NEGOTIATING OTHERNESS IN THE DUTCH PROTESTANT WORLD

Missionary and Diaconal Encounters between the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and Brazilian Organisations
For Maiumi Oishi
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If you come to foreign land
Give in to it
If that place seems odd to you
Give in to it
If the day is total oddity
Submit to it
For you are infinitely stranger
Se vens a uma terra estranha
Curva-te
Se esse lugar é esquisito
Curva-te
Se o dia é todo estranheza
Submete-te
És infinitamente mais estranho

Orides Fontela
INTRODUCTION
1. The Dutch Protestant world and its others

On a Wednesday evening in October 2007, a group of about eighty members of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands met with two Brazilian women, both social workers from Corrente Viva, a network of NGOs active in impoverished neighbourhoods in the city of São Paulo. The meeting was organised in a church building in the Dutch city of Heerenveen, in the province of Friesland (Frisia), bringing together members of the local committees of mission, world-diaconate and development cooperation from many different parishes in that region, which over the last three years had built a special connection with Corrente Viva. The two Brazilian guests had been invited to visit the Netherlands as a sort of farewell tour, as cooperation between Heerenveen’s regional synod and Corrente Viva was coming to an end. That evening, people from almost every parish in the region had the opportunity to meet Corrente Viva’s workers personally.

The translator hired to work during the Brazilian visitors’ two-week-long stay in Friesland was not feeling well that evening and asked me to stand in as interpreter for the event. The chair of the regional committee opened the meeting introducing the two women and reading from Matthew 19:14, citing Jesus words to the disciples: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

The two social workers delivered a presentation about Brazil, São Paulo and of course, about their work at Corrente Viva. The chair of the committee directly responsible for their visit to Friesland suggested first a round of questions from the audience, followed by whatever questions the visitors might have for the Frisian churchgoers. The vast majority of questions raised by the audience were queries that tapped for narratives of the tangible results of cooperation, such as how many children ended
up in school as an outcome of the campaigns organised in Friesland. Yet the Brazilian visitors had only one question: “Why do you do this? Why do you help and support people you don’t even know?”

This short vignette introduces some of the core themes of this dissertation, which looks at a selection of the various transnational contacts and relations that connect the Protestantse Kerk in Nederland – PKN (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) and some organisations and projects in Brazil. The issues that engender these contacts and relations are mission, world-diaconate and development cooperation as they are planned and coordinated by Kerk in Actie – KiA (Church in Action), the dienstenorganisatie (service organisation) managed by the PKN. By carrying out tasks, KiA promotes and facilitates the transnational movement of people, things and ideas, connecting different actors in different parts of the world.

The first issue brought up during that autumn evening in Friesland relates to the experience of encounter. Meeting, being together and encountering are fundamental words in the missionary and diaconal endeavour and I heard them in virtually every interview and conversation I had with people connected to it. Intrinsic to the idea of encounter is the existence of difference. It presupposes a symbolic line separating “us” from “them”, otherwise there would be nobody or nothing to be encountered. My argument in this book, as expressed in its title, is that before promoting the idea of “being together”, missionary and diaconal enterprises must negotiate otherness, organising the terms of the difference between self and other and thus creating the cognitive possibility of encounter. An important point here, which the meeting in Heerenveen illustrates well, is that these personal encounters do not only occur in some stereotypical exotic setting – an exuberant tropical forest or noisy and busy “Southern” cities at the frontier of the so-called civilised world – but can occur anywhere along the whole spectrum of mission and development networks. Although one of the key components of ne-
gotiating otherness is spatiality, as I will analyse in chapter VI, the very encounters that emplace otherness, creating a certain missionary geography based on the difference between “here” and “there”, go beyond spatial borders. The movement of people in the network at issue here is richer and far more complex than modern re-enactments of the (clichés of) adventurous trips of missionaries in the jungle, or the exhibition of “natives” in Europe. On my own journeys between the Netherlands and Brazil through the KiA network, I met an impressively large number of people on both sides of the Atlantic who, through missionary or development work, had visited the other side, often more than once. They showed to be knowledgeable in negotiating otherness.

Personal encounters are a key factor in the negotiation of otherness, and they are combined with extensive, complex and constantly changing symbolic repertoires that render difference thinkable. This is the second topic the ethnographic vignette from Heerenveen touches upon. Biblical texts are a privileged source of meaning and guidance for mission and diaconate. The specific biblical text read that evening might be interpreted as associating “others” and children, a recurrent image in this kind of enterprise which echoes the classical character of the *bon sauvage*, or as Tania Li (2007: 14) pointed out, the “constant minors” that are the “other” of many development cooperation enterprises. It must be said that, within KiA circles, this image and the hierarchical difference it conjures are severely criticised; an honest will to establish “two-way traffic”, to use an expression I often heard, mobilises significant effort and reflection throughout the KiA network. Nonetheless, hierarchical differences persist.

The third issue emerges when contrasting the deacons’ questions with that of the social workers. While the latter was an explorative and open question, apparently based on curiosity or maybe astonishment, the former were questions aimed at assessing a predetermined agenda of improvement, questions that reveal the existence of a teleological
project for the other. The contents of this agenda and its practical implementation, with all its encounters and clashes, communication and misunderstandings, expected and unexpected outcomes mobilise a huge number of people, things and ideas that compose what I am calling here the Dutch Protestant world.

The word “world” in the expression “Dutch Protestant world” has three different meanings. The first refers to the transnational network assembled around KiA (and the ICCO Alliance, which KiA joined in 2007), with its global fluxes connecting people and things all over the world. In this book, only a small fraction of these almost infinite links will be directly addressed, namely those connecting the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and some organisations and projects in Brazil. However, during my permanence in KiA’s office I had the opportunity to encounter people from different parts of the world. Some events related to partnerships in Nicaragua and Mozambique will be analysed in chapters V and VI, providing broader insight into the Dutch Protestant world.

The second meaning of “world” refers to the Protestant circles in the Netherlands and to the constant mobilisation of resources to guarantee the (re)production of its church organisations, networks and parishes. In the account I presented above, the agenda of improvement designed for the far-away “other” is voiced by laypersons living in small villages in the most rural province of the Netherlands. It exemplifies the impressive penetration that ideas about improving other people’s lives have in Dutch society in general, and in the Protestant world in particular. Mission, world-diaconate and development – the triad central to this study – are matters concerning not only highly educated professionals working in cosmopolitan offices with networks extending to all continents, but it also mobilises farmers, housewives, bus drivers, shopkeepers and pensioners, among others, who dedicate part of their time and money to “help people they don’t even know”, to use the Brazilian women’s
words. Furthermore, at the national level, this missionary and diaconal agenda plays a significant role in the constant process of organising and reorganising institutional borders and distribution of resources and fluxes among the many actors somehow connected to the PKN and to what I am calling the Dutch Protestant world.

Finally, the third meaning of “world” at issue in the agenda of improvement I have highlighted as it emerges through the questions of the deacons in Heerenveen, is linked to the spatial negotiation of otherness that I mentioned above. The constant enactment of encounters between “us” and “them”, “here” and “there”, depicts the world as a global community, a place inhabited by a colourful diversity of cultures. Beyond mere description, which in itself does not go much further than that which is already common wisdom about the globe, this enactment establishes sensorial experiences of the world, adding meaning, feelings and memories to an otherwise distant and vague idea of “here” and “there”. Accordingly, in this thesis I also provide an ethnographic investigation of how the feeling of belonging to a place called “West”, which is situated at the centre of the “globalised world”, takes shape through the missionary activities of the members of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

2. Concepts and theoretical approach

Mission, diaconate and development cooperation: negotiating otherness in secular and religious repertoires

KiA, as the PKN’s service organisation, is a central actor in the articulation of the symbolic repertoires, experiences and encounters that make
up the transnational network at issue here. The different initiatives and activities of the organisation, and therefore the connections and exchanges it promotes, are organised and classified through the labels “mission”, “diaconate” and “development cooperation”. These three domains of action are foundational classificatory principles of the KiA network and thus constitute the starting point for the formulation of my research problem.

In KiA and PKN circles in the Netherland, these three types of activities are performed by organs and committees that are very often united under the abbreviation ZWO – zending, werelddiaconaat and ontwikkelingssamenwerking (mission, world-diaconate and development cooperation). At the local and regional levels (parishes and regional synods, respectively), these three domains are not clearly separate and the activities that relate to the far-away “other” are simply labelled ZWO, without further elaboration and division of tasks among the three domains. As I will analyse in chapter V, ZWO work at the local level is conceived as one sole endeavour that competes with the attention, time and resources devoted to other diaconal and religious activities oriented towards the parishes themselves and their surroundings. It is only at the national level, in KiA offices, that the differences between mission, diaconate and development cooperation gain organisational expression in the different programs and different policy documents guiding the elaboration and implementation of action (see chapters II and III). In interviews with churchgoers, it became clear that these differences were not considered important, being no more than a matter of the quantities of religious or secular ingredients used, following slightly different recipes, for the preparation of the same dish: Christian responsibility toward the far-away “other”.

Following this emic classificatory principle, this study approaches mission, diaconate and development cooperation as parcels of the same enterprise, highlighting continuities rather than differences in their ways
of negotiating otherness. In this sense, I analyse ZWO activities as a mode of relating to otherness (Albert and Ramos, 2000: 5-8), which simultaneously organises a transnational network of contacts and fluxes, influences the shape of the national configuration of organs and communities of the PKN and informs a specific experience of the world for Protestant subjects. In this sense, it articulates the three dimensions of what I refer to here as the Dutch Protestant world.

The idea of modes of relating to otherness which underlies concerns motivating the volume edited by Bruce Albert and Alcida Ramos, is the outcome of a wide project to understand how different Amerindian societies accommodate the contact with their others to their own cosmologies. Despite the immense empirical difference between native societies of the low lands of South America and low lands of North Europe, the theoretical problem I am tackling here – negotiation of otherness – is similar enough to allow the formulation of my approach is the terms they have posed. Thus, inspired by the notion coined for the South American context, I start from consideration of the Dutch Protestant ZWO conundrum as another example of the infinite variations in the ways that human societies collectively explain, organise and negotiate their relationships with those they consider as being the “other”, as belonging to intrinsically different social groups.

Moving on from this starting point, in this subsection I will first present the definition of the three ZWO terms, contrasting the ways they are most commonly used by people connected to the KiA network and the official definitions that, at the national level, link the Dutch Protestant endeavour to larger “Western” frames of mission and development. Secondly, I will introduce some of the findings of the recent anthropological literature on mission and missionaries that have influenced the formulation of my own research question.

Development cooperation (ontwikkelingssamenwerking), the “O” in the ZWO abbreviation, is an international and transnational phe-
nomenon conceived as a secular enterprise, based on moral responsibilities connected to basic human rights. It mobilises an enormous number of religious and non-religious people, governmental and non-governmental organisms, which, very roughly speaking, channel a considerable volume of financial and human resources from the so-called “developed” countries to the “developing” or “underdeveloped” ones. Looking from this broad perspective, beyond the limits of the specific Dutch organisations in focus here, it is the largest, richest and most prestigious among the three of the ZWO domains. Since the aftermath of World War II, development cooperation became a wide scale phenomenon, an important issue on international agendas worldwide.

Proportionately to the importance of the phenomenon, academic interest on development has constituted a whole field of investigation and research. Institutes, universities, research programs and think-tanks with their own journals and publications have been established, primarily in Europe and North-America. Their production has been aimed not only at enhancing knowledge to facilitate the practical implementation of development projects, but also at stimulating critical reflection on its philosophical and sociological foundations. In the Netherlands, specifically, a whole multi-disciplinary field of development studies has emerged alongside (and sometimes overshadowed by) the large governmental and non-governmental development apparatus. Its intellectual production ranges from technical studies on the management of environmental disasters to philosophical enquiries into the overlap of religion and development[01].

Critical literature on the topic has provided a rich source of inspiration for the analysis of data collected in my fieldwork. The influential work of James Ferguson (1990) and of Arturo Escobar (1995) has con-

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01 For examples of Dutch academic literature on development, see the production of researchers linked to CERES. This research school brings together a large number of people from different universities in the Netherlands whose research topics are somehow related to development issues.
tributed to the understanding of the power play inherent to development dynamics. David Mosse’s work (2003 and 2005) is fundamental for the comprehension of the importance of everyday practices in the shaping of development cooperation. Moreover, his chapter on decision-making processes within the World Bank (2004) represents one of the few attempts to address the “Western” side of the development equation ethnographically. Tania Li’s book (2007) interestingly relates notions of otherness and improvement, which closely connects to the main issues of this dissertation. Quarles van Ufford’s contributions to the volumes he edited with Dirk Kruijt and Theodore Downing (1988), Matthew Schoffeleers (1988) and Ananta Kumar Giri (2003) provide critical and provocative insights that have illuminated many aspects of the field of development cooperation. Moreover, his historical accounts of the constitution of the Dutch apparatus of development aid (Quarles van Ufford, 1988) are very useful in understanding the broader context KiA and ICCO are embedded in.

