

P5: Digital Relationships and Local Religious Communities

Our project explored how (un)important – and how (non-)digitable – religion and (religious) communities are for digital natives with migration histories.

We conducted long-term fieldwork among a) asylum seekers and b) migrants with residence permits. We included a transreligious spectrum of persons, ranging from Albanian Muslims and Instagram witches to Iranian dissidents and Eritrean Christians.



Picture 1: Asif Bashir // Dribbble


Objective of Project

How important is the experience of digital and non-digital religious community for digital natives with migration histories, and in how far are religious (community) experiences digitable* to them?

**(i.e., possible to be digitised, digitalised, digitally transformed or digitally replaced)*

Methodological Approach

- Online and offline ethnographic research with digital natives with migration histories

 **Subproject 1:** Refugees (both religious and non-religious)

 **Subproject 2:** Religious persons who already possess the Swiss right of residence

- About 50 interlocutors in total

- Main methods: participant observations, semi-structured interviews, digital ethnography

- Languages: English, German, French

Main Findings

Both interlocutor groups assessed the (non-) importance of community similarly, yet not the importance of religion.

While many refugees did not feel a sense of belonging to any (digital/non-digital, religious or non-religious) community, many religious or religiously enculturated digital natives with permit of residence claimed to need religion, yet not necessarily (non-digital or digital) community.

Disclaimer:

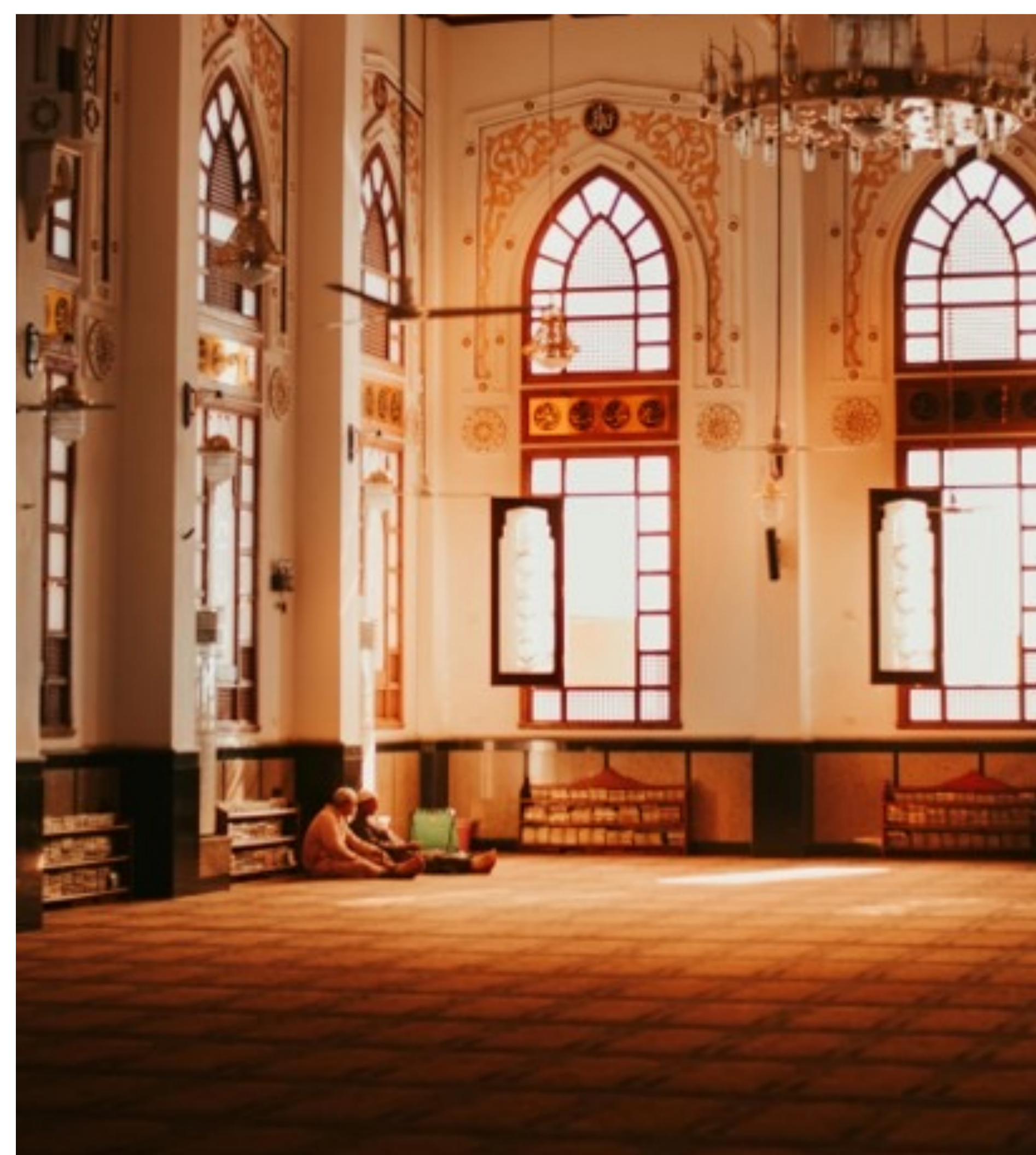
This is a qualitative study and a pointed presentation that levels out ambiguities, contrary trends, and individual counterexamples that nevertheless do exist and complicate the overall picture.

Contribution to URPP Objectives

- Study involved non-Christian persons
- Focus on migrants
- First-hand fieldwork insights about ideas and practices regarding religious and non-religious communities, and the respective assumed digitabilities of religion



Picture 3: V. Fazel // Artistic workshop with unaccompanied minor migrants



Picture 2: Orest SV // Pexels

Other Infos

Inclusion criteria:

- Interlocutors aged between 16 and 35
- Informed consent
- Used to digital devices
- Migration history
- Resident in Switzerland (with or without permanent residence permit)
- Either born into a religious tradition and/or claim to be religious/spiritual

We placed our results in double-blind peer-reviewed journals (e.g., Journal of Religion in Europe) & popular science magazines (e.g., Psychologie Heute).

We presented our findings in settings of public outreach (blogs, online articles) & conferences (e.g., IMISCOE).

More publishing and outreach are to come (books, articles currently in review processes, etc).

People involved

Virginie Fazel, Mira Menzfeld, Dorothea Lüddeckens, Rafael Walthert / Department of Religious Studies

Publications and conferences so far: Selection (double-blind peer review)

Menzfeld, Mira (2024, in press) „Intuitions about the digitability of religion among transnationally rooted digital natives in Switzerland: Belief as a decision tree and the (ir)relevance of religious community experience.” In: Journal of Religion in Europe.

Menzfeld, Mira (2023) „«Wo ist deine Eifersucht? Wo ist deine Religion?» Emotionsmanagement in polygynen salafitischen Partnerschaften.“ In: The Swiss Journal of Sociocultural Anthropology – formerly TSANTSA 28: 127-49.

Fazel, Virginie (2024) Presentation @ IMISCOE (International Migration Research Network)