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Social Compass 2014 61: 153

DOI: 10.1177/0037768614524502

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Social Compass
2014, Vol. 61(2) 153–171
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Abstract

The authors provide a summary of three key developments that have brought change to the field of religious organizations in Finland: the emergence of new Lutheran communities (the St Thomas Mass, the so-called Nokia Revival and the fundamentalist Luther Foundation Finland); Ashtanga yoga as a form of spirituality; and the spread of migrant religious communities. The article sets these developments in the context of late modern communal belonging and discusses how religious communities have been transforming over the last two to three decades in Finland.

Keywords

community, Finland, freedom, Lutheran Church, religious organization

Résumé

Les auteurs présentent une vue d'ensemble des trois principaux développements qui ont provoqué des changements dans le domaine des organisations religieuses en Finlande : de nouveaux mouvements luthériens (la Messe du St. Thomas, le renouveau

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charismatique « Nokia » et la fondamentaliste Fondation Luther) ; l'Ashtanga yoga comme nouvelle spiritualité ; et de nouvelles communautés religieuses de migrants. L'article expose ces évolutions dans le contexte de l'appartenance commune moderne et explique comment les communautés religieuses se sont transformées au cours des deux à trois dernières décennies en Finlande.

Mot-clés

communauté, église luthérienne, Finlande, liberté, organisation religieuse

Introduction

As numerous commentators have noted, the notions of community and freedom do not mix easily. The balancing of these two values is inherently precarious and perhaps especially difficult under the conditions of late modernity. Zygmunt Bauman (2001: 4–5) has given a succinct formulation of the tension:

There is a price to be paid for the privilege of 'being in community' ... This price is paid in the currency of freedom, variously called 'autonomy', 'right to self-assertion', 'right to be yourself'. Whatever you choose, you gain some and lose some. ... Security and freedom are two equally precious and coveted values which could be better or worse balanced, but hardly ever fully reconciled and without friction.

The challenge posed by late modernity to religious communities is likely to be especially acute. If it is true – as the most notable theorists of modernization claim – that the development of society is intrinsically linked with the expansion of freedom (Sen, 1999; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005) and that religion is closely connected to community and social cohesion (Durkheim, 1966 [1912]), then it is hardly surprising that in sociological analyses the fate of religion under modernity is often predicted to be rather gloomy. While it is not the only and decisive argument in the cluster of descriptions and explanations called the secularization paradigm (Bruce, 2002; 2011), it is nevertheless an important theme in many versions of it. Especially Bryan Wilson (1982) has argued that religion draws its strength from the close-knit, integrated, small-scale community. With the advent of modernization, through a process of what Wilson called 'societalization', such communities lose their grip on people, giving way to nation states with impersonal organization, together with large-scale industrial and commercial enterprises. Therefore, the loss of community will also bring along the loss religion.

At the root of this scenario is the classic distinction between community and society delineated by Ferdinand Tönnies (2001 [1887]). Tönnies presented the distinction as an ideal type, rather than an evolutionary trajectory; nevertheless, we need to examine whether this conception has outlived its usefulness. The boundaries of communities are becoming less and less drawn spatially, and membership in them less and less defined by birth and family relatedness, but does that mean that we no longer have communities? Or is it rather the case that community has shifted its location in our expanded networks of interaction? The felt need for community has certainly not gone anywhere. It is still part of our nature to seek community, and the psychological underpinnings for such a task are

unlikely to have changed drastically since the advent of modernity (Dunbar, 1996; Kurzban and Neuberg, 2005). Whether we are today able to realize our need for community as easily as in the past is another matter. There may be pressures in modern technological environments that work against the fulfilment of our social needs. It may be that our communities are more ephemeral creations today, and they may even in some cases be entirely illusory – such as the ‘aesthetic communities’ created by the entertainment industry around fleeting celebrities (Bauman, 2001). Yet, even modern life presents us with situations in which we yearn to find the closeness and warmth of the community of our imagination. Thus it is important to look at what people today expect of their communities, especially the religious ones, and how the communities are responding to these changing expectations.

In this article we explore how people’s relationship and involvement with religious communities are changing in the religious field of contemporary Finland. We shall focus on the question of how different religious traditions and organizations have responded to the pressures of late modern life in terms of community-seeking versus individual freedom. The examination is not based on a comprehensive set of organizations but on a qualitative analysis of the most characteristic movements and organizations that have developed in the past few decades in Finland. We will analyse both the developments and the new movements within the dominant Evangelical Lutheran Church, and also the growing fields of alternative spirituality and religious groups among migrant communities. In this way we attempt to give a balanced overall picture of the changing religious landscape in Finland, with due attention to both continuities and mutations.

