Dwelling: a diasporic theory of religion
- Vasquez: religion, politics and migration
- Bauman: communities and the reification of culture (**warning**)



Why is religion important? What is distinctive about it?

Academic debate in the 1970s-1980s

- In *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1970), Glazer and Moynihan had suggested that religion had declined as an instrument in ethnic identity formation.
- Religion, the sacralizer of (ethnic) identity (Mol 1978)
- Abrahmson (1979): “It is only in contact between cultures, as in the classic role of migration, that ethnicity and religion assume a dynamic and social reality of their own.”
- What happens to a religion/religious group when it moves to a new location (Knott 1986)

Why is religion important? What is distinctive about it?

- 1980s Race and ethnicity debates often excluded any discussion of religion, until the post-Rushdie period and the work of Tariq Modood (Islam, identity and the state).

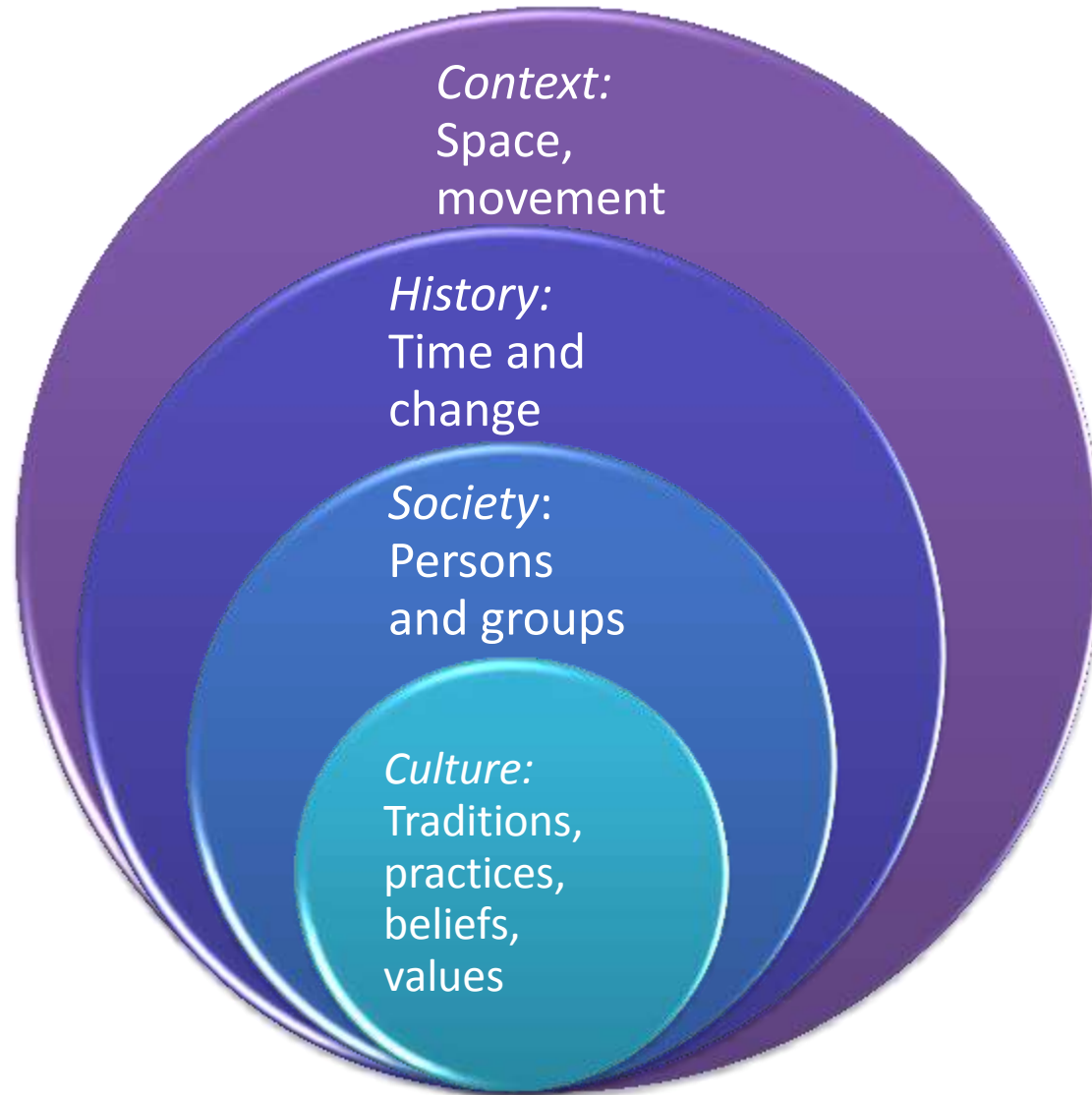
1990s – 2000s

- Shift of focus from migration to transnationalism, diasporas and globalisation (Levitt, Vertovec, Vasquez – included consideration of religion).
- Religion, space and crossing (Knott, Tweed)



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In relation to migration and the settlement and integration of diasporic communities, what does religion do? What resources does it offer?



