

Theoretical description of the civil religious actor category and the constituent concepts

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To quote this article:

Uribe Cortez, J. Descripción teórica de la categoría Actor Civil Religioso y los conceptos constitutivos. *Espacio I+D, Innovación más Desarrollo*, 12(32). <https://doi.org/10.31644/IMASD.32.2023.a10>

RESUMEN

The objective of this manuscript refers to elucidating the main characteristics or elements that explain the production of the category called a religious civil actor. The methodology that is established is qualitative in terms of the construction of concepts. The results lie in building a new category. The limitations refer to the fact that it was difficult to capture all the activities carried out by the churches. The value consists in knowing theoretically some social processes. The findings refer to sharing the category, while the conclusions refer to the fact that it is possible to elucidate social processes through concepts.

Keywords:

Believers; urban; dynamic; social; ecclesial; organizations.

Is it possible to establish links between ecclesial and non-ecclesial activities, say social, cultural, economic, and political, among other tasks that by logic are not reduced to the acts carried out within the congregation of non-Catholic churches? In this sense, the main problem that is framed concerns the development of activities that are not ecclesial on the part of parishioners and ministers of worship and that have become part of their daily life, of the dynamics of the city in which they develop apart from the congregation and that combine with the tasks of the ecclesiastical environment.

The action of the churches within the city of Guadalajara and its Metropolitan Area has become a catalyst that facilitates the obtaining of various material resources and even elements to build their own community, as has been the case of the church The Light of the World, which defines what type of population to choose (Uribe, 2021). In the case of the church House of Prayer, the issue lies in the expansion through the city and surrounding areas in the form of new temples or sub-sites, in which the main claim is the ascription of a greater number of settlers to the ranks of the church.

The main problem discussed here concerns the theoretical denomination of the urban social action of the churches mentioned. This involves answering the following question:

How to theoretically name the churches that develop and deploy a set of actions aimed at influencing the configuration and reconfiguration of the city, in this case, the municipality of Guadalajara?

To answer this question, an argument is presented to theoretically explain the specificity of the dynamics of two religious groups that reconstitute Guadalajara's shape, particularly the churches called The Light of the World and House of Prayer. These congregations have deployed an intense extra-ecclesial activity since at least twenty or thirty years ago. Thus, theoretically, employing the category called religious civil actor, which is a precedent of the "social actor" category, created by Alain Touraine (1995; 1997) and jointly to Touraine and Khosrokhavar (2000), with which it is intended to explain such dynamics.

PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

The emergence of the Civil Religious Actor category has an empirical origin in an investigation developed in the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara, Jalisco, in 2014. Derived from it came years of reflection about social, cultural, and economic dynamics, as well as rituals along with the traditional forms that characterize certain congregations. This has been of great use to reveal the dynamics of non-Catholic religious groups in Mexico in which, for this document, the region of the West, with the municipality of Guadalajara, stands out as a space in which the category for the mobilization of the religious associations, in which the House of Prayer has been the central

axis from which the analysis of all research has been based on. Also, there is the reference to the church The Light of the World which has exercised an important social activity and built a community where their ministers of worship and parishioners live. The two groups are examples of the activation of the aforementioned city dynamics.

The result of analyzing the dynamics of the House of Prayer and The Light of the World produced categories of empirical cut that account for the actions of religious groups while allowing the understanding of why activities are carried out that cross the boundaries of the ecclesiastical and settle in other areas of society.

In this sense, it is that the observation and analysis of the details of the activity of non-Catholic groups have given the foundations for the construction of the category that, as mentioned above, refers to the Civil Religious Actor. Therefore, this document proposes to theoretically review the social and urban dynamics of the groups to conceptualize the category of research named as the basis of the contribution that this document grants. In the case of the phenomenon of the mobilization of non-Catholic churches, the category that explains praxis is precisely the category of the Civil Religious Actor.