Religion, community and modernity

Whether one accepts the theses of the secularization paradigm or not, it is worth re-examining how the changes that are taking place in our sense of belonging and the structures of community are reflected in the religious field. First, as a starting point of this kind of inquiry, we should not conceive ‘community’ as a doomed relic of the past, or the search for community as simply a backward-looking rejection of modernity. As argued by Gerard Delanty (2003: 30) in his examination of the subject:

Premodern societies were not based on primordial communities any more than modern societies have eradicated community. In this view then, community and society are not fundamentally opposed but mutual forms of sociability. The assumption underlying this thesis is that community is not to be understood exclusively in terms of tradition but entails particular forms of symbolically constituted social relationships which can also be mobilized under the conditions of modernity and which are always present in every social arrangement.

In short, community may take post-traditional as well as traditional forms. In fact, even Max Weber defined communal social relationship in a way that left it open to post-traditional forms, although he was pessimistic as to the possibility of community under the conditions of modernity. In Weber’s terms, a social relationship can be regarded as ‘communal’ if the orientation of social action ‘is based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together’ (Weber, 1964 [1922]:

136). In contrast, the relationship is 'associative', when it 'rests on a rationally motivated adjustment of interests or a similarly motivated agreement' (Weber, 1964 [1922]: 136).

Second, as emphasized by Delanty (2003), it is important to keep in mind that community is fundamentally based on communication. Due to the advancement of technologies of communication and travel, the communities of today are by necessity less bounded both geographically and culturally than they were in the past. New forms of belonging emerge based on different modes of communication. Modernization has therefore opened up new possibilities of belonging as communication is becoming freed from the older structures of family, kinship, class and territorial locality. In an increasingly globalized world, individuals find many new opportunities to build communities with a promise of belonging.

Third, it has also been suggested that modernization has, rather than diminishing our need for community, in fact progressively increased and intensified the search for belonging and identity. Manuel Castells (1997), among others, has argued that many social actors are resisting the individualization of identity brought by modernity and are instead seeking an identity as part of an enchanted community. The result is a culturally shaped defensive identity that aims to safeguard or resurrect vanishing historical cultures and values. As individual projects, such attempts are nevertheless fully modern. It may therefore be that the increased individualization that has created the conditions for the resurgence of community has simultaneously made it more and more difficult to achieve (Bauman, 2001).

This suggests that at the heart of the modern predicament with regard to religious communities is that there exist certain inherent structural tensions. One should be careful not to conceive community as simply antithetical to individualism. On the contrary, participation in many modern communities *presupposes* highly individualized agents who are capable of reflexively committing themselves to collective goals and values (Delanty, 2003: 189–190). Individuals are put into community less and less by external forces but through their own agency and free choice, and this voluntariness can be a source of both weakness and strength for the communities. There are thus communities, even religious ones, which are genuine products of modernity – irrespective of their values, doctrines or self-identity.

The approach presented here is thus broadly compatible with the 'multiple modernities' approach outlined by Shmuel Eisenstadt (2000a; 2000b). However, we also want to develop that approach by providing a more detailed analytical schema to probe these issues among religious communities. What we want to suggest is that it is profitable to look at religious communities in terms of the bargain between security and freedom that they offer. Some communities may make heavier demands to conform in many areas of life, and are thereby less able to attract people in affluent circumstances, who value highly their individual freedom. But at the same time they may be more capable of producing durable commitment and more stable structures of community through these very restrictions. Other communities, however, cultivate a sense of individual freedom and empowerment, and are able to attract more people, but are thereby capable of producing only weak commitment and very thin and ephemeral forms of community. In order to succeed in the long run, religious communities need to balance these conflicting values – too much of either value will in the end be detrimental to the viability of the

community. This suggests that the religious communities that will be likely to endure and prosper are the ones that are capable of finding ways to keep an optimal balance between freedom and security in their particular social and cultural environment.

The emergence of new Lutheran communities

In the case of Finland, the empirical evidence seems to confirm the prediction that when people leave the agrarian towns and villages and move to the cities and suburbs, they also leave conventional religion behind – in this case involvement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church. After relocating from their place of birth, people do not seem to find their way into the parish activities of their new home areas. In the capital of Helsinki, for instance, only 59 per cent of the population belonged to the Lutheran Church at the end of 2012, whereas nationally the figure was 76 per cent, and there were many small rural municipalities where Church membership was well over 90 per cent. The share of those baptized in Helsinki was 50 per cent whereas in the whole country it was 75 per cent (Kirkkohallitus, 2013). According to surveys, about 6 per cent of Finns attend worship services at least monthly and about two-fifths (43%) never attend. In Helsinki only about 3 per cent do so equally often while over half (54%) never attend (Gallup Ecclesiastica, 2011: N=4,930).