Four arenas in which religion operates and provides resources



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As we look at each of these arenas in turn, have in mind migration and integration, and the work that religion does in that context.

Culture:
Traditions,
practices,
beliefs, values

Instructive ways
to live and to die

Transferable norms,
moral guidance,
parables and stories

Transferable practices ,
symbols and rites

Folk, esoteric models, knowledge
and practices

Explanatory accounts
of the way the world is

Experiential and
emotional
resources

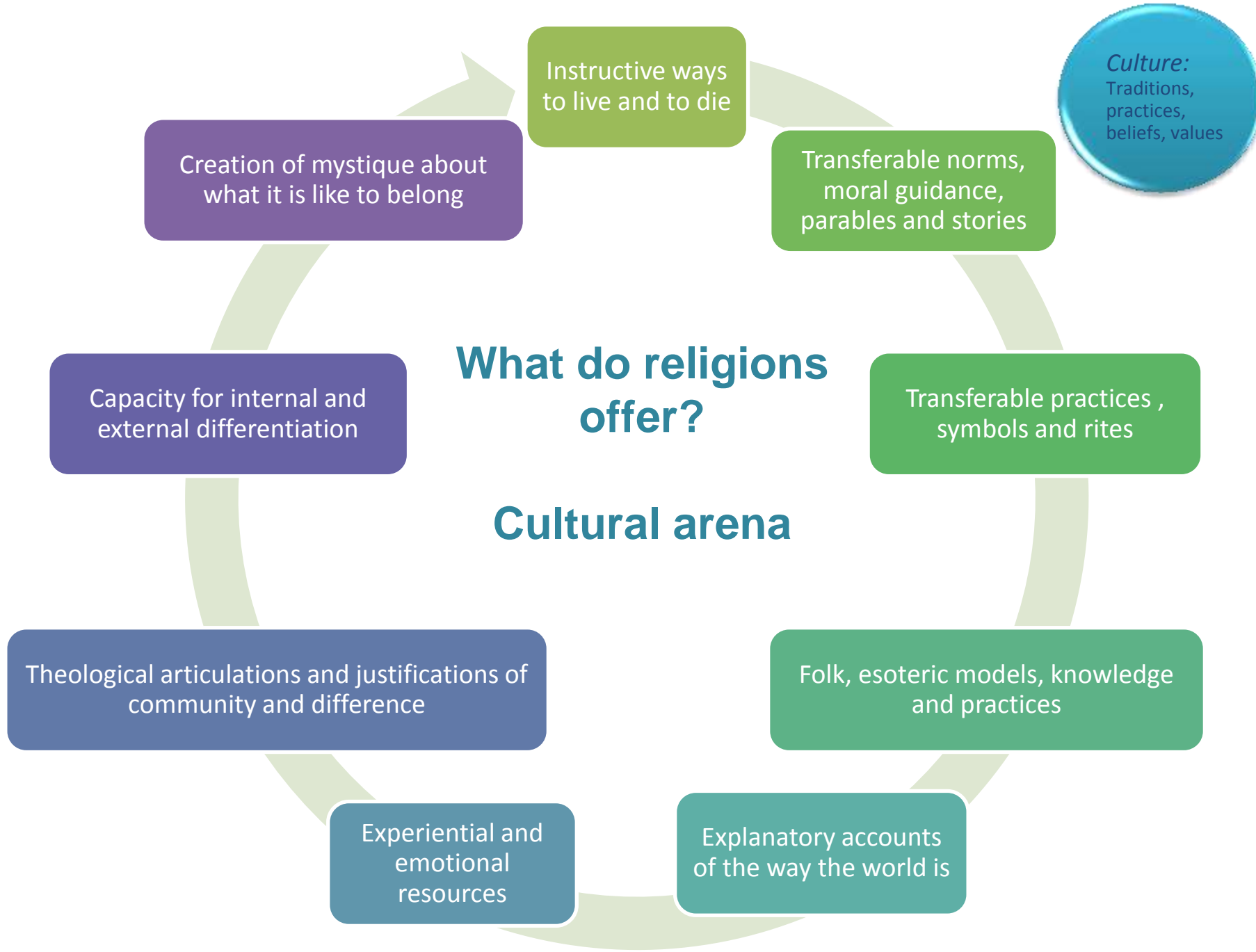
Theological articulations and justifications of
community and difference

Capacity for internal and
external differentiation

Creation of mystique about
what it is like to belong

What do religions offer?