THE *THEORY OF THE SOCIAL ACTOR* AS AN ANTECEDENT OF A NEW CATEGORY

In *Configuration of Indigenous Organizations and Evangelical Leadership* (Uribe, 2014), the Theory of the Social Actor is exposed, a construct that has become one of the foundations of the French sociology of the twentieth century, classical European, and recent American sociology. Coined by the sociologist Alain Touraine (2000a, 2000b, 2006) in a context characterized by protest movements throughout Western Europe, in addition to pointing out the presence of shock groups to contain the mobilizations of medium and lower classes, the author saw the possibility of questioning the constant clashes between political factions and stressed that social movements are fundamental actors for the socio-political change of the old continent.

The author Bourdieu (1998, 2001) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1995), similarly to Touraine, in their texts called Counterfires I and II, point out that it is necessary to review political action when they intend to establish social, economic, political, and cultural orders among others, which to a large extent are deployed by actors capable of transforming reality and instituting changes at all levels. This is fundamental to think that the dynamics of the actors are very important catalysts to implement fundamental transformations, which impact the various areas of the social fabric.

The elementary praxis of the Theory of the Social Actor lies in giving an account of the conforming conceptual elements. It is necessary to describe

the dynamics of the actor to understand the logic with which they operate, which is revealed according to their passage and the transformations that they achieve in the structure of society.

Touraine (2000b) exposes his Theory of the Social Actor in his work *The Production of Society* from the theoretical solution that he saw necessary to build for what according to him, was the main problem of European sociology in all times and ages past, present and future: The eternal problem of the social order.

The social order, the same one discussed in Bourdieu's work (1985), in his Theory of Social Reproduction, leads Touraine to wonder about the mechanisms for establishing social order. Establishing such a position goes against the anomie, as pointed out by Girola (2005), Durkheim (1998, quoted by López Fernández, 2009) in the specialized texts: *Anomia and individualism, Suicide* and "The concept of Durkheim anomie and subsequent theoretical contributions", which means an absence of norms as a product of null emotional regulation and pragmatic integration of individuals into societies, which, for the author, this phenomenon becomes known as suicide. On the other hand, the social actor would be the rescue of the individual who, in social groups, inclusively, can reverse his history of life to transform structures that do not allow their integration.

With the Theory of the Social Actor, Touraine (1995) produced an explanatory model where he clarifies that social change is the result of the collective action of social actors, who can be individuals or human groups, with abilities to transform the social environment that surrounds them. According to Melucci's logic (2001; 1999), social movements, in this case, the collectives of society and the associations that form the social fabric, reconfigure the social dynamics, the daily life of citizens, and the political conditions of nation-states. Individuals can change their situation. But with a touch of cordiality that turns its action into a set of experiences that do not conflict but are in harmony with the same social structure. The Social Actor does not violate the norms, principles, rules, or precepts that the social order issues but gives them fulfillment and provides elements for their transformation.

Unlike the theory of the agent built by Anthony Giddens (1985; 1991; 1995) in his famous book *The Constitution of Society* argues that individuals are always subject to the conditions of the social structure, regardless of whether they contribute ideas, attitudes or actions to change the conditions of the social environment. The Actor Theory conceives of individuals as being in "danger of extinction" -according to its interpretation-, and then gives way to the construction of historical subjects; actors become architects of their own destinies.

Historical subjects who construct their life stories reconfigure their daily activities and build a society with their discourses and practices (Touraine, 1997; 2000). By constructing their own definition of society, they face the power of social structures, which using their rules of action try to limit the initiative of the actor to condition him to be the one who builds the society he wants to establish, contrary to the notion of Social Actor (Bourdieu, 1985; 1988).

The clash occurs between forces that legitimize the ontological order of the social structure, actors who build these dispositions, and those of the subjects who, due to their hegemonic position, with their ideas and initiatives, give life to the transformation of their environment. The Social Actor directs his transformation toward a historical subject, where society tends to be the maximum historical subject. Thus, the Social Actor promotes their transformation that produces new procedures and new elements of the social structure through new relationships with other actors, always in fullness, that is, to erect themselves as free and conscious people, especially with the knowledge of their conditions that, although immersed in the social norms of institutions, autonomously determine their own lifestyle, thought and practice without transgressing the provisions of the social structure (Pleyers, 2006).