The urban centres are therefore at the forefront if one wants to encounter innovations in the religious sphere that speak to late modern sensibilities. In this regard, a turning point in Finnish church life took place one Sunday evening in spring 1988. On that day the first alternative mass explicitly designed for the urban milieu was performed at a Lutheran church in central Helsinki. It was called the St Thomas Mass after the apostle Thomas, whose characteristic was to have doubts and questions rather than unshakeable faith. The service was a brainchild of two Lutheran pastors who felt that they did not have a community of worship where they would feel at home. Having informed people representing different streams of Christian life in Finland, they managed to gather about forty people, who started to build a new kind of Lutheran service expressive of urban sensibilities, ecumenical tolerance and openness. As one of the pastors described the process:

The Taizé-people brought the music, silence and mystery. Evangelicals wanted a place to call new people. Charismatics wanted to pray for the sick and feel that the Holy Spirit is strongly present. The holy chaos with prayer altars, with comings and goings of people, was adopted from the Orthodox. (Olli Valtonen cited in Toivanen, 2013: 24)

The St Thomas Mass turned out to be a success. It filled the church in Helsinki Sunday after Sunday and the concept soon spread to other parishes, especially in urban areas. According to the most recent parish survey, in 2011, it was held at least occasionally in a quarter of all the Lutheran parishes – that is to say, in 110 localities, spread all over Finland (Fig. 1). Altogether, the St Thomas Mass was celebrated 492 times that year, with almost 70,000 visitors (*Haastettu kirkko*, 2012).

Juha Kauppinen, having interviewed participants in the St Thomas Mass in Tampere in the early 1990s, found that the most valued aspect of the new kind of mass was the feeling of community among the participants. The mass is organized entirely by

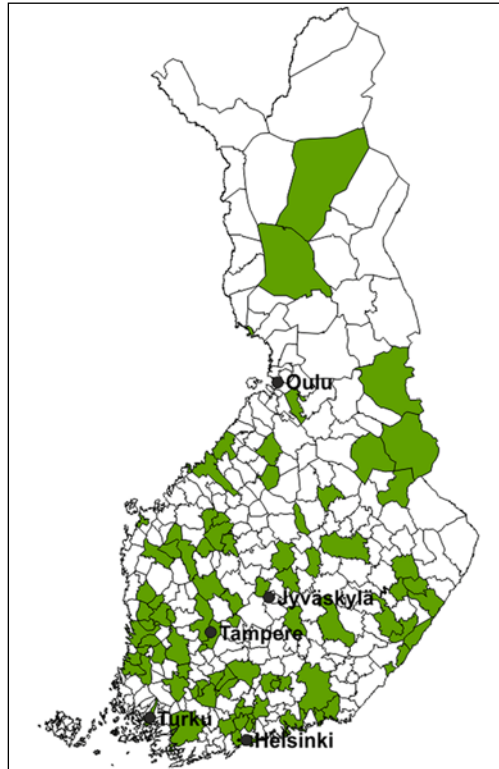


Figure 1. Lutheran parishes where the St Thomas Mass was held in 2011.

volunteers – even the pastors participate in the process on a voluntary basis – and thus there is a feeling that the mass is the result of collective effort where all participate as equals. Certain elements in the liturgy itself contribute to a feeling of togetherness (see Kauppinen, 1992).

A second aspect of the new mass was found to be equally attractive: the experience of freedom. Participants stressed the fact that behavioural rules were not as strict and controlled as in a normal service and thus a newcomer could feel more easily at home. The atmosphere in the mass also encouraged more open expressions of feeling than the regular, rather subdued, Lutheran service. And this, again, was felt to be liberating and enlivening. In short, the study shows that it was precisely the ability to combine the feeling of community, togetherness and participation, with an experience of freedom, openness and tolerance of difference that seems to be the source of the appeal of the St Thomas Mass (Kauppinen, 1992).

Despite its popularity, the St Thomas Mass has not remained unique in its attempt to create new communities of worship in the Lutheran Church. Since the 1990s, there have emerged two distinct movements that are less committed to the official line of the Lutheran Church and which have diverged further from the moderate Lutheranism

prevalent in the local parishes. One of them emphasizes Charismatic phenomena and is more emotional in nature, whereas the other puts weight on the Lutheran confession, and is more doctrinal in orientation.

A prayer service that began at the parish of Nokia, near Tampere, in 1991, gradually expanded into a distinct movement, which came to be called the Nokia Revival. The local vicar, who had experienced spiritual healing through prayer, emerged as the leader of the movement, which emphasizes Charismatic phenomena. Healing, prophesy, speaking in tongues and other experiences signalled to the adherents that God was speaking and acting among the people just as in the times of the Apostles. It should also be noted that numerous small Neo-Charismatic congregations emerged at the same time outside the Lutheran Church. These tended to be very fluid, as congregations emerged and disappeared in quick succession (Hovi, 2009).