The size and complexity of development apparatuses and the volume of financial and human resources they manage to mobilise tend to attract single churches and ecumenical organisations to the generous shade of their sophisticated bureaucratic umbrellas. Although some authors have recently pointed to the religiosity that is more or less inherent to the kind of moral discourses conjured by development cooperation (see Salemink, Harskamp and Giri, 2004 and Quarles van Ufford and Giri, 2003), rigorously speaking, it is defined as a secular endeavour. Quite often, the independence in relation to religious contents is a condition projects have to fulfil in order to receive financial and institutional support from governmental and multilateral agencies. A considerable part of these projects, however, is designed and implemented by organisations closely connected to churches or ecumenical movements. Their accommodation within the secular governmental apparatus, or their inclusion in large-scope networks of “Northern” development agencies,
is based on the overlap of Christian and secular moralities of peace and justice. That is the case of some of the projects supported by KiA and classified as development cooperation. Moreover, since 2007, the majority of programs classified as world diaconate were developed in close connection with ICCO, the independent Protestant agency for development financed primarily through public resources, which approximate them to the rhetoric of development. This issue will be addressed in chapters II and III.

However, my objective here is not only to understand how the KiA network is constituted (especially in relation to some Brazilian organisations) and how it relates to broader networks of development cooperation, but also and mainly how it influences the Dutch Protestant experiences of the other and the world. Therefore, I have attempted to understand how Protestants themselves perceive, classify and conceptualise the network and its actions. Data collected in fieldwork reveals that in my research subjects’ understanding, development was the least important of the three ZWO domains and was encompassed by the religious notion of diaconate. This perception led me to relegate the literature on development cooperation to a secondary position in the analysis.

Interviewing many churchgoers and volunteers involved in ZWO activities at the local level, I noticed that ontwikkelingssamenwerking is a word seldom used in PKN parishes. The secular and rather technical repertoires associated with development do not have much appeal at the local level and the issues linked to ZWO seem to be incorporated in their religious agendas. When questioned about their reasons for being personally committed to the work or for donating money to KiA, the overwhelming majority of people I interviewed explicitly invoked help, share and love as their Christian obligations towards the other.

Thus, although from a “top-down” point-of-view, a considerable part of KiA actions could be simply understood as the Dutch Protestant share of the much broader phenomenon of international development
cooperation, from a “bottom-up” perspective, it is development cooperation that is encompassed by religious repertoires. That is why the concepts and theoretical implications of development cooperation play an ancillary role in this study. Focusing on the two explicitly religious domains of the ZWO – world-diaconate and mission – seemed to me a more adequate way of formulating research questions that address the Dutch Protestant experiences of the other and the world.

Diaconate (or diakonia) is a word derived from ancient Greek and the meaning that is most commonly attributed to it is “service”. Diaconate is a very flexible concept and it can be used to define a rather broad range of church activities, all of them related to the not strictly religious action of the church in the world. Based on a deep philological study of the Greek word, the Australian theologian John Collins (1990) argued that the most accurate translation of its meaning would not be service, but communication. According to him, in its original context the word had no connotation of the humility and simplicity that is inevitably attached to the idea of service. Thus, deacons should be considered emissaries, mediators that facilitate communication between the church and its surroundings.

Collins’ interpretation, which lies far beyond my objectives or competence to assess, seems to be well-received in PKN circles. In an edited volume published with KiA support, for instance, a Dutch theologian connected to PKN considers “[Collins’ – JR] view of the role of the deacon very challenging: the deacon as an educator and a go-between who keeps the Christian community focused on its work for people in need, by building connections between the latter and the church community” (Noordegraaf, 2006: 17). Similarly, in a seminar organised a few weeks before KiA and ICCO began working together (see chapter II), the Rumanian theologian Ioan Santa developed similar views, adding that Christ himself could be considered a deacon, and that diaconate is the essential identity of Christianity.
Another point that is often discussed about diaconate is the relationship between secular and religious meanings in the work performed. Most theologians agree, although for different reasons, that diaconal activities must not contain any explicit religious message. What differentiates the diaconate from mission is precisely the secular character of the activities that, when encompassed by the notion of the former, are considered a Christian duty. Thus, if the activities were themselves to convey religious messages, the distinctiveness of diaconate would be lost. Furthermore, the importance of keeping the two domains separate is often explained as a means to avoid the exchange of secular benefits for religious conversion\(^2\). Religious contents are, to some extent, taboo in diaconal activities.

For the objectives of the present work, the most important aspect of diaconate, either as service or as communication, is how it articulates religious and secular domains. Deacons act precisely on the boundaries between the church and its surroundings, fulfilling their religious obligation as Christians to perform a secular role in society in general. In relation to the religious/secular divide, diaconate is a “double-sided” concept: in its “internal” face, that is, the one that represents the point-of-view of the church, religious meaning is seen as encompassing the secular character of the activities performed; its “external” side, that is, the one which represents from the point-of-view of those outside the church, it covers the secular aspects of the church in action. In the specific case of the KiA world-diaconate, for instance, the same project can be, on the one hand, included by churchgoers among their diaconal activities as part and parcel of their religious obligations; on the other hand, it can be implemented by secular NGOs that understand it as development cooperation and do not attach any explicit religious

\(^2\) I will not get into the details of these discussions here. The different policy documents for mission and diaconate analysed in chapter III address the most important issues in the definition of boundaries between the two domains.
meaning to it. As I heard in a lecture during the *Landelijke Diaconale Dag* (National Diaconal Day), the annual event that gathers about 1000 deacons from all over the Netherlands, “diaconate without the church is no diaconate; the church without diaconate is no church”.

In some uses of the word “diaconate”, the opposition between religious and secular domains overlap with the opposition between the church community and its surroundings. For instance, in the ritual of Collection of Offerings during the PKN’s Sunday services, which I will describe in detail in chapter V, two different collection bags circulate throughout the congregation. One has a K (*kerk* – church) embroidered on it and the money deposited in it is destined to the church, to cover costs such as salaries, maintenance of facilities, etc. The other has a D (*diaconaat* – diaconate) on it, and this money is destined to the church’s external activities and campaigns. The precise destination of the money is announced before the collection starts, according to a schedule prepared by the church council, including a variety of local and national issues. The distinctive characteristic of the “D” list, in this case, is the fact that all these issues are related to the role and obligations the church has with its surroundings.

While development cooperation and diaconate frequently refer to the same kind of activity (sometimes the same projects) and the differences between them are quite often a matter of point-of-view, **mission** in the KiA network indeed relates to a separate domain, one with its own set of initiatives. The word conjures a vast repertoire of meanings and the definition of the term is a rather complex task. The existence of an independent field within Christian theology – missiology – to treat issues related to mission is a good indicator of the level of diversity of ideas and realities gathered under the term.

Among the lay people involved in the missionary work of the PKN at the local level, however, the conceptualisation of mission was not object of much attention and debate. Everyone seemed to have a more or less
clear idea about what mission is, although most of people did not feel comfortable to improvise a definition during the interviews, thus showing their awareness of the fierce theological debates that rage around the topic. Through gathering up different opinions and statements, I can say that for most of them mission becomes a matter of communicating the Christian message around the world, sometimes with the explicit objective of converting, while other times sustaining the objective of establishing dialogue and “two-way traffic” between their own churches and other communities (Christian or not) in different cultures. In the specific case of Brazil, the fifty years of contacts between the Dutch Protestant communities and churches and organisations in the country can be roughly seen as a move from the former perspective to the latter, but this is a move that cannot be generalised for the entire scope of KiA action. This process will be detailed in chapter III.

At the central level of the PKN, theological definitions of mission are a matter of dispute and debate, as the most recent policy document for mission, written in 2004, makes clear. It can be affirmed that the current definitions of mission orienting PKN action were achieved through intense dialogue with the international ecumenical movement. Dutch Protestant churches and theologians participate intensively in the missionary conferences that, since Edinburgh in 1910, have set out the mainline definitions of mission for members of the incipient international ecumenical movement. This dialogue is visible not only in the relatively large number of Dutch Reformed theologians occupying key positions in the history of the ecumenical organisations (Willem Visser ‘t Hooft and Hendrik Kraemer are the most famous), but also in

03 The document will be analysed in chapter III.
04 The World Council of Churches (WCC), the most important organisation in the international ecumenical movement, was founded in 1948, in a conference held in Amsterdam. Although the international missionary movement initiated in Edinburgh did not become a full-fledged part of the WCC before 1961, it is widely accepted that the former influenced the establishment of the latter. For a short and useful summary of the main debates of each ecumenical missionary conference, see Longuini Neto (2002: 69-73).
the constant reference to documents and conferences in different policy
documents orienting the missionary action of the PKN and the denomi-
nations that preceded it.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a comprehensive
summary of theological controversies around the conceptualisation and
implementation of missionary work. The task of searching for a short,
stable and widely accepted definition of mission in manuals, readers and
classical books of missiology could be considered as difficult as finding a
definition of culture in anthropological literature. Thus, I will just point
to two aspects of mission that seem to be widely accepted among missi-
ologists and historians closely related to the Dutch Reformed tradition.
The first highlights how mission is intrinsically related to specific geo-
graphical depictions and perceptions of the world. The second aspect
relates to the understanding of mission as an impulse that is inherent to
Christianity, neglecting the varied socio-political contexts that motivate
it and attributing to it a transhistorical character. The combination of
these two aspects will serve as a starting point for my introduction on
the anthropological studies of mission and missionaries that have influ-
enced the formulation of my research problem.

Geographical space is a fundamental ingredient of the idea of mis-
sion. It is significant that one of the most quoted classics on history of
Christian missionary enterprise is entitled “A History of the Expansion
of Christianity”. This breathtakingly long work written by the Christian
scholar Kenneth Scott Latourette (1947) depicts mission, from biblical
times to the 20th century, as the long history of the physical spreading
of the gospel all over the earth. The idea of “expansion” in Lato-
urette’s title points to the importance of the geographical component in
the definition of the missionary endeavour.

05 Despite criticism of the enthusiastic and celebrative tone which affects the quality of the histori-
ography that the book offers, its monumentality and ambitious scope places it among the most
important and influential works on mission.
Also in missiological treatises, among complex theological concepts and debates, the definition of mission is quite consensually connected to the idea of travelling, visiting and knowing far-away places. For instance, the selection of biblical texts from the Old and New Testaments presented as the sources for missionary work are very often composed of quotes that relate to the act of travelling, the diversity of peoples and languages to be reached and the discovery and occupation of new places and regions (Verkuyl, 1975: 124-143; Bosch, 1980: 78-81). Despite the immense variation and discrepancies in the definition of mission, the use of the term seems to consistently evoke geographical and spatial overtones.

Peter van Rooden, writing about Dutch missionary society at the beginning of the 19th century, also notes the importance of the spatial component of the missionary endeavour. In the case he is concerned about, he observes two principles characterising the missionary geography: the depiction of the world as one single whole and the opposition between ecumene and terra incognita, which in his specific case coincides respectively with Europe and the rest of the world (1996: 67). As I will analyse in chapters III and VI, these two principles are constantly evoked in PKN’s missionary work as well, being an important part of the global panorama depicted in its activities. The comprehension of the missionary geographies at issue in the KiA network and the consequent production of specific maps and experiences of the world will be the core of the last chapter of this book.

The second aspect of widely accepted definitions of mission relates to its trans-historical character. According to van Rooden, theologians and Christian historians tend to address mission as “a transhistorical essence of Christianity” (1996: 65), its development in time being in-

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06 Since my objective here is not to provide an extensive and deep review of missiological literature, I chose to limit myself to quotes from and references to authors related to Dutch Protestantism or recommended to me by theologians connected to KiA when inquired into classical and widely accepted books on the theme.
separable from the history of Christianity as such. Again, Latourette’s work is paradigmatic. Throughout his seven volumes, Christian mission, from biblical times to the 20th century, is depicted as one sole endeavour, whose unity he enthusiastically celebrates. In missiological treatises, such as Verkuyl’s and Bosch’s, the historical dimension of the endeavour is not explicitly at issue. However, the chapters on the theological foundations of mission provide interpretations of biblical narratives that highlight its essential character. They seek to establish continuities between stories, prophecies and commandments from Old and New Testaments, and the missionary obligations of present-time Christians. Temporal unity, literal or not, linking biblical times and current efforts, is one of the cornerstones of the missionary project.