Being a social actor of a collective nature, without discarding individuals, means influencing the formation and elements that determine the social structure. It implies having the capacity to transform and be transformed, to go in continuous harmony with the historical law of the time, which leaves no one without a proposal for transformation, least of all societies, which are directly linked to history and memory.

The Social Actor category of Alain Touraine is a theoretical proposal that when analyzed and pieced together, arises other categories for the analysis of diverse contexts. When analyzing social movements, both Touraine and Bourdieu elaborated an extensive work of analysis for Europe and other latitudes of the world such as Africa. While, for the case of this work, the empirical analysis observes that the dynamics of non-Catholic ecclesial groups, build development through the category Civil Religious Actor, which in the following sections will take center stage.

ELEMENTS OF THE CIVIL RELIGIOUS ACTOR CATEGORY

The novel and unprecedented thing that the theoretical model called Civil Religious Actor shows is that the social action of the House of Prayer church does not infringe on the claims of other social groups regarding the eagerness of popular representation, nor does it attempt to supplant government action as a driver of public policies, much less take the role of manager of public

services, but try to be a body that contributes to the provision of public services.¹ According to the testimonial sources, in the case of the church The Light of the World there is no claim² to undermine the right of other denominations, missions, and religious congregations to establish themselves, attract parishioners and flourish economically, but to build community, that is, indirectly, it would stand as an actor representing the needs of his parishioners, which greatly facilitates attracting believers and increasing the number of its affiliation, to the detriment of other denominations.³ Both congregations raise their hands for the different needs of their parishioners.⁴ To collaborate, or at least that's what they intend, as social representatives of their congregation, transform the urban image and the conception of social, cultural, and urban development in the city of Guadalajara and other municipalities,⁵ without confronting the constitutive norms of the social order and the functions that each group deploys in society, including the government.⁶

This theoretically confirms what Touraine argues (1984, 1997, 1995, cited by Uribe, 2014; 2021) about the fact that individuals have a real aspiration to transform social conditions and their own human conditions. It seems that they become social actors, historical subjects who, without lacking the determinants of the social order, including in religious and political matters, shape their destiny.

They exercise their right to choose the elements that build their collective and individual environment to freedom of association, of religious self-determination, to choose their profession, partner, and friendships they want, to learn the aspects that life grants them, with full awareness of doing so without being pressured, coerced and forced by a third party. In other words, the social actor is completely under-summed in social structures (Touraine, 1997) but also completely motivated to configure in the way he/she prefers the will of their being, as expressed by Schopenhauer in his work *The World as Will and Representation* (2000).⁷

The category of the Civil Religious Actor is characterized by several characteristics: the first refers to allowing the investigation of reality around the category entitled Totality of the Socio-religious Action of the ecclesiastical groups in the city. The second is that it makes it possible to account

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- 1 Joel's testimony, Guadalajara, 2015
 - 2 Jaqueline's testimony, Guadalajara, 2015
 - 3 Juana's testimony, Guadalajara, 2015
 - 4 Joaquín's testimony, Guadalajara, 2015
 - 5 Juan's testimony, Zapopan, 2015.
 - 6 Francisco's testimony, Tlaquepaque, 2015.
 - 7 Commented on this: Darío's testimony, Guadalajara, 2015

for the category called Field of Interest, in that the characters involved are mobilized, which allows for establishing the general purposes and particulars of the organism.

The third characteristic is that the Civil Religious Actor is the same congregation, this refers to the daily action or activity that takes place within the framework of his image as a worship group, this gives way to the existence of the category of Organism of Religious and Civil Worship that acts as a social institution when organizing the municipalities' urban and social lives.

By the totality of socio-religious action, we must understand the complex environments in which the religious group is mobilized, whether political, economic, or cultural fields, among others, in which they develop, as well as the functions and activities that they carry out daily.

The collective action that comes from the Civil Religious Actor is divided into two points: 1) it contains ritual processes that are characteristic of it, typical of the lines of religious identities to which they belong, in the case of the House of Prayer, the non-evangelical biblical churches and Pentecostalism, and on the other hand, 2) it is manifested in activities which are typical of other social fields such as commerce, public service, and finance.