In the early stages of the Nokia Revival the meetings took place in a parish house in the form of so-called 'Evenings of Word and Prayer'. This is a common form of parish activity in Finland, where intercessory prayer is practised. In 1993 the activities were transferred to the local church building at Nokia and an association (Nokia Missio) was formed in 1997. The reputation of the movement grew rapidly and its popularity peaked around the turn of the millennium. In addition to the regular events at Nokia, the movement became known by its large-scale events that took place in sports stadiums. For instance, at an event organized at a sports stadium on New Year's Eve in 2002, there were an estimated 12,000 people (Pohjanheimo, 2008: 279).

These events, which were held a few times a year, gathered large numbers of people from outside the circle of regular attenders. They also often featured guests from international Charismatic congregations, which signalled a certain openness to other like-minded organizations. Such events therefore attracted people not only from the Lutheran Church but also from the Pentecostal movement and other Protestant free churches. Only a minority of participants felt that they belonged closely to the Nokia Revival (Salomäki, 2010).

Here again, one can argue that the ability to combine a strong sense of emotional community with a low threshold of participation was one of the key features behind the success of the movement. Studies of the Nokia Revival have shown that the most important feature of its events is their emotional intensity (Hietanen, 2011). The use of modern media also gives it more public visibility. In its most expansive period the movement broadcast its Evenings live via Christian radio stations and vast amounts of information were shared through the internet site.

The reasons for the recent decline of the movement stem from organizational and contingent factors. Despite its popularity, the activities of the movement also attracted much criticism within the administration of the Lutheran Church. A conflict between the movement and the diocesan chapter continued for many years. The leader was accused, among other things, of straying from the Lutheran confession and was twice temporarily suspended from the priesthood. In 2001, the meetings relocated from the parish to the local Pentecostal meeting hall. Finally, in 2008, the movement announced that it was separating itself from the Lutheran Church entirely and established its own organization, the Nokia Missio Church. It turned out to be a theological compilation that drew its teachings from both the Lutheran Church and the Protestant free churches. Although it

permitted double membership, only about 300 people eventually joined the Nokia Missio Church.¹

The other movement that has challenged the Lutheran Church from within has a totally different emphasis, as its name, the Luther Foundation Finland, implies: conservative Lutheran confessionalism. It was established in 1999 and the most important practical reason for its formation was that it did not accept female priesthood, which had been established in the Lutheran Church in 1988. The Luther Foundation claimed that the Word of God and the sacraments were no longer administered correctly and for this reason new communities of worship were needed. At first, it was part of the Swedish organization Missionsprovinsen, but today it has an entirely independent ecclesiastical structure.

As in the case of the Nokia Missio, the relationship between the Luther Foundation and the Lutheran Church has always been tense. Since 2010, the Luther Foundation has had its own bishop and in spring 2013 it established its own diocese in Finland. The stated reason for the need of a new diocese was that the Lutheran Church had relinquished its traditional doctrine and confession (Evangelis-luterilainen lähetysliikkeen, 2013). The bishops of the Lutheran Church have repeatedly expressed the wish that the Luther Foundation would establish itself as an independent Church. The representatives of the Luther Foundation, however, have emphasized that it is they who represent the Lutheran doctrine and who are committed to the official confession of the Church, so they have no reason to separate themselves from the Church.

The Luther Foundation spread quickly around Finland. By 2013, it had 28 communities of worship, which were served by priests that had mainly been ordained in the context of the Luther Foundation or Missionsprovinsen. The communities of worship had about 1,000 members and the magazine published by the movement had a circulation of about 3,500, and so it can be estimated that at least a few thousand Finns participate in the activities provided by the movement.

The sense of community provided by the Luther Foundation is one of the attractions of this movement. On its internet site, the Luther Foundation describes itself as a bulwark against the runaway individualism associated with modernity: 'Our communities seek to form a fellowship of believers which also offers a much-needed social safe haven for people suffering from the hardships of over-individualistic culture and stressful lifestyle of our time' (Luther Foundation Finland, 2013). The movement is largely based upon voluntariness, and this is also a factor that creates commitment. Although the public face of the movement is centred upon doctrine and confession, it is clear that other social factors play a crucial role in the movement. A priest of the Luther Foundation recently stated that he aimed to meet every single member of his congregation personally:

I have started to meet the members of my congregation one by one. I aim to meet all those who come to church. I have given them in advance a question to be pondered: 'How did I become who I am?' Then we meet and people may tell me their life story. The discussions are good, deep and effective. One by one people have become more and more close and dear to me. (Väätäinen, 2013)

The special attraction of small religious communities is that they can create close relationships between members through intimate knowledge of one another. At the same