Peter van Rooden interprets this trans-historical attribute of mission as a consequence of the fact that histories of mission tend to focus on its developments in the field, constructing heroes and pious narratives and analysing the successes or pitfalls of the implementation of theological conceptions. For this author, an excessive focus on the frontiers and expansion of the Christian world, neglecting the relationships between the missionary endeavour and the socio-political contexts that produce them, has obscured the distinctive character of the modern mission as it emerged in the late 18th century.

At this point, Van Rooden suggests that the social scientists working on mission, for precisely the same reasons, have also tended to consider “Christianity in possession of inherent missionary impulse” (1996: 66). This assumption has led them to overlook the variety of actors and forces in the “sending” societies that, in different moments of history, motivate different types of missionary efforts. Although the main topic of Van Rooden’s article, namely, the distinctiveness of the modern mission, does not directly concern this study, his observation of the distortions caused by exclusive (and excessive) attention to the interaction between missionaries and missionised will orient the critique in the anthropo-
logical literature on mission I will present in the next few paragraphs. On the one hand, some of the fundamental questions these studies raise about missionary interactions and encounters represent an important source of inspiration for the formulation of the research problems that guide the present study. On the other hand, their difficulties in ethno-graphically addressing relations between mission and “sending” society limits their contribution to the comprehension of my research subject. Since my intention is to understand the articulations between the constitution of the Dutch Protestant network in Brazil, its influence on Dutch organisations and experiences of the “far-away other” and the globalising world it promotes, some other theoretical developments are necessary. The conceptual tools developed by the so-called Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which I will present in the following subsection, will serve to articulate these different dimensions.

Missionary and anthropological projects have a complex history of overlap and distensions, cooperation and fierce controversies. However, only in relatively recent times have missionaries themselves become the central characters of anthropological study. Since Thomas Beidelman’s seminal ethnography (1982), a significantly large and considerably diverse body of knowledge has been built on this theme. As already mentioned, the majority of these studies provide detailed ethnographic accounts of missionary encounters, interactions between missionaries and their others somewhere on the edge of the ecumene. Most of the ideas ventilated by anthropology of mission relate to modernity, cultural change, translation, conversion and globalisation. Most of them also try to understand the religious ideas guiding missionaries and the motivations behind their endeavours.

Among these studies, the Comaroffs’ monumental work on Non-conformist colonial mission in South Africa is a programmatic book.

07 For interesting reflections on the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists see van der Geest (1990) and the contributions to the volume edited by Bonsen, Marks and Miedema (1990).
It touches upon many issues that would be taken up again by most of the subsequent anthropological literature on missionaries. Especially relevant for my study, which deals with the role played by the missionary endeavour “at home”, is their claim that not only missionised people are transformed by the (in their case colonial) encounter, but that modernity as such was shaped in opposition to its others (1991: 54 and 1997: 22-23). Throughout the more than nine hundred pages of thick description of different aspects of the Nonconformist missionary practice, however, one finds only a few references to the influence of the missionary encounter on Methodism itself and on 19th-century Britain. The transformation that both missionaries and Tswana undergo are described and analysed in detail, but no empirical data are presented showing exactly how modernity is shaped by its others.

The issue may be that the methodological device the Comaroffs use to solve the problem of the ambitious scope of their research subject has ended up reproducing the very anthropological tendency to “study down” that they criticise (1991: 54). This device consists in taking the “Western” part of the missionary equation as the social context embedding the individual biographies of the missionaries. However, the comprehension of these social contexts is not achieved through the same kind of meticulous ethnographic analysis that has resulted in the impressive and lively picture of both Tswana and Nonconformist missionaries in South Africa. The chapters and sections of the Comaroffs’ text in which the “metropolis” is at issue build on canonical literary, philosophical, historical and sociological analyses of different aspects of Europe in the 19th century[08]. The only exception to this pattern is the short (if such a word can be used to refer to any part of the Comaroffs’ book) section on images of missionary adventures in British literature (1991: 49-53). The outcome is, in the end, unbalanced. In relation to

the Tswana, the book depicts how the missionary and colonial encounter affects their “culture/society” as a whole. In relation to Europe, it shows how the encounter affects individuals, whose “original culture” remains more or less impermeable both to Tswana influence and to anthropological enquiry.

The programmatic character of the Comaroffs’ book and the excellence and monumentality of their ethnography has influenced subsequent studies on missionaries. Most of these publications build on the ground prepared by the Comaroffs, with its strong landmarks: the dialectical character of encounter, the urge to understand the specificities of both missionaries’ and natives’ worldviews, the multiple “modernities” resulting from the encounters of “Western” modernity with multiple others, to mention only a few. Together with these landmarks, however, a certain topography of the groundwork laid by the Comaroffs seems to influence the direction taken in the studies that followed. In general lines, these studies provide detailed ethnographic accounts of the missionary encounters, focusing on conflicts and changes occurring in the “receiving” societies and in the worldviews of the missionaries. Fluxes and influences “from the West to the rest”, or from the centre to the periphery, are addressed in detail, while the question of how Western conceptions are embedded in social relations and practices in the “sending” churches and countries gain, in general, a residual treatment. The Western side of missionary networks is subject to analysis almost exclusively as a context that provides insights on the work of the missionaries. Attempts to understand mission as part and parcel of the modern “West” are much less numerous, to say the least.

This excessive emphasis on encounters at the edges of the ecumene may be interpreted as a reproduction, on anthropological theory, of the same divide that structures the missionary geographies. In this sense, the inexistence of good and comprehensive ethnographies of mission and development “at home”, extensively addressing the role of the mission-
ary enterprise in the societies that conceive and implement it, may be a sign of a certain reluctance by anthropologists to study phenomena that are not marginal or peripheral.

To some extent, Birgit Meyer’s dissertation (1999) on German Pietist missionaries among the Ewe in Ghana is an exception. Although her main focus is also the dynamics of conflicts and encounters between missionaries and missionised, and Pietism “at home” is presented as the context surrounding missionaries’ worldviews, her approach to it is richer and more detailed than most existing characterisations of the “Western” part of mission (1999: 28-53). She builds on popular images and allegories, as well as on a precious autobiography of one of the would-be missionaries in Ghana that allows her to provide a picture of the Pietists’ cosmologies, which go far beyond the official theologies pronounced by authorised spokespersons. Her analysis demonstrates that the dualism opposing good and evil, God and the Devil, is widespread among Pietists in 19th-century Germany, as part of popular ways of interpreting and framing religious beliefs and practices. This larger frame allows her not only to show how fundamental this dualism is to understanding the Devil’s career in the mission in Ghana, but also to point to the importance of the missionary effort within Pietism.

Among the best known pieces of the anthropological literature on mission, two have Dutch missionary efforts as their main subject. Webb Keane’s analyses of the Reformed mission in Sumba, Indonesia (2007) raises interesting points, most particularly, his elaboration on materiality, money and purification, which prove to be quite helpful in addressing some of the issues at stake here, as I will show in the next subsection. His book is quite exceptional in mission studies, insofar as it explicitly aims at illuminating the relationship between Christianity (and Calvinism, specifically) and modernity, through analysis of the encounters in Sumba, treated as a case of the “persistent religious attack on semiotic forms” (2007: 8). He suggests that the process of purification (in Bruno
Latour’s sense) that characterises modernity is deeply affected by the way religion in the “West” (especially Calvinism) obliterates other semiotic ideologies. The notion of semiotic ideology (2007: 16-21) is his main analytical instrument to investigate conflicts and clashes around the issues of agency and materiality in the missionary encounter.

He justifies his choice for the observation of encounters that occur “in a religious borderland” (2007: 8), attributing some sort of explanatory power to difference and contrast. “If there is any shared ground for Protestant and more secular traditions, it should be most apparent when both stand in a situation of maximum difference from something else.” (2007: 4) For the author, “the missionary encounter and the attendant problems of radical conversion provide one context in which this [religious – JR] background and its links to the idea of modernity can be rendered especially visible.” (2007: 6)

There is one major inconvenience, however, in this type of methodological choice. The lack of empirical data on how the assumptions of Calvinism are dynamically actualised in the daily life of people living in the “sending” society may lead to confusion between one part of the Calvinist religion, its official theology, and its religious system as a whole. Semiotic ideologies of missionaries and theologians cannot be simply assumed to be the Calvinist semiotic ideology as such, without taking into account that these actors are “spokespersons” struggling to establish the borders of what they want to be recognised as “Calvinism” or “modernity”. The ambitious project of understanding how (Calvinist) religion and modernity are complexly intermingled cannot be fully successful without the knowledge of how their semiotic ideologies are (re)produced in the religious practices and how different actors experience them in their daily lives, both at home and abroad.

A good example of this inconvenience was noticed by Miranda Klaver (2008) in a review of Keane’s book. Klaver points out that the author overlooks movements that contradict the hegemonic view on
Calvinism’s semiotic ideology. The emphasis on body, pleasure and consumption, which Colin Campbell (1989) has convincingly shown to be as “modern” as the worldly ascesis pointed out by Max Weber, is simply absent from his analysis. Keane’s decision to observe modernity through the mirror of the “other”, leads him to produce a distorted image of the “West”, in which the semiotic ideology spread by the Dutch missionaries in Sumba is oversized.

The second work addressing Dutch missionary efforts that has influenced the theoretical framework of this book is Peter Pels’ dissertation on the Dutch Catholic mission in Tanganyika; in particular, his chapter on the circulation of the “exotic” in the Netherlands and its role in fundraising and recruitment of new missionaries (1999: 45-66). His analysis of missionary images and narratives provide an insight into the way Holland’s Catholic population viewed such endeavours and their importance in the formulation of exotic and paternalistic images of the other (present in expressions like “zwartjes” – blackies, in the diminutive). Moreover, he analyses how the combination of adventure and sacrifice present in these narratives rendered a missionary career attractive for a specific parcel of the members of the Catholic Church.

At a theoretical level, the author’s proposition of a “tactile approach” (1999: 25-29), as opposed to what he characterises as an excessive visual bias in anthropology (1999: 23), allows the comprehension of the engagement in missionary activities from a perspective that includes the body and the senses. Unfortunately, Pels’ analysis of the tactile implications of mission is restricted to encounters in the field and the perceptions of the missionaries themselves. In his interesting and inspiring chapter about the Dutch Catholic public, he suggests only that the sensuous presentation of adventurous missionaries in the wild Africa affects the general public, without developing its consequences beyond the restricted circle of the would-be missionaries.
In summary, the main concern of the present study is to understand how the Dutch Protestant missionary enterprise, as it is implemented in Brazil, connects to the church (and broader society) in the Netherlands, affecting the experiences of Protestant subjects. Official views and definitions of each of the ZWO domains are a fundamental part of the symbolic repertoires invoked by people to make sense of what they do at the different levels of the enterprise and in different points throughout the network. Furthermore, some of the questions raised by the anthropological literature on development and mission help to illuminate the central nodes of the network and their relationships with their partners in Brazil. In other words, they help to understand the negotiation of otherness as it is enunciated and performed in official discourses and encounters between Dutch organisations and their others in the “South”. These are the main topics of the chapters II, III and IV.

Furthermore, despite the residual treatment given to the ways mission, diaconate and development cooperation relate to the people in the “sending” society who contribute to their implementation, some of the insights in the anthropological studies I have mentioned in this section proved to be extremely important and useful to the formulation of the main questions concerning the experiences of the far-away other and the global world propitiated by Dutch Protestants. Based on these insights, I look at three different aspects of these experiences.

First, in chapter V, I inquire into the meanings of money and the churchgoers’ attitudes towards monetary donations. For the majority of PKN members, this is the only actual effort they make to participate in the church’s mission and diaconate, which thus makes it extremely important to understand the role played by mission “at home”. Keane’s and Comaroffs’ chapters on the monetary aspects of missionary action serve as a counterpoint to a specific literature that addresses the social meanings of money, discussed in the second section of the fifth chapter.
Secondly, again - in chapter V, I address bodily sensations connected to mission, diaconate and development. Following Pels’ and Meyer’s suggestions, I approach the tactile aspects of the ZWO activities at the parishes, interpreting how, in rituals and services, some elements of the missionary endeavour are aesthetically displayed as sensational forms (Meyer, 2006).