According to Uribe (2021), the thematic line that contains the category has precise characteristics that are in constant tension with the social fields because its function, as we said, is to provide salvation goods to believers, such as 1) The sacraments, 2) glossolalia, 3) ecstatic dance, 4) extreme anointing, 5) counseling, 6) emotional liberation and "malignant possession" among other aspects.

One category inherent in the idea of a Civil Religious Actor is that related to the activity of believers. This means that all actors leave the sphere of ecclesial activity to insert themselves in other social fields, so they have an essential characteristic: It is a dual category, that is, part of two natures of action: Civil and religious.

The non-evangelical Pentecostal and biblical churches represent the basis of general identity (Bastian, 1997; 2011). Both deploy a set of activities typical of these lines; let's talk, for example, of each of the rituals that take place there, and yet, also carry out civil activities because, with the stamp of a citizen entity, they mobilize between the different social areas entering into other non-religious lines of action (Uribe, 2014). The Civil Religious Actor category consists of three aspects essentially (Uribe, 2021):

- a) To influence the shaping of the urban image mainly contemplating the construction of more congregations that are scattered throughout the city.

- b) By building more congregations, they intend to increase the space of dominion of religious preferences, defined as the hoarding of ecclesial preferences, which consequently increases the parishioners' affiliation.
- c) By obtaining a considerable number of parishioners from other denominations, and even Catholicism, they lose adherents, thereby diminishing the Church's Competition for the Monopoly of the Religious Offering, a sociological category that is established to denote the struggle to win the preferences of potential parishioners. By winning the battle, the dominance of the space of preferences increases, they can establish more temples in other territories, the parishioners increases, as well as the collection of economic resources, with which a conceptual hegemony is glimpsed, which in this document is called a space of Civil Religious Preferences. The civic religious preference space is the number one place and target for which the Civil Religious Actor works. Dominating this space also legitimizes its civil function and its collective action, and, before government authorities, facilitates the establishment of arguments to demand public goods.

SPACING CATEGORIES: *DISTANCE AND PROXIMITY*

In this line of ideas, we agree with Uribe's analysis (2021), and the notions of Distance and Proximity take on great importance, both considered of great value by the leaders of the organism, especially as a mechanism of attendance control, as well as of collection of tithes and offerings⁸. The use of the notion of Distance (religious and urban) becomes relevant for leaders to observe the arrival of parishioners on days of worship, either by car, bus, or other means, in addition to the monetary amount offered, is a sign of the status the parishioner counts.

The above categories help leaders identify the characteristics of their congregants. For example frequency in attendance at services and important events such as anniversaries of the congregation, weddings, and collective baptisms, among others. Obtaining the predominance of the space of religious preferences is equivalent to identifying the origin of the parishioners in terms of kilometers traveled to reach the different centers of worship, less distance is better, it is also important the type of goods they hold, if they bring a car, what brand and model, as well as the professions, careers, and salaries that they have.⁹

8 Julián's testimony, Zapopan, 2015

9 Alfonso's testimony, Zapopan, 2015

They are, as we said, theoretical references of distance and social status that explain the socioeconomic condition and the range of the path existing between each center of worship and the home of each believer. It is considered far more than four kilometers and similarly close to less than that mileage. The budgets involving both categories of distance: Distance and Proximity are five according to some oral testimonies:

1. The domain of the space of religious preferences implies a distinctive treatment according to the needs that surround the parishioners immersed in one category and another, which implies differentiated attention by the leaders of each organization.¹⁰ By differentiated attention, we will have to understand the relationship between ministers of worship and parishioners, as well as the basic attention of problems, which develops in the function of the parishioner and his closeness to the congregation. The categories of Proximity and Distance work to identify the most important needs, lifestyle, as well as the form of care driven by the organization, according to their social status and the distance between both social spaces.
2. Also, as we said before, as the number of parishioners increases, the need to open more congregations or temples increases.¹¹ This raises the probability that they appear in other regions of the city and the state, which boosts the number of parishioners who join and adhere to the category of Distance.
3. It is not excluded that the number of parishioners in other congregations decreases. It is assumed that our type of Civil Religious Actor absorbs parishioners of other denominations. The increase in parishes directly affects the appropriation of the space of religious preferences, while facilitating the presence of the denomination throughout the city and the state.¹²
4. The categories of Spacing and Distance make it easy to visualize the evolution in terms of the believers' filiation, as well as the loss of enrollments. There has been a noticeable decline in the Catholic monopoly and the effective growth of non-Catholic denominations, especially Pentecostal churches such as the House of Prayer, also the church Assembly of God, and the church Ministerios de Miel y Azúcar of the Guatemalan leader Otoniel Ríos Paredes.