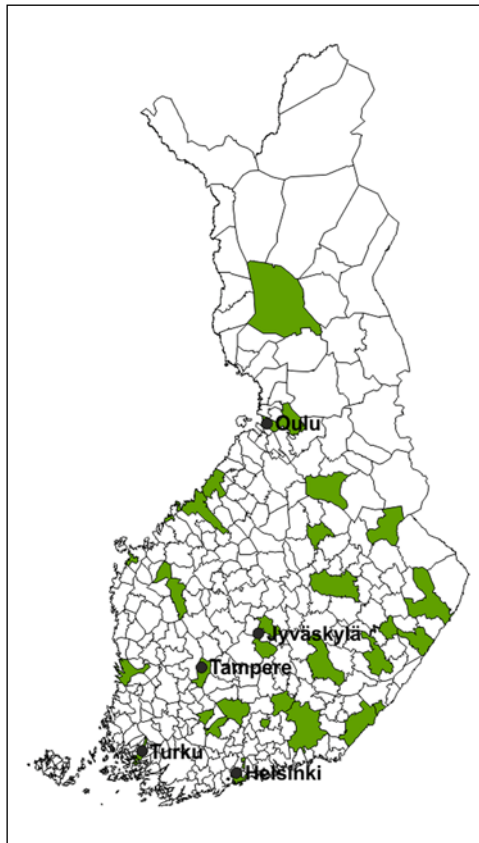


Figure 2. Worship communities of the Luther Foundation Finland, 2013.

time, it is evident that such doctrinal conservatism combined with intense methods of social control does not appeal to a very large segment of the population.

Alternatives for the adventurous seekers

The decade starting from the late 1970s was a turning point for the alternative spiritual milieu also. One of the most significant developments in this area was the spread and popularization of yoga among Finns. Although instruction in the practice of yoga started to become available in Finland as early as the 1950s, the year 1988 marked the beginning of something new in the Finnish yoga scene. A Finnish man from Helsinki had met a British couple who were yoga teachers while on holiday in the Bahamas. He was so impressed that he invited the teachers to hold a course in Finland. As a result of that course in 1988 the Finns were introduced for the first time to Ashtanga yoga, a strikingly new style of yoga that was far more physically demanding than the ones that had previously been available in Finland.

Soon, Finnish yoga enthusiasts started travelling to faraway places where Ashtanga yoga was being taught more regularly. In the early 1990s they found their way to Mysore in India, where the guru of this particular yoga style, Sri K Pattabhi Jois (1915–2009), resided. There they met an experienced Italian Ashtanga yoga teacher (Lino Miele), who was invited to Finland. The Italian came in 1994 and was soon put in charge of teaching in Finland. Organizations for the teaching of Ashtanga yoga also started to be established at around that time. One Finnish yoga practitioner established a teaching centre on an island near Hanko at the southernmost tip of Finland. The first school in Helsinki was established in 1997 and in a few years it reputedly grew to be the largest Ashtanga yoga school in the world, having about 400 students per day (Räisänen, 2005: 10). Since the late 1990s, the new yoga style has spread all over Finland.

Although we cannot know precisely how many people practise Ashtanga yoga, one can gain some idea of the popularity of yoga in general by looking at surveys. For instance, about 5 per cent of Finns claim to meditate and the same percentage of people claim to ‘use some other² method of spiritual growth (such as yoga or tai-chi)’ at least weekly (Gallup Ecclesiastica, 2011: N=4,930). This would amount to more than a quarter of million Finns. Although the wording of the question was rather imprecise, it is certainly the case that yoga has become very popular in recent decades.

One may, of course, question whether the modern yoga that is being taught in these places can be seen as representing any kind of spirituality, let alone religiosity. It seems clear that most people practise yoga for reasons related to health and well-being. However, looking at the situation from another angle, one may also claim that the most significant characteristic of the modern yoga movement is precisely that it resists our conventional categorization of the sacred vs. the secular. Anthropologist Joseph S Alter (2004) claims, for instance, that modern yoga would not have reached its present level of success if it had been understood solely as an attempt at metaphysical transcendence. On the other hand, it is equally clear that if yoga were to be conceptualized within the narrow confines of modern, scientific physiology and medicine, this would drastically limit its meaning and applicability. Modern yoga is secularized, this-worldly yoga, to be sure, yet that does not mean that it is ontologically or epistemologically materialistic or rationalist. It may be that the ambiguity in this regard is precisely one of the key features of today’s alternative spirituality more generally.

In fact, Bryan Wilson (1995: 23) has singled out this-worldliness or man-centredness as one of the key features that distinguish the post-war religious movements from the 19th-century sectarian movements:

Paradoxically, secularization, the process of increasing dependence on purely secular techniques and regulation, opens the way for spiritual experimentation, but does so by shifting the goals of spiritual endeavor. By and large, people come increasingly to believe that their aim is not to do the will of God but to get the best out of life for themselves.