Cultural arena





Identification with particular group/s

Resources for making, maintaining and ordering community

Resources for building identity

Roles and hierarchies based on spiritual knowledge, power and status

Sacralisation of individual and group dynamics

What do religions offer?

Social arena

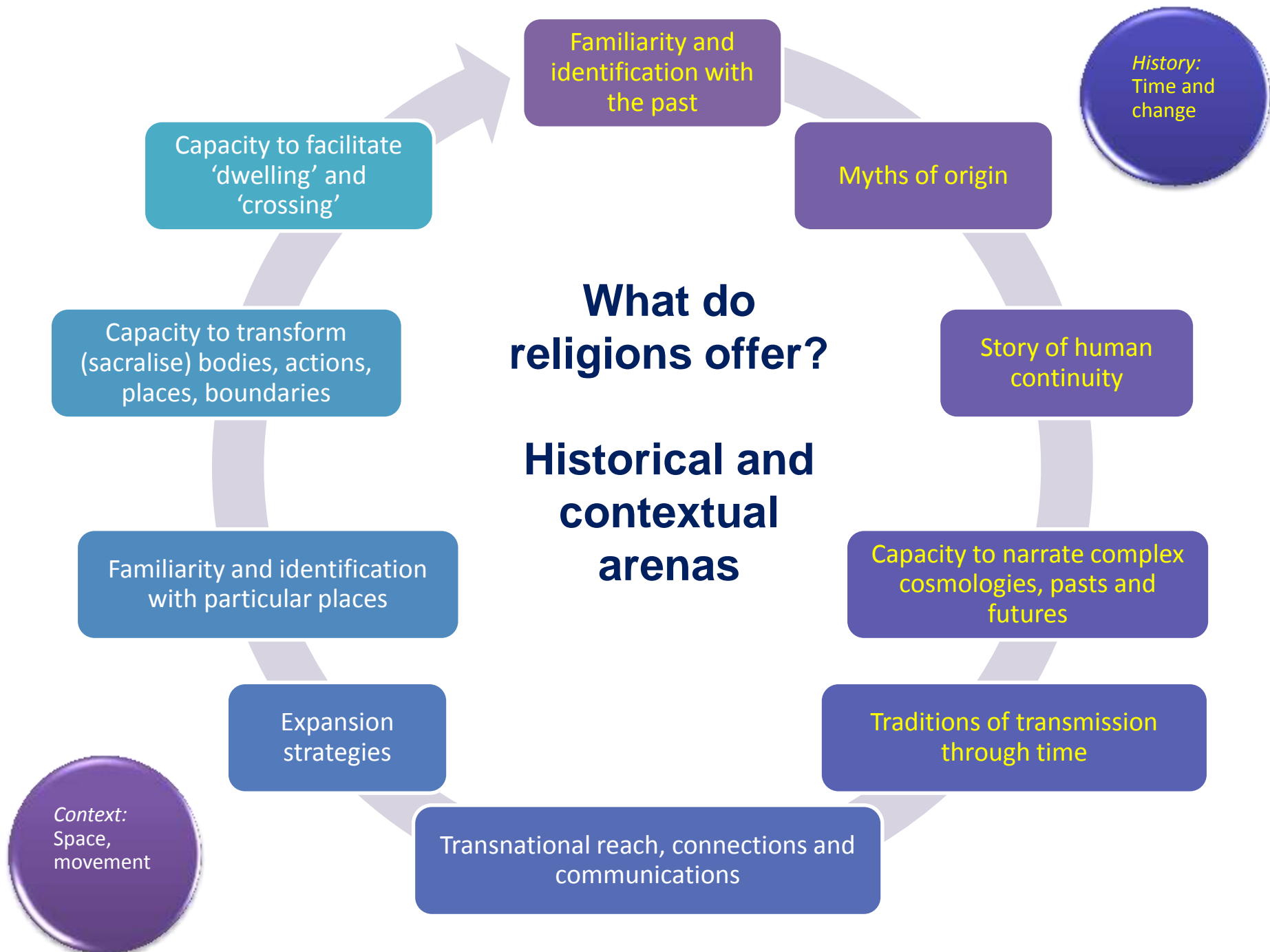
Theologies of inclusion and exclusion, boundary-making and 'Othering'; practices of inclusion and conversion

Conceptions of how society should be and of relationship between religion and the state

Acknowledgement of supernatural as well as human agency

Theologies of divine/human relations and associated norms and practices





Questions

- What do these attributes and resources bring to the migration and settlement process?
- Are some drawn on more than others for creative use by migrants and settlers?
- Do religious people have particular type/s of capital that can be drawn on in the migration and integration process and for sustaining a diaspora? (Religious or spiritual capital?)
- Do they create social and emotional spaces that can enable them to endure as migrants/diasporans?
- Do religions have special boundary-making and boundary-marking properties that they can use in the migration/settlement process?
- Is it possible to go beyond seeing religion merely as the sacraliser of identity (a functionalist explanation of what religion does in the migration process)? Is it not about 'being' as well as 'doing'?