Finally, in chapter VI I analyse geographical repertoires at issue in PKN’s missionary enterprise. Building on the importance of the spatial dimension of mission that is pointed out in missiological discourse, the chapter introduces some phenomenological approaches to processes related to mapping and production of locality.

Network

The subject of this dissertation is the missionary and diaconal network of the PKN, assembled around KiA, its central node. As I have stated above, the objective of this study is to understand the articulations underlying the constitution of a Dutch Protestant network in Brazil, its influence on Dutch organisations and the experiences of the “far-away other” and the globalising world it promotes. I use the expression “Dutch Protestant world” in the title of this book to refer to these three articulated dimensions of the KiA network. In this subsection, I will introduce some conceptual tools for approaching these articulations.

The word “network” suggests a diversity of meanings, from ordinary commonsensical uses to a diversity of elaborated theoretical/methodological traditions in social sciences. Therefore, it is important to explain the meaning I attribute to the word here and the way I will use it throughout this book. The first and most important step is to make clear that network, as I employ it here, refers to two separate things: (1) the emic description of what the actors themselves perceive as an
empirical set of relations; and (2) an etic concept to analyse at a scholarly level how these relationships simultaneously affect and are affected by those actors and organisations. The latter invokes some insights developed by the so-called Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), as phrased in Bruno Latour’s (2005) and John Law’s (1994) works.

Very often in my fieldwork I heard “network” being used to refer to the scope and the reach of the connections and links created around the Dutch Protestant missionary endeavour. The word is part of official and unofficial repertoires that people who are connected to it in one way or another use to explain it. KiA’s networks, in the plural, refer to the different people and organisations to which this central node, KiA, is connected. For instance, one can talk about KiA’s network of partners in Brazil, KiA’s global network of ecumenical partners, or about KiA as part of the missionary network in the Netherlands. In the singular, the KiA network refers to all these relations together. In stressing connections between nodes, this use of network points to a description of the fluid and relational character of the links developed in the Dutch Protestant missionary enterprise. In other words, network, as it is perceived by people connected to KiA and its partners, is not a structure or a concerted organism, but a bundle of relationships, connections and fluxes. In this study, I follow a very limited parcel of these links, namely, those connecting some actors and organisations in the Netherlands that are directly involved in PKN’s international missionary activities and some partners in Brazil.

Opposed to this image of fluid fluxes, however, organisations appear in emic discourses on the KiA network as more or less fixed unities, solid nodes connected to one another through different forms of contacts and exchanges. In general, these organisations are regarded as actors that produce relationships and not as results of the fluxes and links that make up the network. At this point, my use of network as a concept differs from that of the actors themselves. Instead of taking organisa-
tional or cultural boundaries as an a priori and using them as an empirically given frame to the subject, I am more interested in the process of producing boundaries through connections and exchanges. Therefore, I will focus on how different actors involved in the missionary, diaconal and development work are constantly drawing, erasing and negotiating the limits and boundaries of the organisations they belong to and represent in front of other actors\textsuperscript{09}. The insights developed by some ANT scholars around the concept of network are useful instruments in understand these processes.

Following the ANT approach, I see network as an analytical tool that allows the understanding of social phenomena as the result of interactions and fluxes among a diversity of (human and non-human) actors considered as mediators, in other words, as active vehicles which transform and influence the effects they transport (Latour, 2005: 129-131). In this sense, network is “a concept, not a thing out there” (Latour, 2005: 131), and one can use it to describe and analyse objects and topics that do not have the shape of a network – “a symphony, a piece of legislation, a rock from the moon, an engraving” (2005: 131), to stick to Latour’s examples. Therefore, network as it is used by ANT scholars has no relation with the commonsense meaning attributed to the word, but may be considered a lens through which to observe, describe and analyse how objects and realities are the result of complex and more or less unstable interactions and assemblages. In the present study, however, I am using a few notions connected to the actor-network approach, especially the notions of panorama and mediator, which I will develop in chapters II, IV and V, to analyse a subject that is indeed commonly described as having the shape of a network. Most of time, the word network appears in this text in reference to the emic and commonsensical description of links and relationships organised around KiA. When

\textsuperscript{09} The difficulty of defining institutional boundaries in the world of development cooperation and NGOs is a phenomenon detected by many authors. See, for instance, Hilhorst (2003: 4-5).
I use the word as a concept, I will explicitly connect it to other elements of ANT.

The main advantages provided by these concepts is that they present an alternative to the arbitrary divide between, on the one hand, bounded and fixed nodes of the network, and on the other hand, fluid links and relationships. Using ANT vocabulary will serve to analyse organisations and organs that are members of the KiA network, seeing them not as predefined static nodes but as outcomes of relationships, fluxes and connections, fragile achievements that can only be maintained through the constant mobilisation of different actors and forces. In chapter II, for instance, I analyse how institutional borders are drawn between the main organisations related to the Dutch Protestant missionary and diaconal work. I suggest that the very existence of these borders and their spatial expression, as they can be apprehended in the observation of the building that shelters the organisations, are outcomes of relationships and fluxes occurring within the network as a whole[10].

Another important advantage of the ANT approach is methodological. Researchers and their scientific apparatuses and institutions are understood as part and parcel of the network they study, mediators submitted to the same sort of processes of assembling, mobilising and ordering (Law, 1994: 9) they seek to describe and analyse. This insight is especially useful for the specificities of the case in point. The multi-sited character of my fieldwork and the absence of boundaries that could be easily naturalised, contrasting with the classical ethnographies of territorially, culturally or symbolically bounded communities, rendered the researcher’s active choices evident. The somehow arbitrary

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[10] Although I believe some of ANT’s concepts may help to shed light on aspects of my research subject, I do not fully follow the ANT approach. Its overcritical position in relation to basically every existing social theory (except for ANT, of course), which Latour gathers under the roughly generalising label “sociology of the social” (2005: 9-12; 160), seems to demand of interested researchers a quasi-religious conversion and a dramatic break with the past. That is why I find it important to make it clear that, although using some of its concepts and vocabulary, I am not a newborn social scientist of the ANT church.
inclusion of churches, NGOs, parishes and people in the scope of this rather exploratory account is the result of my own involvement as an active mediator in the network I investigate here. The frame of my research subject is based on my own journeys through the KiA network, following fluxes of people, money, images and documents and putting together an account that mobilises (to use an ANT word) a specific set of actors and forces to reaffirm or contradict views and panoramas encountered in field.

Finally, it is also important to make clear that this specific way of understanding network as a concept has almost no relation to sociological and anthropological traditions on network analysis. The former, following Freeman’s (2004) account, is based on different combinations of four main principles: structural intuition, systematic relational data, graphic image and mathematical or computational models[11]. The latter appeared as a reaction to the rigidity of structures and corporate groups, in the context of British structural-functionalism, introducing the idea of network as an attempt to leave more room for individual action and historical changes[12]. In authors such as Boissevain, Mitchell, Srinivas and Béteille (Boissevain and Mitchell, 1973), the social impact of networks of personal relationships (among kin, friends and neighbours) appears to contrast to ways of belonging to bounded and objective social corporate groups.

The main questions and objectives of these latter theories have no direct relation to the main goals of this dissertation. Besides some overlap between their ways of describing a network and the emic views I will constantly evoke, there is no further connection between social network analysis and the use of network as a concept in this book.

11 Freeman’s work presents a summarised historical overview (and an enthusiastic defence) of network analysis in the sociological tradition. See also Scott (1988) and Castells (2000 and 2000a).

12 In the 1970s, the British model of network analysis had good fortune in Dutch anthropology. See, for instance, the many Dutch contributions in the volume edited by Boissevain and Mitchell (1973). Boissevain himself was a professor at University of Amsterdam.
3. Core question and ancillary questions – outline of the book

Based on the theoretical issues presented above, the core question guiding this explorative study is:

*How does the process of negotiating otherness, as apprehended through the symbolic repertoires and personal encounters at issue in Kerk in Actie’s network of mission, diaconate and development cooperation in Brazil, influence Dutch Protestant organisations (PKN, KiA and ICCO Alliance) and their members’ perception and experience of the globalising world?*

This question unfolds through five ancillary questions, each one related to one of the chapters of this book, as follows:

1. What are the main processes and issues connecting the three organisations in the Netherlands that are directly involved in the elaboration and implementation of Dutch Protestant missionary and diaconal initiatives in Brazil?

2. What are the differences and similarities between the images of otherness emerging from the various religious and secular repertoires used to define the missionary, diaconal and development enterprise of the Dutch Protestants in Brazil at different moments during the last fifty years?

3. How are otherness and sameness negotiated in the daily context of missionary, diaconal and development practices regarding Brazil?

4. What are the corporeal/bodily dimensions of the experience of otherness, as it unfolds with the local communities of the PKN, through the financial and ritual activities related to mission, diaconate and development cooperation?
(5) How do geographical and spatial repertoires associated to KiA’s network produce specific religious maps and how do these maps situate Dutch Protestant subjects in the global world?

4. Methodological considerations

To finalise this introductory chapter, I will describe the methodology I have used in seeking an answer to the above questions. As I mentioned in section 2 of this introduction, the exploratory research I conducted to answer these questions could itself be seen as a network (in the ANT sense), assembling actors and mediators and producing specific panoramas, based on theoretical questions and methodological choices that cannot be disconnected from my own personal experiences and affinities. Thus, I believe a short account of my own several years of journeys through KiA, meeting people and organisations, is the best way to introduce the main methodological points concerning this study.

My journey through the Kerk in Actie’s network began at some point during my Master’s research, while doing fieldwork in Castrolanda, a town in Paraná (the state of Southern Brazil that I come from), founded by Dutch Protestants who migrated to Brazil in the early 1950s. I wrote my MA thesis (Rickli, 2003) at the Universidade Federal do Paraná – UFPR (Federal University of Paraná) about the relation between kinship and religion in Castrolanda. Although the relationship between the Dutch town in Brazil and the Netherlands was not part of my concern in the thesis, the close contact with Dutch migrants and their church, the Igreja Evangélica Reformada – IER (Evangelical Reformed Church), as well as with many Dutch teachers, pastors, friends and relatives of the migrants that visited the town during my fieldwork period there, made
me wonder about how relationships between migrants and the country they come from are perceived and sustained over so many years. Furthermore, living among European migrants and their descendants instigated my curiosity about the way Brazil and its inhabitants are depicted and represented abroad. I was able to perceive the deep impression that Brazilian issues made on the migrants and on their Dutch visitors, who quite often used the idea of cultural difference to explain their own feelings of alienation regarding Brazil. At the same time, I could perceive a diffuse sense of asymmetry that apparently positioned the Netherlands and Brazil at different levels of development, which was very often expressed as an urge to help, to do something for Brazilian people. The desire to understand these processes of production of cultural differences and hierarchical asymmetries provided my initial motivation to study the Netherlands.

In addition to the acquaintance with people of Dutch descent that I acquired through my fieldwork in Castrolanda, my parents had worked, since the early 1970s, for different missionary and diaconal projects supported by the Dutch Protestants. The last one, in particular, an NGO dealing with rural development that they coordinated together, provided me with a first example of the kind of partnership produced in the KiA network, further instigating my curiosity about that vague feeling of asymmetry between the Netherlands and Brazil that I had already encountered in my contacts in Castrolanda. My parents’ network in the Netherlands also put me in contact with people working in KiA, who encouraged me to go ahead with the project of doing research on the organisation and who were very open to the idea of having a Latin American anthropologist hanging out around KiA headquarters for awhile. From these contacts I also got some provisional data that were very important in elaborating the research proposal I presented to Capes – the foundation within the Brazilian Ministry of Education that was to support my research
financially. One of my parents’ friends also introduced me to the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the VU University in Amsterdam and to Prof. André Droogers, who became my main supervisor.

This was the scenario within which I formulated my very first questions related to what later would become my research topic. How are Brazil and its poverty perceived by Dutch (Protestant) people? Why do such people develop an interest in helping Brazil? How are hierarchical differences between Brazil and the Netherlands produced in this process? Do gift and exchange play a role in it? What is the relation between religion, mission and gift? These incipient concerns gained anthropological tones in the research proposal I presented to Capes at the end of 2004. The research questions formulated at that moment related almost exclusively to the theories of gift and exchange, and the connection between gift-giving and religion.