As Wilson also makes clear, there is a parallel shift in the moral and ethical orientation of these New Religious Movements. The ascetic ethic of traditional Christianity is being superseded by the encouragement of enjoyment and the care of the body. Spiritual goals are often said to be attained precisely through the abandonment of inhibitions and

restraints imposed upon us by traditional religion. So, while today's yogis aim at the well-being of the body and mind – patently this-worldly aims – one may still question whether these immanent goals are seen in purely secular, instrumentalist terms.

There are many other features, in addition to this-worldliness, in the modern yoga movements that characterize the contemporary New Religious Movements more generally, several of which have been pointed out by Wilson (1995: 20–31). The post-war religious movements very often emphasize the individual benefits of privatized practices (such as yoga and meditation), rather than the public benefits of collective worship. The new movements function most clearly for individuals, rather than for families or local communities, as the old sectarian movements did. The new movements generally seek only segmented commitment from most of their adherents, rather than attempting to create their own encapsulated social world. Their teachings and practices have relevance only in certain discrete areas of experience and they do not seek to embrace the entire lives of their members.

A salient feature of the new movements is that they embrace change and novelty, often seeing themselves as harbingers, offering something new and exciting, and often exotic. They also derive inspiration from traditions from all over the globe, rather than claiming to represent pure, authentic and unadulterated Christianity, as the old sects did. This progressive and globalized outlook differs radically from the conservatism of the older sects, which resisted and protested against change in both religion and in wider society. Through such features, as we have seen in the case of Ashtanga yoga, the new movements tend to appeal to single (often young) and socially and geographically mobile people. Indeed, it could well be argued that cheap and speedy international travel and new communications media, such as the internet and mobile phones, are the major technological conditions for the emergence of these new movements.

The new movements exhibit patterns of association that make them very hard to compare with 19th-century sects. There is often little collective life and students on a particular course may not be introduced to one another. In terms of freedom vs. community, these movements clearly stand on the side of freedom and the forms of community are very 'thin' (Turner, 2001), since they are not based on strong ties and are often communities of strangers. What they offer is an adventurous journey to unknown worlds, rather than a safe haven in a hostile world.

Nevertheless, the adherents may be linked in loose networks, and they do often have some symbols of identity. Instead of building local communities or congregations, they often relish the image of an international community that includes people who come from very diverse cultural, religious and geographical backgrounds. In short, they are typically 'cosmopolitan communities', that is, communities that are not limited by space and time (Delanty, 2003). They are also 'world communities' in the sense that they aspire to global reach and conceive the world as one and humanity as universal. They consist of people who have a broadly similar outlook, or habitus, derived from the particular style of mental and bodily practices that they are currently exploring.

Migrant communities in the making

International mobility and transnational connections are also apparent in the migrant religious communities, although in a very different way. In the great trans-European

Table 1. The estimated religious background of foreigners born in Finland, 1990–2009 (%).

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2009
Buddhists	2	2	3	3	4
Hindus	1	1	1	1	1
Christians	76	69	66	64	61
Muslims	6	14	17	18	19
Indigenous religions	1	2	2	2	2
Sikhs	0	0	0	0	0
Jews	0	0	0	0	0
Non-religious	9	10	10	10	11
Unknown	4	2	2	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Martikainen, 2011

Table 2. The shares of foreign-born members of selected religious organizations in Finland, 1990/2013.

	1990		2013	
	Total members	Born abroad (%)	Total members	Born abroad (%)
Evangelical Lutheran Church	4,390,739	0.8	4,147,371	1.1
Other Lutherans	1,079	1	1,276	4
The Finnish Pentecostal Church	0	0	7,445	6
The Orthodox Church of Finland	52,627	3	58,705	12
Other Orthodox	800	18	2,801	58
Catholic Church	4,247	32	11,530	48
Jewish Congregations	1,006	13	1,188	25
Islamic Congregations	810	12	10,596	58
Buddhist Communities	0	0	538	52
Population Register and unknown	510,608	5	1,139,730	19
Total population	4,998,478	1.3	5,426,674	5.3

Source: Statistics Finland

migrations of the past 150 years, Finland has largely been a sending country. However, it has also received some international migrants over the same period, and it became a country of net immigration during the 1980s. In 2013, the 285,000 first-generation migrants (foreign born) and their 130,000 Finland-born children constituted together 8 per cent of the population. Most of the migrants were of Western or European origin, but

one-third came from Asia and Africa. The principal countries of origin were Russia, Sweden, Estonia and Somalia (Martikainen et al., 2013: 38–40; Statistics Finland, 2013).

The religious affiliation of immigrants cannot be studied through national membership statistics as it can among the majority population due to low registration rates, and so needs to be estimated differently (see PEW, 2012). Based on country of birth estimates coupled with other research findings, it seems likely that up to two-thirds of migrants to Finland are of Christian background, one in five is a Muslim and a somewhat smaller proportion religiously non-affiliated. Buddhist and Hindu migrants count in the thousands, but followers of other religions are few (see Table 1). Christian migrants can be found across the spectrum in different Churches, but most of them are in the Lutheran, Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Currently, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has the highest number of members (see Table 2), but migration's impact on her remains small due to the church's large size (Martikainen, 2011). In 2009, migrants constituted 1 per cent of members in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 11 per cent in the Orthodox Church of Finland and 46 per cent in the Catholic Church (see Table 2; Statistics Finland, 2009).