10 Medardo's testimony, Tlaquepaque, 2015

11 Alonso's testimony, Zapopan, 2015

12 Alexandra's testimony, Zapopan, 2015

In short, the category Civil Religious Actor is of great value for the elucidation of the activity of both churches. We reflect that the elements that surround this construct also make it possible to observe more acutely the details of the representation that make this Pentecostal denomination. In the same vein, a qualitative study was used (Hernández Sampieri, 2001; Dear & Moos, 1986) which consists of the spatial delimitation of the city of Guadalajara as the center from which the ecclesial action begins and extends to other territorial areas at the municipal and regional level, in a series of political-religious and cultural displays, that structure the actions of House of Prayer and of the Church Light of the World itself, whose leaders transcend their influences beyond their religious affiliation (Uribe, 2021). Methodologically, the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area was conceived as the center from which a network of alliances has been woven to found other sub-headquarters, at least fourteen which at the same time share a common history regarding their processes of ecclesial organization and social representation with regional and even state scope. On the understanding that the Civil Religious Actor is the main figure that builds his reality, thought, activity, and imagination it is necessary to ask ourselves about the scope that has as direct representative of the parishioners and congregants in Guadalajara. An exercise of questioning the participation of this actor was established through its activity of representing two types of parishioners: 1) Those living within a radius of four kilometers or less and 2) those residing in a space range greater than four kilometers, that is, those living far away from those living nearby.

Ipsa facto the analysis of public services is the main dimension that allows us to approach the vicissitudes of the complex link between religious leaders, parishes, and municipalities. Three fundamental links to explain and understand the collective action of the Religious Civil Actor. Therefore, the link between religious leaders, the dynamics in the municipality of Guadalajara, and the parishioners was analyzed. The speech presented here is framed on some fundamental assumptions that are presented below.

With the category of Home-Congregation Distance Proximity, it is understood that religious leaders develop two ways of representing parishioners. One of them, according to the category Home-Congregation Proximity, means that believers live within the range of four kilometers, the other corresponds to Home-Congregation Distance which includes believers who live beyond four kilometers.

The first is defined by the religious leaders' concern for the basic provision of the following utilities: Water, electricity, drainage, asphalt fencing, poles, and electrical wiring. It is reiterated that reference is made to parishioners living within a range of four kilometers or less.

This response to a double budget is economic and ecclesial. Religious ministers understand that the type of parishioner who lives beyond four kilometers of the congregation shows less attendance at the congregation than those who live in a range of four kilometers or less, therefore, they are not available to cooperate with resources, time or work when required. Believers who live beyond four kilometers of the congregation usually don't own a car, and arrive on foot to the congregation, plus they are regularly the people who least participate in the events.¹³

State services such as park and garden maintenance, street cleaning, building and house infrastructure, and building materials are provided for parishioners living within a radius of four kilometers. Among other reasons, because they have their own car, they either arrive by taxi or other means of transport. On behalf of the believing population, those who will be preachers and deacons and who will have some ministry and open other temples are chosen. They are considered important for initiating or continuing any function entrusted to them. Distance categories are elements that function as classifiers of the social (and ecclesial) status of parishioners.