In November 2005, after a two month delay due to the strict policies of the Dutch immigration authorities, I began my PhD work at the VU in Amsterdam. My first task was to adjust my research proposal to fit faculty standards and submit it to an assessment committee within 9 months. I was further confronted by the promethean task of learning Dutch in less than one year in order to be able to conduct my fieldwork, which would be based mainly on interviews and participant observation, as I will describe later. Under the careful, patient and generous supervision of André Droogers and Marjo de Theije, I re-wrote my research proposal, expanding the theoretical framework and formulating new research questions. The new theoretical framework included, in addition to gift and exchange, discussions on symbolic repertoires, elaborations on the body and sensations, and literature treating globalisation from a phenomenological perspective.

With these ideas in mind and a still insufficient command of Dutch, I began my fieldwork at KiA headquarters in September 2006. For six
months I “worked” in the organisation as a volunteer, mostly carrying out research in the archives, attending meetings and celebrations, playing the organ for morning meditations and trying to talk to people in the corridors and during lunchtime. Being (or maybe seeming to be) very busy is one of the most visible qualities of office workers in general, and Dutch office workers in particular. Ethnographers of organisations are, thus, in trouble because nobody seems to be particularly eager to engage in small talk around the coffee corner and opportunities for informal conversations are not really abundant. Yet despite initial difficulties, I ended up adjusting my time and expectations to the routines of the office and I gathered a good amount of data. I also managed to interview almost all staff members directly related to Brazil, and almost all members of the team for Latin America.

In March 2007, I began the second phase of my fieldwork, this time in Brazil, where I spent about five months doing research at Corrente Viva – CV, a network of NGOs supported by KiA that is itself composed of different community based organisations in the city of São Paulo. The time I spent participating in Corrente Viva’s activities was very fruitful, allowing me to observe a variety of issues related to mission and development encounters. During this period in Brazil, I also attended a meeting in Salvador, Bahia, which brought together all partners of the recently forged ICCO Alliance. KiA had become a part of the Alliance in 2007. The meeting proved to be an excellent occasion for observing interactions between Dutch and Brazilian partners.

From the end of July until the beginning of September I interviewed with people related to IER missionary and diaconal work. There were three reasons why I did not conduct deep ethnographic research. Firstly, my interest in the IER was restricted to its missionary cooperation with KiA, and I thought that interviews with members of IER’s missionary committee would be the best way of gathering information
about that cooperation. Secondly, I had already found a reasonable amount of information on their relationships in KiA archives in Utrecht. Finally, I would also be able to rely on the ethnographic data about the IER that I had collected during fieldwork for my master’s thesis.

The last phase of my fieldwork took place between September 2007 and March 2008, when I visited many different parishes of the PKN, most of then in the provinces of Drenthe and Friesland. Almost every Sunday I attended church services in different parishes in the region, usually connected to missionary and diaconal issues. I also attended special activities (campaigns and informative evenings) as well as many meetings of the so-called ZWO commissies, the committees of laypersons involved in missionary and diaconal activities at the local level.

A remarkable moment of this third phase was the visit by a delegation from Corrente Viva to the Netherlands, from which I selected the short vignette that opens this chapter. I experienced this visit as a gathering of the three phases of my fieldwork: it was a tour, organised by the KiA office in Utrecht, for guests from the network I had researched in Brazil, who were to visit some of the parishes I was relating to at that moment in Friesland. I worked as a volunteer escorting the two Brazilian women, from the time of their arrival until their departure at Schiphol Airport. I acted as a translator in many meetings and for some of the families that hosted them (and me).

During these three phases of my multi-sited fieldwork[13], five different methodological techniques were used to collect data: (1) participant observation, (2) open-ended interviews, (3) image elicitation (4) discourse and image analysis, and (5) documental research.

[13] For a comprehensive and programmatic description of multi-sited ethnography, see Marcus (1995). The volume edited by Burrawoy (2000) gathers a handful of good examples of ethnographic research conducted in multiple locations, providing many insights on methodological issues associated to this sort of research design.
Participant observation was the central strategy. The descriptions of Sunday services, meetings, office routines, campaigns and encounters, among others, provided the most substantial part of the data that served as the basis for improving my preliminary research questions and for the development of analyses and conclusions throughout this study.

About thirty open-ended interviews complement the data collected through participant observation, being the second most important source of data. In the first fieldwork phase, interviews were conducted with KiA’s staff members related to Latin America and former employees who had worked in Brazil as missionaries and later occupied key positions in the organisation’s hierarchy. In the second phase, I interviewed CV staff and the managers of local organisations that were part of the CV network. Finally, during the research period in the parishes in the Netherlands, some members of local and regional ZWO committees as well as KiA’s regional advisor were interviewed.

Together with open-ended interviews, in some cases I also used image elicitation, showing pictures produced by the KiA communication and fundraising department and asking for the interviewee’s impressions and opinions. This research technique helped to capture people’s own ways of apprehending and understanding the images that circulate within the network, especially those depicting people and landscapes associated with “otherness”. In addition to my research subjects’ perceptions, my own analyses of pictures and discourses make up an important part of chapters III, V and VI.

Documental research was done in KiA archives, throughout the first stage of my fieldwork. This resulted not only in the analysis of the documents that make up the core of chapter III, but also provided background information about the different organisations and churches connected to the KiA network, serving as an indispensable tool to the descriptions presented in chapters II and IV. Besides the
documents found in KiA’s archives, I also used documental sources obtained from former staff members who kindly gave me piles of old documents they had kept filed away.
CHAPTER II

The *Protestants Landelijk Dienstencentrum* and its inhabitants
1. Introduction | in the "hart van Nederland"

Panoramas

The Dutch Protestants Landelijk Dienstencentrum – PLD (Protestant National Service Centre) is an imposing building located in an upper class area of Utrecht, the city known as “het hart van Nederland” (the heart of the Netherlands), situated in the central part of the country\(^\text{14}\). The PLD is the headquarters of three different and intricately interconnected Protestant organisations which in different ways and degrees are connected to the network I analyse in this study. The first is the Protestantse Kerk in Nederland – PKN (Protestant Church in the Netherlands), a denomination founded in 2004, which is the biggest Protestant church in the country, recognised as the main heir of the predominantly Calvinist Reformation in the Netherlands. The second organisation based in the PLD is Kerk in Actie – KiA (Church in Action), the so-called dienstenorganisatie (service organisation) of the PKN and the most directly implicated actor in the network I research in this study. It is the organ within the Protestant church that is directly responsible for designing and implementing its missionary and diaconal work. Finally, the third organisation is ICCO\(^\text{15}\), the independent Protestant agency for development, funded by the Dutch government.

\(^{14}\) The Kingdom of the Netherlands comprehends twelve provinces in the lowlands of North Western Europe, occupying a territory of a little over four million hectares, holding a population of about sixteen and a half million people. The country is also known as “Holland” - the name of its most populated provinces (North and South Holland), where its major cities are located.

\(^{15}\) ICCO was the abbreviation for Interkerkelijke Coördinatie Commissie Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Interchurch Coordination Committee of Development Cooperation). The organisation has changed its name to Interkerkelijke Organisatie voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation), but kept the old abbreviation, more widely and commonly used than its actual name.
This chapter introduces these three units, describing their organisational configuration at the time of my fieldwork, understanding the very existence of the PLD as one of its most tangible expressions. This configuration was an outcome of two main developments in the Dutch Protestant landscape, namely, the establishment, in 2004, of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, as the result of the merger of three denominations; and the forging of ICCO Alliance, in 2007, bringing together (but not merging) KiA and ICCO, the two biggest Protestant organisations in the field of international cooperation for development (and mission, in the case of KiA). These two processes will be introduced in this chapter.

In order to approach these organisations and the processes influencing the relations and connections between them, I begin with the description of the use and distribution of space within the PLD building. There are two main assumptions underlying this choice. The first is that the way the space of the building is occupied and distributed among its three inhabitants is a crystallisation of their recent histories. The boundaries between these organisations are continuously negotiated, a result of institutional ruptures and continuities. Thus, analysis of the spatial composition of the PLD can serve as a means to introduce these dynamics.

The second assumption is that there is somehow a correspondence between the use of space within the building and a specific spatial image of the transnational network assembled in the work of these organisations, which I propose to analyse here as a panorama, in Bruno Latour’s terms (2005: 187-189). Latour understands panoramas as totalising views that allow their spectators to be “equipped with a desire for wholeness and centrality”. It is within the actually narrow boundaries of panoramas, “that we get our commonsensical idea that interactions occur in a ‘wider’ context; that there is a ‘up’ and a ‘down’; that there is a ‘local’ nested inside a ‘global’” (2005: 189). To describe them,
Latour uses the metaphor of images painted or projected on the walls of a room fully closed off to the outside (2005: 187). Through analysis of the global panorama produced in Dutch missionary endeavour, it is possible to access the way in which the actors involved trace the boundaries between the network and its context, rendering a notion of the scope of their action.

The use of this analytical instrument allows the researcher to find a place beyond two attitudes: taking the totalising images for granted as the truth about the contexts in which the subjects studied here are embedded, or simply refuting them as pure imagination projected on reality. Instead of wasting time and energy tracing artificial boundaries separating “research subject” and “context”, the idea of panorama tries to grasp where the actors themselves place the limits of their actions, and what they see beyond these limits. The focus, then, is on the comprehension of what these totalising views can reveal about the people and organisations that produce them. I analyse the network of missionary and development action of the Dutch Protestants and the world created around it as panoramas that are very effective in organising the interactions between actors and the organisations involved in their production.

This efficacy cannot only be perceived in the interaction between people, but also in the way people interact with their landscapes, giving shape to the materiality of their organisations. In this sense, these panoramas are not only a cognitive repertoire inside the actors’ heads, but they are also tangible accomplishments materialised in different forms - such as an office building. One of the arguments of this chapter, thus, is that the PLD building reflects a given panorama of the Dutch Protestant missionary world, and that an analytical look at the shape of the building can reveal some of the characteristics of this perspective.

The choice to analyse the distribution of space in the building as a crystallisation of its inhabitants’ histories and as the expression of a given panorama implies that I am looking at the network as the result of
a dynamic and continuous process of ordering (Law, 1994: 1). Instead of a fixed and stable order, the recognised borders and limits of each organisation are understood here as temporary and vulnerable outcomes of a constant process of ordering and assembling. To introduce some of the actors and forces implied in this process, I will start with the description of its most tangible and visible accomplishment: the Protestants Landelijk Dienstencentrum.

A guided tour through PLD

The PLD is located at number two of the Joseph Haydnlaan, about fifteen minutes by bus from the Central Station of Utrecht, the main node of the Dutch railway network. Many people I have talked with during my fieldwork mentioned that centrality and accessibility were the main reasons for the choice, in 1999, in the scope of the long merging process that resulted in the PKN, of this former military hospital facility to be the Protestants Landelijk Dienstencentrum.

The building is composed of six blocks and has two floors, an attic and a basement. The central block, the longest and broadest of them, connects the western part of the edifice, made up of two short wings, which during the time I was doing my fieldwork housed mainly the management of the church, and the eastern part, composed of three long wings, which is the biggest part of the building, where KiA’s and ICCO’s offices were located at the time of my fieldwork. The main entrance, in the middle of the central block, behind a square courtyard that serves as parking lot for cars and bicycles, is flanked by the flags of the three organisations that the PLD houses.

For most people working in the PLD or connected to the church (as for myself as well), the most impressive aspect of the building is its size. I heard that the decision to buy it and to centralise the Protestant bureau-
Schematic map of the building

1. Western blocks
   PKN

2. Meeting room area

3. Chapel

4. Main entrance

5. Restaurant

6. Eastern blocks
   ICCO and KiA

aspect of PLD
cracy in Utrecht was rather controversial, among other reasons, because many people in the church considered the building too extravagant, given the context of the high prices of the Dutch real-estate market[16].

The entrance flanked by flags provides access to the main hall, where the reception desk is located. This part of the building is covered with a pyramid-shaped roof topped by a clock tower, whose appearance is remotely ecclesiastical, despite the fact that it was already part of the building before belonging to the church. The main common areas of the PLD are contiguous to the main hall: the chapel, the restaurant and the large meeting-room corridor. The restaurant occupies almost the whole eastern side of the central block’s ground floor and it is the biggest space in the edifice. It is a rather typical Dutch cafeteria, furnished with a buffet where food packed in individual portions is available, a counter, and some dozens of long common tables. The restaurant does not accept cash, and the customers must have a special card, which can be charged in a machine placed in front of the entrance. This card, which is indispensable for every person working at the PLD, is also the access card that allows entrance to the office areas of PKN, KiA and ICCO. During lunch time, the restaurant is the liveliest and noisiest site inside the PLD, favouring more informal and personal interaction.