Until recently, migrants played a small role in the Finnish religious field, even though they were central to the establishment of, among others, Catholic Christianity, Islam and Judaism during the 19th century. Many details of the impact of contemporary immigration on the Finnish religious field are yet to be uncovered, or are still in the making, and some communities have been researched more than others. Muslims, in particular, have been targeted in much research. The processes of community formation among new migrants in Finland have been studied to some extent (e.g. Martikainen, 2004; 2013; Hirvi, 2010; 2011). A basic distinction can be made between migrants who form new organizations and those who enter existing ones (Martikainen, 2004: 206–207). Religious tradition seems to make the difference: Christians and Jews are more eager to become members of existing religious organizations than Muslims and others in Finland (Martikainen, 2013: 16).

The first new local Muslim groups, which were established at the turn of the 1990s, were quite ecumenical in terms of the Sunni/Shia divide, ethnic and linguistic differences and particular religious orientations. As the numbers of Muslims grew, separate Sunni and Shia communities were formed, to be followed by mosque associations for different ethnic groups. So far, at least Bosnians, Kurds, Pakistanis, Somalis and Turks have founded their own communities, but there are still several multi-ethnic mosque associations even in cities, where ethnic-based communities have their own premises for other purposes. While these processes are yet to be more thoroughly analysed, factors that contribute to the continued splintering of groups include national, ethnic and linguistic differences in religious practices, disagreements among people running the associations or dissatisfaction among the members. During the last decade, the role of religious movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi and Tablighi Jamaat has also grown, or least become more explicit. The number of mosques has grown from a handful in the early 1990s to about fifty in the 2010s (Martikainen, 2013: 112–117). Mika Vähäkangas (2009: 103–105) has noted a similar process among African Churches in the Helsinki region, where the numerical threshold for the formation of new congregations appears to be even lower than among Muslims.

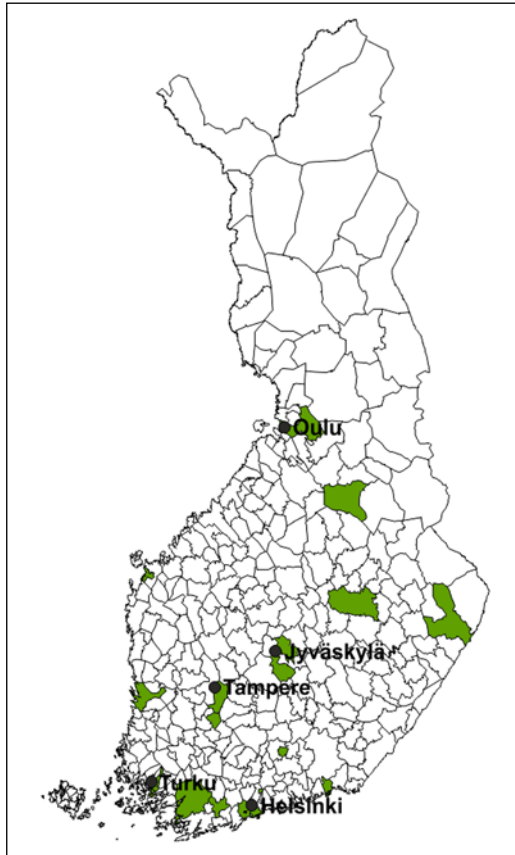


Figure 3. Muslim community locations in Finland.

The case of Orthodox Christianity is interesting in terms of community formation. Orthodoxy is the second folk Church, though its members constitute only 1 per cent of the population. The Orthodox Church of Finland (OCF) is an outgrowth of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) but has been under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople since 1923. The OCF, however, has adapted the Gregorian calendar, unlike the ROC and many other Orthodox Churches, which remains internationally a contested issue. As a matter of fact, when the Gregorian calendar was implemented in the 1920s in Finland, two parishes with mainly Russian membership remained outside the OCF and are today associated with the ROC (Martikainen and Laitila, forthcoming).

As Russians are the largest migrant group in Finland, the number of people joining the OCF has also grown, but the two ROC parishes have also gained many new members. The ROC has somewhat clandestinely expanded its activities in Finland, even though this violates the agreements of the OCF and ROC as well the Orthodox tradition of national Churches' sovereignty on their own territory. The issue has occasionally popped

up, but it has been silenced for Church political reasons. Continuing Russian migration and the ROC's interest in both founding new parishes and supporting existing ones, however, will keep the matter on the agenda (Martikainen and Laitila, forthcoming).