Therefore:

- a. Home-Congregation Proximity is equivalent to the socioeconomic status of less structural advantage compared to other social strata (Rawls, 2000).
- b. Home-Congregation Distance equals a greater membership of economic resources of various kinds, monetary, land, houses, and businesses, among others.
- c. Both categories not only clarify the frequency of attendance and participation in ecclesial events but also point to the socio-economic conditions of the parishioners. A lower socioeconomic status does not favor the selection and participation of parishioners in ecclesial positions considered very important by the church. It is thought that people with greater resources can better support the activities of leaders. Donations or offerings are essential for the congregation to flourish.
- d. Eventually, it contradicts the spiritual dogma that emanates from the statutes of operation of the church, which says that the assistants' selection to form the ministerial bodies is done theologically, also called "revelation of the Holy Spirit", as the final choice is

13 Alejandra's testimony, Zapopan, 2015

established through a socioeconomic analysis and of the conceptual duality distance-travel attending to the aspects in terms of economic resources, belongings or properties, and availability to help in the functions of the congregation.

Proximity means fewer financial resources, less possibility of occupation of ministries, and similarly, less ability to obtain more complex public services. While the maintenance of parks and gardens, clean streets, the infrastructure of buildings and houses, materials for construction, and others are granted through representation activity with greater emphasis on parishioners living beyond four kilometers.

To understand the dynamics of representation of the Civil Religious Actor it is fundamental to explain the nexus between dimensions. The incidence and forms of representation as an ecclesial body with well-defined civil representation tactics are intended to represent the interests of the parishioners of the community attached to a church that performs civil functions in the city.

The collection of oral testimony was deployed, mainly, the dialogue with five fundamental participants of both churches, which have primary functions in the congregation and presumably participate in and influence urban mobilization. Building a socio-religious network of key informants was one of the primary yearnings for this research. The network constituted by the subjects who participate in the activities of the Civil Religious Actor is the main scheme with which the acts and speeches emanating from the leaders were analyzed.

It should be noted that the testimonies have served to approach the most significant actors and understand their activities, negotiation strategies, the search for municipal spaces, and forms of social representation. The population that is the subject of the analysis, the main unit of study is the Pentecostal congregation of the House of Prayer Church, the leaders, their helpers, supporters, and even opponents. Interesting gatherings are established with an open and receptive attitude to bring us all the necessary information and then classify it according to its importance.

Several useful tools were used such as structured and semi-structured interviews, we collected oral testimonies, official documentary sources, and primary and secondary sources.

The analysis of situations provides the similarities and differences in access to social spaces and the benefits that this generates. This has allowed us to make a comparison for the case of two types of parishioners through the Proximity-Distance category.

It has been essential to obtain the exact details of the role of the social representative of the House of Prayer to go to the place of events to observe

the activities of the main protagonists. We participated actively and entered, almost as anthropologists, the activities of the congregation. Fundamental details were obtained, and the meanings of the rituals, speeches, and the protagonists of the collective action of the Religious Civil Actor were captured. The collection of information has been developed based on an instrument for capturing and systematizing data, with which the contents and specificities are sorted while being interpreted and exposed to capture the details that account for the object of study.

CONCLUSIONS

The present document has set forth some fundamental questions for establishing the dynamics of non-Catholic creeds in Guadalajara, Jalisco. It has been fundamental to elucidate the urban and social dynamics of the non-Catholic ecclesial groups located in the west of Mexico, especially in terms of the construction of abstractions about the produced category called: civil religious actor. This paper was developed from Alain Touraine's social actor theory, as the precise antecedent to build the mentioned category.

It was very important to establish the characteristic elements of such a category those that indicate the affiliation of new parishioners, proximity, and distance. It seems that the affiliation of parishioners occurs within a distance, which means that there are more likely to be affiliations if the homes of the prospective parishioners are close to the congregation. It should also be noted that in the understanding that the farther the home or housing is, the conditions of arrival at the congregation become complex, is more difficult to attend, so it is to draw attention that, in the field of empirical evidence, it is constant, with a series of testimonies, that proximity and/or distance are factors that facilitate the arrival of people, of new parishioners to the congregation.

This document reports the construction of a category that would account for the dynamics that non-Catholic religious creeds establish in cities. This time, the city of Guadalajara was the urban entity that received the influence of the congregations House of Prayer and The Light of the World, which greatly influenced the configuration or reconfiguration of the urban scenario. In different ways, yes, but they influence in a very concise way the surrounding urban structures that make up the city of Guadalajara.

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