The chapel is located right behind the main hall and entrance, in the centre of the block connecting the eastern and western parts of the building. It is equipped with a tiny pipe organ and a piano and furnished with small stools, a liturgical table and a lectern. The chapel is the room where morning meditation takes place, at nine o’clock every working day except for Mondays. Special services during the last working days before Christian holidays or on other kinds of special occasions are also celebrated there.

16 More details on these controversies in the official meetings of the committees involved in the process of merging can be found in Wallet (2005: 280-288).
The main hall, restaurant, chapel and meeting rooms (that I will describe in the next section) are the most differentiated spaces in the PLD. The other areas, with only a few exceptions, are a long sequence of carpeted corridors, offices, rooms and (coffee) corners that, at first sight, do not vary much. The religious and missionary aspect of the decoration contrasts with this business-like series of offices and corridors. The decorative elements disposed in the building could be divided in four different groups. The first and most abundant are the objects with a generally defined “ethnic” appearance – a collection of souvenirs, paintings in tribal motives, tapestry in straw, wooden sculptures, etc, everything suggesting the idea of “other cultures”. The second group is composed of something that could be called modern religious art, which is quite difficult to differentiate from ethnic style, since “other cultures” are a widely used source of inspiration for many Christian contemporary artists\(^\text{[17]}\). The third group of decorative elements relates to publicity material, mainly posters from previous campaigns, especially those that retain a higher aesthetic quality. Most of the pictures of the “far-away other” that can be seen in the headquarters are linked to these posters. Finally, the fourth type of decoration is represented by maps, which are everywhere in the building, but particularly in the offices of the staff members directly involved with projects abroad.

This description introduces, along general lines, the atmosphere and the division of space among the three main units occupying the building. Some of its aspects, such as the contrast between its impressive size and the small part of it that houses PKN management, will be explored in section 2, which addresses the emergence of this denomination and its relationship to the Dutch religious landscape. Section 3, describing KiA, will provide a detailed description of the offices and their decora-

\(^{17}\) Good examples of this sort of ethnic religious art can be found in the missionary calendar published by KiA and other missionary organisations, which features modern Christian art from a different region of the world each year. The calendar is distributed among these organisations’ partners, and can be also bought in religious bookshops, churches and through the website of the organisation.
tion, stressing the division of departments, functions and programs of the organ. The final section 4 will point to the constant changes in the organisational configuration of the building, describing the instabilities provoked by the forging of the ICCO Alliance and the changes that took place within the few months I spent doing fieldwork in the PLD. This section will also provide deeper insight into the interactions between the building and the people that inhabit it.

2. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands in the Dutch religious landscape

The western part of the PLD, occupied in 2006 by PKN management, is the smallest part of the building, composed of only two short wings. To gain access to them, coming from the reception area, one must cross the western side of the central unit, mainly a long sequence of meeting rooms used by all three organisations sharing the building. These meeting spaces vary in size and available facilities, from a big room for more than a hundred people, equipped with microphones, beamer, etc., to small cubicles for three or four people, furnished with no more than a table and a few chairs.

This long corridor is the place where formal meetings take place. A TV monitor in the main hall announces the schedule of the events that are supposed to take place there during the day every morning, a way of publicising and formalising them. In contrast, daily informal meetings normally take place in offices or flexible spaces within the respective wings of each organisation. Visitors, most commonly members of the church or the Synod, members of regional committees or PKN pastors, are often seen circulating in the meeting-room area.
At the end of this corridor, a door that can only be opened with the card that is also used in the restaurant provides access to PKN offices. To get there, visitors must be escorted by some staff member. The library and the archive administration offices (archives themselves are kept in the basement) occupy a spacious room at the end of one of the wings. Part of the second floor is occupied by the management of missionary and diaconal work inside the Netherlands. The KiA coordinator’s office, unlike all the rest of the organisation, is also located in the western part of the building.

Offices of PKN officials, especially the executive committee of the church, the so-called *moderamen*, are the core of PKN management. The most prestigious among them is the *scriba*, the person selected by the Synod as the day-to-day leader of the church organisation for a determined number of years. I heard that some of the staff members of the PKN humorously called his office “the Holy of Holies”[18].

The décor of corridors and rooms does not diverge from the general aspect of the building as a whole: modern Christian paintings; “ethnic” objects coming from the missionary fields; maps; tapestry and patchwork with Christian motifs and posters of special campaigns and events that took place in the past.

The emergence of the PKN

The small number of offices accommodated in the west wing of the PLD house the officials of the church to which about two million Dutch people belong: the *Protestantse Kerk in Nederland* (PKN). As mentioned above, it was founded in 2004, through the merging of three different denominations: the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* - NHK (Netherlands

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18 This fact is also registered by Emiel Hakkenes (2008: 35), in his journalistic account of one year “shadowing” the *scriba* of the PKN.
Reformed Church), the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* - GKN (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) and the *Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands). According to relatively recent surveys\(^{[19]}\), in 2006 about twelve percent of the Dutch population belonged to the PKN.

Members of the two Reformed denominations make up the large majority of PKN (at the time of the merger, the Lutheran church had no more than sixteen thousand members) and this fusion can be seen as part of a century-long history of schisms and mergers within Calvinism in the Netherlands. The NHK was the one denomination that managed to preserve the same institutional unity since the Calvinist Reformation in the late 16th century, while the GKN resulted from the merging of two movements in the 19th century (Jonkers, 1997). Besides these two denominations, small independent communities proliferate in the Netherlands, most of them more orthodox than the NHK and GKN\(^{[20]}\).

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\(^{19}\) I am using the figures of the report *Geloven in het Publiek Domein* (Donk et al. 2006) of the *Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid* – WRR (Scientific Committee for Governmental Policies) and the research *Godsdienstige veranderingen in Nederland*, (Becker and Hart, 2006) of the *Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau* – SCP (Social and Cultural Planning Bureau). There are many controversies around statistics on church membership, and figures may vary a lot, depending on the sources and methodologies used. For the purpose of this dissertation, however, such variation is not of capital importance.

\(^{20}\) Following Jonkers’ account (1997), one can count sixteen different denominations in Dutch Calvinism, since 1816. Some of them still exist; others disappeared in the schisms and mergers. The *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (1), the original official Calvinist denomination, got this name in 1816, being until then known as *Gereformeerde Kerk*. In 1834 two churches left it: *Christelijke Afgescheiden Gereformeerde Kerk* (2) and *Gereformeerde Kerk onder het Kruis* (3). In 1869 these two churches merged and formed the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland* (4), but a small part of the *Gereformeerde Kerk onder het Kruis* did not join it, forming the *Ledeboeriaanse Gemeenten* (5). Right after the merger, another group decided to start an independent denomination, called the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (6). In 1886, another schism in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, know as “Doleantie”, results in the *Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerken* (7), which merged with the majority of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* in 1892, forming the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (8). A minority within the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* did not join and kept this name. In 1907, the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* and the *Gereformeerde Kerk onder het Kruis* merged forming a new denomination called *Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland and Noord-Amerika* (9), which split again, originating the *Oud-Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland* (10). Another schism divided this group and originated the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland* (11). In 1926 a group left the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, establishing the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband* (12), which joined the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* in 1946. In 1944 another schism in the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* formed the *Gereformeerde*
During the time I spent strolling the grounds of the PLD, I heard different explanations for the process that finally led to the establishment of the PKN, which took decades and is known as Samen op Weg – SoW (together on the way). I group these complementary explanations into two main perspectives. The first, more skeptical (and sometimes phrased with a bit of cynicism) sees the establishment of the PKN as the result of financial pressure caused by the continuous decrease in the number of members of all traditional churches in the Netherlands. This point of view sees the merger as a sort of desperate solution for the financial and administrative problems caused by the secularisation of Dutch society. This explanation and the debates around secularisation will be further discussed in this chapter, in the section dealing with the Dutch religioscape. The other point of view sees the SoW process as a victory of the ecumenical movement in the three denominations, which were able to overcome minor differences and make the decision to unite their members.

Only a detailed historical account of the many intricate juridical, theological and ecclesiastical arrangements of this process can shed more light on these points of view, and represents a task which would take us far beyond the scope of this study. Thus, I make mention of but a few aspects that are closely connected to the missionary and diaconal action of the churches involved in it, for which an understanding of the network at stake here is important[^21].

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[^21]: The Samen op Weg process has not yet been carefully and analytically studied, but a detailed account of the main facts, from the point of view of an insider, can be found in Wallet (2005). Dijkstra-Algra (2004) summarises something that may be considered an official view on the process in a booklet aimed at the church public. Lieburg (2006) in his inaugural lecture at the VU University makes interesting reflections on the choice of the name of the new denomination. Stoffels (2008) also mentions the main facts in his chapter in the handbook on religion in the Netherlands, situating PKN in a broader picture of Dutch Protestantism.
I start with a fierce dilemma implicit in the project of building unity that seems to have been at the centre of the debates: how to construct a church that shelters different groups with different theological positions and at the same time promotes communication between them. In reference to this problem, people often use the opposing imagery of a “hotel church”, with its many independent and non-communicating rooms all under the same roof, and the “household church”, cohesive and highly integrated, but producing orthodoxy and exclusion as side effects. This complex interplay between tolerance and unity had a profound effect on the construction of a common missionary and diaconal project, which was one of the most fundamental parts of the merger, as I will clarify below. The definition of organs, projects, partners and target groups of the common endeavour must be satisfactory for the diverse actors and groups involved. At the same time, they should have some cohesion and unity. Thus, from this point-of-view, the long SoW process can be seen, among other things, as a process of attuning images of otherness, whose scope must be large enough to accommodate the expectations of all the different rooms of the “hotel church”, but narrow enough to produce warmth and communication among them, feeding the image of a “household church”. Under the pressure of secularisation, the negotiation of a common otherness was an important component in the reorganisation of the Dutch Protestant ecumene and the renegotiation of the breadth of the continuum between tolerance and orthodoxy.

My argument is that the ecumenical project of uniting three different denominations relied heavily upon the construction of a common missionary and diaconal project. Some of the most daring, visible and practical episodes of the SoW process occurred in these fields, against the backdrop of the missionary world, the terra incognita, as opposed to

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22 See, for instance, how Dijkstra-Algra (2004: 30) describes this dilemma in relation to the differences between NHK and GKN before the merger.
the ecumene to be established. For instance, it has been widely accepted that the foundational act of the SoW process was a meeting of eighteen pastors of both Reformed churches that occurred in April, 1961. They elaborated a text that was publicised at Pentecost that year, exhorting the churches to cooperate and overcome their differences\(^{23}\) (Wallet, 2005: 39; Dijkstra-Algra, 2004: 28). Wallet, a pastor occupying key positions in the NHK during the SoW process, points to the fact that the eighteen pastors were all somehow connected to evangelism and that apostolate is related to the importance of promoting unity in the world. In his own enthusiastic words: “The endeavour was not about the unity of the church as an end in itself, but about the testimony of the gospel in word and deed. The church has a message for the whole inhabited world and cannot, thus, afford divisions\(^{24}\)” (2005: 39, my emphasis). Following this statement, Wallet provides the example of the cooperation that already existed at that time in the missionary fields in New Guinea.

Thus, since the beginning of the SoW process, cooperation in missionary and diaconal work anticipated cooperation in internal affairs. KiA was founded in 1994, ten years before the establishment of PKN and the existence of the united missionary and diaconal organisation was the main practical justification for moving to the building at the Joseph Haydnlaan. Its opening, which received considerable media attention and the presence of Queen Beatrix, herself a member of the PKN, is mentioned by many as one of the most important moments in the SoW

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\(^{23}\) Pentecost is the date in the Christian calendar when the descent of the Holy Spirit to the apostles is celebrated. According to Christian tradition, it was the Holy Spirit that inspired and moved the apostles to establish Christianity as a religion. Pentecost, then, is considered the “birth of the church”. The launching of the SoW process precisely on the Pentecost, and the official acceptance of this episode as the origin of the PKN interestingly link the history of the PKN to the mythical narratives about the origins of the Christian church.