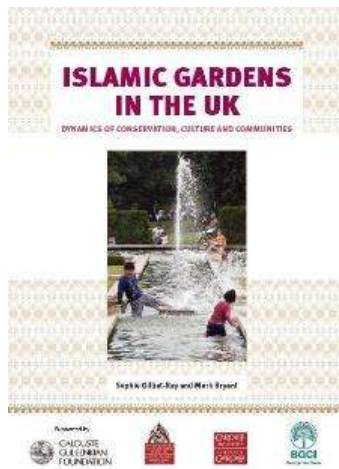
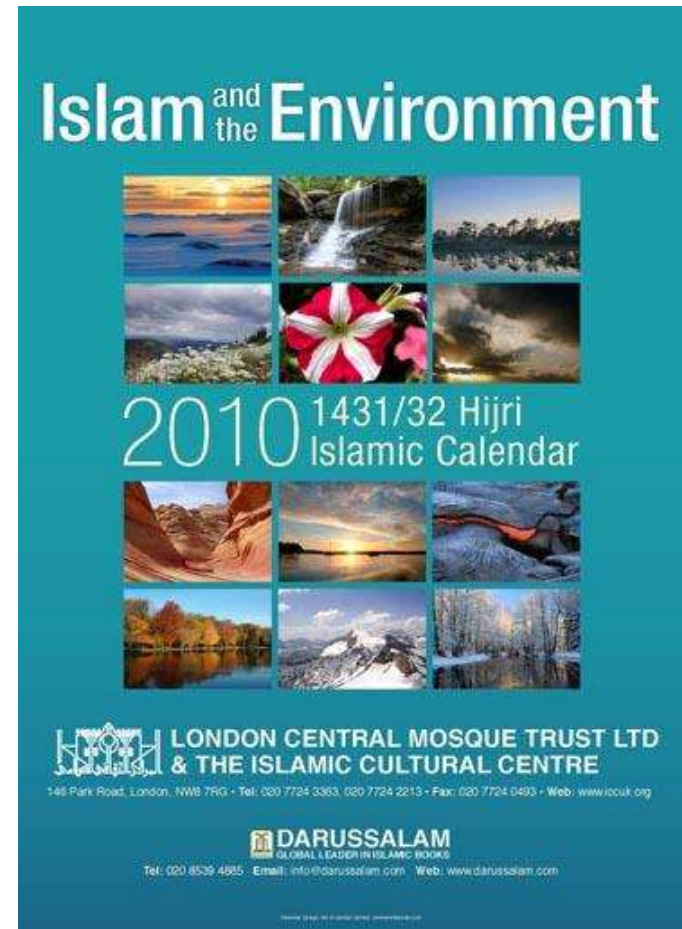
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*Latin American
immigrants in the
New South: Religion
and the Politics of
Encounter
Manuel Vasquez*





*British Muslims:
Islam, social
engagement and
the environment
Sophie Gilliat-Ray*



Key attributes and resources for migration, settlement and integration



Resources for making, maintaining and ordering community

Resources for building identity

Theologies of human relations, creation, destiny and associated norms and practices

Experiential and emotional resources (for envisioning the future, for coping, helping others etc)

Transferable norms, moral guidance, parables and stories (values/traditions)

Transferable practices (inc rituals, festivals, life cycle rites), symbols, texts

Stories of human continuity (ancestors, future members)

Transnational reach, connections and communications

Capacity to transform (sacralise) bodies, actions, places, boundaries

Resources and attributes that *may* inhibit integration

Resources for building identity

Transnational reach, connections and communications

Expansion strategies

Folk, esoteric models, knowledge and practices concerning the body, the divine, divine/human relations, personal destiny

Familiarity and identification with the past (selective)

Roles and hierarchies based on spiritual knowledge, power and status, and authorisation of those in such positions

Conceptions of how society should be and of relationship between religion and the state

Theological articulations and justifications (and practices) of difference; theologies of inclusion and exclusion; practices for erecting social boundaries and for 'Othering'

Creation of mystique (among those who are outside) about what it is like to belong, to know and to experience the insider's culture)

Conclusions: *Religious attributes and resources help new migrants to settle and integrate, assisting them to...*

- build and sustain communities through donations and volunteering
- protect and support their members
- build bridges to others
- use their theological resources to drive engagement and change
- maintain transnational linkages that aid development back home and maintain family and religious connections
- sacralize their new localities
- cope with exclusion, pressures for assimilation, negative press and the emotional difficulties of migration
- develop diasporic stories of migration and settlement in a wider context of religious narrative
- and build a future and connect the generations; to transmit culture to the next one.

BUT...



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June 2011