All in all, the growth of immigration has led to an increase in religious diversity that extends beyond the Muslim communities. Internal diversification of church membership is already significant among some religious organizations, though it has been ignored by much European research on the field and merits more careful study. Regarding the role of religious and other communities of immigrants, it seems clear that they are crucial for cultivating a sense of ethnic and religious identity, such as that which Laura Hirvi (2010; 2011) has documented among Sikh immigrants in Helsinki. However, the broader impact of immigrant associations remains a contested issue. On the one hand, the associations do provide a comfort zone in the at times hostile and alien new social environment. On the other hand, they are also places for learning new civic skills, as many associations are involved and included in the co-operation between different religions as well as with public authorities. New multi-faith environments are emerging at the interface between civil society and public authorities, where immigrants can also effectively represent and plead their causes. Nevertheless, many immigrants still do not become members of religious communities.

Conclusion

Since the late 1980s, there have emerged numerous new communities in Finland representing many religious traditions. It is not the case that the old traditions are simply declining, that the ground is being laid waste for something entirely different to take their place. Rather, we see that all religious traditions are undergoing change, transforming themselves from within, under the impact of modernization and globalization. While we have given much emphasis to the creativity and rapid growth of the new communities of worship and spirituality, this has not been done in order to refute the secularization thesis in a simplistic way. As the most recent surveys here in Finland show, most indicators of religiosity point towards a decrease in religious belief, practice and involvement (*Haastettu kirkko*, 2012). The only possible exception may be found in the area of alternative spiritual practices, which, as we have seen, are not so easy to interpret in terms of religiosity vs. secularity. The broad situation looks as if a decreasing number of religiously involved people are scattering among an ever more diverse set of communities. Pluralization and diversification of religious communities may well go hand in hand with a decrease in overall religious involvement. Hence, we do not aim to dispute the observations that point to religious decline.

Nevertheless, our analysis also shows that religious traditions are undergoing a process of adaptation to the new situation. New types of event, ritual and community have been created as responses of various kinds to the challenges presented by the modernizing environment. The responses can clearly be situated on a continuum that extends between the extremes of total security and total freedom. At one end, there are communities like the Luther Foundation, which are built upon clear doctrinal identities and intense social interaction among members. They claim to offer an almost family-like warmth and community feeling combined with very traditional doctrines and rituals. The

communities are mostly small, and often unpopular in public discourse, but on the other hand, they seem to be capable of enlisting stable and durable commitments from their members. At the other end of the continuum there are movements like Ashtanga yoga, which offer international fellowship to practitioners with much hazier boundaries and ephemeral loyalties. Not much is expected of people choosing to follow the path of yoga, except, of course, personal practice of a particular type of bodily discipline. Organizationally they are often based on an entrepreneurial model, in which the practitioners are treated ostensibly as clients rather than 'members'.

The migrant communities are a special case because their community identity is determined to a large extent by the external factor of their perceived ethnic and cultural difference from the majority population. Depending on the climate of attitudes in the host culture, the strength of their identity as members of a minority community may change in one direction or the other independently of their own efforts. The situation is made more complicated by the changing waves of new migrants. Thus, the organizational scene of migrant communities tends to be in flux. Yet, here also one can detect a process of differentiation, where ethnic and linguistic factors gradually give way to more consciously determined (ethnic or religious) identity constructions and community identities.

The most interesting cases are those communities that seem to be able to combine a strong sense of community with a low threshold of participation in their activities. Nokia Missio, for instance, managed to create – no doubt due to international models and influences – an event that combined simultaneously a feeling of strong emotional community and a very low threshold of participation. Such events drew crowds that, at least in the Finnish religious context, were surprisingly large. The success of the St Thomas Mass appears to be based upon a similar principle. In this case, the event itself is similar to a weekly mass (and often is organized on a weekly basis), but it is tweaked in such a way that it creates a sense of unusual liberty, ecumenical openness and warmth of communal feeling. Yet, the very openness of the events often works against the build-up of stable commitments. Low thresholds when coming in also means low thresholds when going out. While both Nokia Mission and the St Thomas Mass are successful as forms of activity, the number of committed participants tends to remain small in both cases.

Acknowledgement

Tuomas Martikainen has contributed to this article in the context of the 'Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape', an Åbo Akademi University centre of excellence in research.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1. The final setback came in 2011, when the Church announced that it had relieved its leader of his duties due to 'violations of sexual boundaries'. Later, he came out and confessed that he had committed adultery with another man. In spring 2013, he was charged with sexual abuse of a

minor. Since then, the Church's activities have had a much lower public profile and continued on a far more modest scale.

- Prayer and reading the Bible were listed as separate alternatives in the questionnaire: 31 per cent of Finns pray at least weekly and 4 per cent read the Bible as often.

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