\(^{24}\) Het ging in dit streven niet om de eenwording van de kerk als een doel in zichzelf, maar om de opdracht in woord en daad van het evangelie te getuigen. De kerk heeft een boodschap voor de gehele bewoonde wereld en kan zich daarbij geen verdeeldheid veroorloven.
process (Wallet, 2005: 283), when people were able to see that the rhetoric of union and ecumenism of the long SoW process was finally being fulfilled. In this sense, the contrast between the monumental size of the building located “in the heart of the Netherlands” as a grandiose statement about the new united church, and the small and relatively modest wings (as compared to ICCO and KiA’s) that are actually occupied by church management, is an eloquent image of the importance of the missionary project for the unity of the church at the national level. Relating this idea to the notion of panorama mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the tangibility and spatiality of the building are not only an expression of a specific organisational configuration, but are also an expression of the tangibility and spatiality of the missionary world and the “other cultures” that inhabit it. In this sense, the Protestant panorama visible in the PLD articulates specific ways of organising and ordering institutional borders and a determined worldview, whose geographical and cosmological aspects will be treated in detail in the final chapter of this dissertation. The existence of the PKN and its specific organisational structure are not only the corollary of internal negotiations, but they are also the outcome of determined ways of negotiating otherness.

The Dutch religioscape

One of the facts that is most commonly connected to the emergence of the PKN is the financial pressure brought about by the dramatic decrease in the number of members of Dutch traditional churches. Although it can be said that there is consensus in academic debate that the importance of traditional Christianity in the Netherlands has been constantly decreasing, scholars do not agree about what this fact means and what its outcomes are. The plurality of opinions on and interpretations of the recent changes in the Dutch religioscape is reflected in the debates flour-
ishing around the notion of secularisation, which constitutes the most
decisive and widely discussed characteristic of the religious landscape of
the country in the last few decades. Secularisation has been the leitmo-
tiv of the study of religion in the Netherlands, sometimes played in re-
sounding fanfares, sometimes as basso continuo for the intimate arias of
individualisation and subjectivisation, and sometimes as counterpoint
to the Arabic and African rhythms of Islam and migrant churches. Vir-
tually, any topic of any research agenda on Dutch religion always comes
back to the secularisation debate[25].

I am using the words “religious landscape” or “religioscape” in-
stead of “religious context” to highlight the view that conceives of
these panoramas of the religious field, no matter how scientific they
claim to be, as constructs belonging to particular perspectives, pro-
duced by situated actors who possess their own political, academic and/
or religious agendas. Since my focus in this study is on the interplay
between the PKN and the global landscape depicted in its missionary
activities, rather than on the interactions between the Dutch Protes-
tants and their national religioscape, I have neither the intention
nor the competence to contribute to the debate itself. Secularisation will
play a role in this dissertation only insofar as it has an evident infl u-
ence on the missionary and diaconal activities of the PKN, or when
it is explicitly invoked by the actors involved as an explanation of
their actions. In this section, therefore, I will only summarily intro-

25 A short look at the questions asked in introductions of large scope studies about religion in the
Netherlands corroborates this opinion. See, for instance, the handbook Religie in Nederland (Borg
et al. 2008), the quantitative long term research project God in Nederland (Dekker, Hart and Peters,
1997 and Bernts, Dekker and Hart, 2007) and the report Geloven in het Publiek Domein (Donk
et al. 2006) of the Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid – WRR (Scientific Committee
for Governmental Policies). They all start with questions that have the secularisation debate as their
backdrop, all of them using the word “ontkerkelijking” (de-churching) as a point of consensus in
the debate. See also the edited volume The Dutch and Their Gods (Sengers, 2005). The research
program “Between Secularisation and Sacralisation”, which brings secularisation already in its title,
developed at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the VU University, coordinated
by Prof. André Droogers, added a more qualitative and nuanced approach to the matter.
duce some aspects of the debate and mention some of the consequences that this process has had on the missionary and diaconal activities of the Protestant church\textsuperscript{26}.

The decrease in the number of members and public importance of the traditional Christian churches, the process known in Dutch as *ontkerkelijking* (de-churching), is evident in the statistics. Although different sources, methodologies and research problems produce considerable variation in available figures on religion in the Netherlands, in relation to this process the numbers do not vary significantly. According to the long term quantitative research project God in Nederland (Dekkers, 2007), which has carried out four different surveys since 1966, the variation in percentages of Dutch population belonging to the main religious denominations are as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic Church</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Church in the Netherlands</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other religious groups</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religious affiliation</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>61</td>
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Although scholars more or less agree about the *ontkerkelijking* visible in the percentages, the meaning of these figures is rather controversial. The main questions resides in the category “no religious affiliation”, which hides a broad gamut of non-institutionalised religious and non-religious subjects, from convicted atheists to Pentecostal believers that consciously choose to preserve their freedom to shop around in the religious market rather than becoming official members of any denomination. However, even with this controversy in mind, these figures put

the Netherlands at the top of the list of examples of secularisation (understood simply as de-churching) in Western European societies. Within a few decades, the country has moved from its position as one of the most religiously observant countries in the continent to a robustly secular one, with one of the highest percentages of population declaring no religious affiliation at all (Kennedy, 2005: 31). The so-called “pillarisation” of Dutch society, the partial organisation of society along religiously and ideologically defined “pillars”, which reached its zenith in the 50s, was rapidly (and maybe radically) replaced by a modernising discourse that defines the Netherlands as “de-Christianised”, “emancipated” and “secularised” (Kennedy, 2005: 30). The grandiloquence of the rhetoric describing the power of secularisation, whether as a positive or negative process, was a common characteristic of the early studies on the topic.

However, after many years at the top of the list of cases that provide support for the secularisation paradigm in sociology of religion, more detailed and qualitative research begins to reveal that the idea that religion has been disappearing and giving place to a secular, rational and disenchanted worldview is not the whole truth, and perhaps not even true at all. In the international field of sociology (and anthropology) of religion, the focus on the study of the emergence of new religious movements and the individualised forms of spirituality has added complexity to the black-and-white picture of secularisation tout court, creating new fields of social research.

Following these international tendencies, new research paradigms have begun to search for an understanding of the transformations of religion in the Netherlands, within the context of the modernisation of

27 More details about the pillarisation will be given in the section on ICCO.
28 For an overview of the secularisation paradigm in sociology and anthropology of religion, see Bruce (2002: 1-44).
29 For examples reflecting the diversity of these approaches see, for instance, Casanova (1994), Davie (1994), Heelas (1996), Hervieu-Léger (1990) and later, Taylor’s monumental work (2007). See also some of the contributions to the volume edited by Woodhead, Heelas and Martin (2001), especially part III.
Dutch society, instead of simply assuming that religion would be engulfed by modernisation and secularism. Exemplary cases of this new paradigm are the research projects conducted in the scope of the program Between Secularisation and Sacralisation (BSS)[30]. The work of this group revolves around the issue of the new subjective and individualised religious forms expressed in the success and renewal of existing movements (such as evangelicalism) and in the emergence of new tendencies, sometimes organised in religious movements, sometimes diffusely spread over society as feelings and beliefs that can hardly be categorised as religious.

This concern with transformations and movements that go far beyond the narrow limits of organised (mainly Christian) religion has led to rethinking and redefinition of the main categories at stake in what was once called the secularisation debate. Terms such as “secularism” and “religion” have been deeply questioned and analysed from different points of view. Droogers (2008), for instance, analyses the definitions of both in relation to power, showing that different positions regarding the terms of the debate are related to different levels (individual, church and society) of analysis of the interplay between religion and power (Droogers, 2008: 121). The inclusion of the notion of spirituality in the debate moves the discussion to the individual inner self, the new refuge of religious expressions (Droogers, 2008: 124).

The emphasis on new movements, new concepts and diffuse forms of religiosity has relegated the understanding of secularisation and sacralisation within the traditional churches to a second plane. There are some exceptions among the studies produced within the BSS program, although most of them deal with specific niches in the interstices of the churches’ structures. Knibbe’s dissertation (2007) on the religious repertoires of the Catholics in the South of Limburg is the only one that analyses a hegemonic group inside a mainline church. The consequences

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30 For a provisional account of the main findings of the group, see Droogers (2007).
of secularisation (or de-churching) for these traditional churches remains a relatively unexplored field for social research. The present study barely touches upon this issue; it does so only insofar as it addresses how the dramatic decrease in membership, as portrayed in surveys, has affected the missionary and diaconal work of the largest Protestant church in the Netherlands.

The first evident consequence, connected to the inevitable decrease of income that follows from the decreasing number of members, is the transformation of the administrative structure of the church and its service organisation. The most significant fact in this process is the emergence of the PKN and the ICCO Alliance. Beyond such “structural adjustments”, however, other more subtle developments have taken place inside the church. In light of the modernization and emancipation agendas characterising Dutch society as a whole, the church was also faced with the need to change (Droogers, 2007: 86). I refer to this process as a “homeopathic treatment” of secularisation, which means an attempt to become more secular in order to go on being religious. Theology has broadened its boundaries to include new themes, treated more from the point-of-view of a general humanistic ethics and contextualised readings of the bible than from dogmatic positions and literal interpretations of the scriptures. Contemporary issues and discussions have become part of the scope of religion and are treated using a modern lexicon that is much closer to secular vocabulary. Emancipation has become a prestigious word in the religious repertoire[31].

In the specific field of mission and diaconate, this aggiornamento can be listed among the causes of a change to a new missionary paradigm, whose emphasis moves from conversion to intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Flirting with cultural relativism, new missionary discourses are based on the assumption that God is one, but he (or she)
reveals him/herself in different ways in different cultures. Thus, the mission’s task is to establish opportunities for dialogue that propitiate to the believers the discovery of these other faces of their own God, the colourful ways he/she appears in other cultures. This generalised view will be developed throughout the following chapters of this book.

The incorporation of a modernising and emancipating agenda by the mainstream Reformed (and Lutheran) churches also approximated the religious missionary agenda and the secular development agenda, affecting the conceptual boundaries between the definitions of mission, world-diaconate and development cooperation. On the one hand, traditional secular issues, such as human rights, became part of the scope of the theological discussions. On the other hand, the religious roots of the highly secularised enterprise of development cooperation permitted straightforward cooperation[32].

Organisational arrangements, missionary theologies and international agenda items of the Dutch Protestant churches have been clearly transformed by the developments occurring in the scope of the so-called secularisation process. These transformations will be discussed in the following chapter, through the analysis of policy documents and travel reports.

Organisation of the new church

The new denomination that emerged from the SoW process preserved the main administrative features of the Presbyterian system, which is characteristic of the Protestant (mainly Reformed) tradition. It is locally and centrally managed by assemblies of pastors and laypersons occupy-

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32 Although after the establishment of the ICCO Alliance this cooperation would become less evident, as I will show in the next chapter.
ing official functions in the church (deacons or elders[33]). It has no fixed and lifelong hierarchical positions, such as bishops. At the local level, parishes are managed by church councils, composed of pastor(s), elders and deacons elected for temporary terms. The church councils normally have an executive committee and a representative in the regional synods – the classes. Classes are the intermediate level of the church structure. Every classis is formed by a number of parishes that are geographically contiguous. The assembly of the regional synods, composed of one representative of each parish in the region, elects a representative who will be a member of the national synod, the highest organ within PKN structure.

The importance of the classes in the composition of the Synod reveals a geographical principle of organisation of the PKN as a whole. In this sense, the choice of Utrecht, the heart of the Netherlands, as the ideal location for the establishment of the headquarters of the new church is not accidental, but is the expression of a specific relationship between church and territory, highlighting the national character of the new denomination[34]. This spatial dimension is a counterpoint to the geographical conceptions of the world expressed in the missionary and diaconal activities, which I will explore in more detail in the last chapter of this dissertation.

The national synod meets every year to deliberate on the most important and decisive issues of the church. Like the church councils, the synod also has an executive committee, the so-called moderamen, whose members are elected by the synod for four year terms. The moderamen is responsible for the daily management of the church structure. Inside

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33 The functions of elders are pastoral and administrative, while diaconal functions are related to the service the church provide to the community. The former also enjoy slightly more prestige and power than the latter.

34 Among the three churches gathered in the PKN, only the small Lutheran church had its headquarters in the city. The most important offices of the two Reformed denominations were based in other places and were not completely centralised, with some departments and branches based in different cities and villages.
the *moderamen*, which is coordinated by a chairperson, called *preses*, the most important executive function is that of the *scriba*, who is responsible for the PLD and is considered a sort of a PKN CEO.

This form of organising church management has some interesting consequences that are related to the main theme of this study. Firstly, it produces a high level of parish independence. Parishes are able to choose their own way of organising services and activities, and to a certain degree, their theological positions. There are, of course, a number of core dogmas, values and norms that must be followed everywhere, as well as some general rules for the arrangement of practical and financial issues, but there is considerable room for local groups to make their own options and take their own positions, and also to organise and dispose of their budgets in their own ways. In the field of missionary and diaconal action, the outcome of this high level of freedom is that local parishes can choose, from a list of projects offered by KiA, what sort of missionary and diaconal action they want to support and get involved with, as I will explain in chapter V.

A second consequence of this form of administrative structure is that the people occupying the highest positions in the church are temporary servants responding to the national synod, and not personifications of the church as a whole, as is the case of the pope (or the bishops and archbishops in the regional and sometimes national levels) of the Roman Catholic Church. Although PKN’s high officials do have power in decision-making processes, their symbolic power does not emanate from their person in relation to the functions they occupy, but from their relationship with the synod. This specific configuration is also expressed spatially in the building in Utrecht. The image of the long corridor of impersonal meeting rooms, for which no access card is required, is a good metaphor for this faceless entity – the national synod – source of the symbolic power that legitimates decisions made behind closed doors that only an access card (and therefore an inscription in the bu-
reauocratic order, even temporarily as a visitor) can open\[35\].

In relation to mission and diaconate, and therefore to KiA management, this division between the *de facto* power of the bureaucrats, and the symbolic and ritual power of the synod is expressed in the way the rather abstract biblical and theological language of the policy documents approved by the latter are translated into daily practical decisions made by the former. This topic will be further developed in chapters III and IV, analysing, respectively, KiA network documents and encounters.

3. KiA | the church in action

Introduction

The three long blocks that form the eastern part of the PLD were shared by ICCO and KiA offices and by some administrative units that pertain to the PLD as a whole (facility services, human resources management, etc)\[36\]. In this section I will present some general information on KiA, the PLD organ most directly connected to the network I am researching in this study.

\[35\] Although the annual meeting of the national synod does not occur in the PLD, pastors, elders and regular members of the church can be seen circulating around the meeting-room area almost every day during the whole year. They participate in different events, some of them to deliberate about and proceed with processes that will be finally taken to the national synod. That is why I am proposing the metaphor relating the meeting-room area, the only part of the building opened to the church public, and the synod.

\[36\] Until the end of 2006, the human resources and financial management of the PKN and KiA were joined within the scope of something that was called the *dienstenorganisatie* (service organisation) of the PKN, term that sometimes was used as synonymous to KiA, sometimes as something that encompassed KiA and the departments responsible for the practicalities of the central management of the PKN. ICCO, until 2006, had its own administrative departments, sharing with the PKN and KiA only the facility services, which where related to the building itself. The ICCO Alliance dramatically changed this picture, as will become clear in the next section.
Even though KiA offices are distributed among the three sections of the building (western wings, central block and eastern wings), the majority of them are concentrated in the eastern part, especially on the first floor of its southern wing. The most substantial part of KiA work is handled in the ten rooms distributed along this broad corridor and in a few other complementary offices in other sites of the eastern wings. Some of these rooms, accommodating three or four desks each, are occupied by the relationship managers (relatiebeheerders), staff members in direct contact with the partners abroad. Three smaller rooms make up the private offices of the leaders of the three regional teams: ASPAC for Asia and the Pacific, AFMOL for Africa and Middle East, and ENLA for (Eastern) Europe and Latin America. The biggest room of the block is occupied by the secretaries working for the three teams. There are also some flexible rooms, normally used for meetings that were not formal enough to take place in the meeting-room corridor described in the previous section.

At the beginning of the corridor, in the intersection with one of the other wings, there is a spacious coffee corner which, in addition to the coffee machine, is furnished with some comfortable chairs, a coat rack and a big copy machine and printer. This corner serves as a meeting space for informal and social occasions, such as birthdays or receptions for foreign guests, and for short conversations.

The “ethnic” décor of this part of the building is rich and elaborated. The various foreign cultural objects, together with maps and posters, stress the regional and geographical character of the departments. An unwitting visitor could easily guess, based only on their decoration, which the rooms are connected to Africa (and more discreetly, the Middle-East), Asia and Pacific, and Latin America (and much less visibly, Eastern Europe).

The other offices belonging to KiA, located on the western side of the PLD, housed the general coordination of the organisation, and a
department called *Kerkinactie*\(^{37}\) *Binnenland*, which dealt with mission and diaconate inside the Netherlands. It disappeared after the establishment of the ICCO Alliance, absorbed by other KiA and PKN departments. These offices did not differ much from the neighbouring PKN offices. Finally, the long corridor connecting the two parts of the building, on the first floor of the central block, right above the reception and the restaurant, was also occupied by management offices connected to KiA. The department of communication and fundraising was the most visible administrative unit based there.

**General information on KiA**

If the network that is the subject of this study has a central node, this is KiA. Heir of different missionary and diaconal departments of different religious denominations and communities, it was established in 1994 in one of the kaleidoscopic moves that have constantly changed the configuration of the field of mission, diaconate and development in the Netherlands. The most important organs that formed KiA were those connected to the three denominations that would later join PKN, but other small Christian groups have also adhered to the new organisation, such as the Remonstrant Brotherhood, the Salvation Army and the Old Catholic Church.

In 2006, when I conducted most of my field research in the PLD, KiA had a budget of about 50 million euros destined to projects in 75 different countries around the world. At the time, the organisation had 719 partners, most of them church organisations and NGOs related to all sorts of

\(^{37}\) Since its foundation, in 1994, the organisation has been using three different combinations of the words “kerk” (church) and “actie/aktie” (action) as its official name: founded as “Kerken in Aktie” (Churches in Action), it became “Kerkinactie” (something like Churchinaction) by the time of the merger of the three churches, changing to Kerk in Actie (Church in Action) in January 2007, when it joined the ICCO Alliance. The move from the plural form of “church” to the singular form is worth noting, for it points to the unification in only one denomination.
development issues, and it maintained 42 expatriate workers. Moreover, KiA supported another 25 employees engaged in projects abroad in cooperation with other sponsors. At the end of 2006, KiA had 110 employees in the Netherlands that, given the high number of part-time workers, added up to a bit more than 76 full-time positions (fte’s)\(^38\).

The most substantial part of KiA’s current work abroad consists in supporting partner organisations in different parts of the world for a determined number of years. KiA also sends different kinds of professionals to work abroad as missionaries or expatriate social workers, most commonly in cooperation with local partners. Besides these more stable and long term forms of operating, the organisation also manages a program of emergency aid that acts in cases of natural disasters or extreme humanitarian crises.

Inside the Netherlands, KiA is responsible for stimulating missionary and diaconal activities in local communities\(^39\). These activities, occurring mostly around a program called \textit{Interactief}, aim not only at raising the funds that make the work possible, but also at investing the money raised with a religious character, making the work of the organisation come alive locally as the missionary and diaconal work of the church. The relationship between the organisation on the one hand and the local communities and the churchgoers on the other is, therefore, extremely important, both to guarantee the flow of money that sustains KiA, and to imbue their work with the religious meaning it is supposed to have. The relationships established by KiA in the international arena, specifically with Brazilian organisations, will be the focus of chapter IV (and, in a more historical perspective, of chapter III), while its relationship with local communities will be the main topic of chapter V.

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\(^38\) The source of these figures is KiA’s Annual Report of 2006.

\(^39\) I am referring here to the work connected to the activities abroad, which until the end of 2006 was under the auspices of the department called Kerkinactie Buitenland. In this study, I do not approach Kerkinactie Binnenland’s activities, related to mission and diaconate whose target groups are people living in the Netherlands. When the organisation changed its name to Kerk in Actie (three separate words), the departments did not exist anymore, therefore I am using here their old names, in which Kerkinactie is written as only one word.
A window to the “South”

Before the formation of the ICCO Alliance, topic of the next section, KiA’s administrative structure was described in the following chart, published in the organisation’s annual report for 2006:

kerkinactie/Dienstenorganisatie
Among the three departments, *Kerkinactie Buitenland* is the most important for the purposes of this study, and it is also the biggest and the one with by far the largest budget (in 2006, 93% of KiA’s budget directly expended in projects was allocated to this department). The communication and fundraising department is important insofar as it elaborates images and campaigns that will be analysed in chapter V, in which I will discuss the relations between the international missionary endeavour conceived and implemented by KiA and the local communities and parishes of the PKN. Neither *Kerkinactie Binnenland* nor the *Hendrik Kraemer Institute* (HKI) is directly related to the main topic of this dissertation[40].

The most substantive part of the processes this study analyses occurred, thus, in the scope of the international department, known as *Kerkinactie Buitenland*. As mentioned in the previous sections, the department is divided in three regional teams: ASPAC for Asia and the Pacific, AFMOL for Africa and Middle East, and ENLA for Europe and Latin America. In relation to human resources, each of these teams has three main positions and functions: relationship managers, team leaders and secretaries. The secretaries, of course, handle all the practicalities of the work, while the team leaders are the chiefs of each team, representing them at the higher levels of the organisation’s hierarchy.

Relationship managers perform the most tangible part of KiA work. They are in direct contact with the partners abroad, visiting the regions where the projects are implemented on a regular basis; they speak the languages that make communication possible and write travel reports (*reisverslagen*), one of the most important documents within KiA bureaucracy (see next chapter). In relation to the local churches in the Netherlands, they are responsible for feeding the parishes with infor-

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[40] The HKI is an independent institute for the training of expatriate workers, especially missionaries, that are preparing their period abroad. KiA is one of its most important shareholders. The HKI is based in a building that is part of the PLD complex, but the institute is administratively independent of the Protestant organisation.
mation, images and narratives that they collect in their contacts with partners abroad, sometimes directly, visiting the local communities, and on other occasions through the regional advisors. Similarly, they have the task of feeding the communication and fundraising department with information and pictures that are the basis for all sorts of publications and campaign material that is produced. Per regional team, the department of communication and fundraising has one person appointed to work in special cooperation with them.

Relationship managers also have an important function in decision-making processes related to partners. General policy documents and budgets are produced in higher circles (KiA’s management team and in some cases the national synod of the PKN), but the conversion of abstract statements and figures into practical partnerships and projects occurs in the offices of the relationship managers. Their participation in decision-making processes has two main forms: the more or less formalised consultations with other relationship managers about specific projects, and during the monthly Teamoverleg (team discussion), which is the most formal meeting within each team, taking place in the meeting-room area and announced on the TV monitor that publicises the official schedule of the PLD for the day. A detailed account of one of these meetings, in which partnerships are created, maintained and finished, will be provided in chapter IV.

The division of working space among the various administrative units of KiA is a useful datum to reveal the classificatory principles behind the different departments, teams and functions within the organisation. I found four non-excluding principles: functional, hierarchical, geographical and thematic, which I will summarily analyse here.

The first principle operating the division of space is functional. “Technical” departments such as communication and fundraising and the financial and administrative departments (human resources, facility services and so forth) have their own offices which are separate from the
geographical departments, the latter directly connected to the ultimate goals of the whole organisation. The most expressive exceptions were the members of communication and fundraising who were directly appointed to serve each regional department, whose desks were contiguous to those of the staff members of the regional teams.

What is interesting about these technical services is their invisibility to visitors, being located as they are in cul-de-sacs within the building, rather than in transit areas. The exception again, is the communication and fundraising department, which is located in the middle of the building, in the corridor in-between the western and eastern wings. This department is a special case, occupying a liminal position in many respects. First of all, it is responsible for technical services of a unique type, as the only department in the KiA structure that plays no primary role in the missionary and diaconal field itself, situated in between the technical units and the geographical departments. Secondly, most of its staff is trained in communication and marketing, skills that have no specific connections with mission, diaconate or development. Finally, insofar as it provides support for all the main interfaces the organisation has with the Dutch public (publications, campaigns, website, etc), the department holds major responsibility for publicising the panorama of the missionary world created by KiA. In this sense, it is in-between what happens “there” in the fields and “here” in the Dutch context. The difficulties involved in this liminal position are interestingly described by Scholte (2003), in her account of the dilemmas faced by the KiA communication and fundraising department, based on her own experience. She describes the department’s task as “building bridges between different worlds” (2003: 232), providing accurate and reliable information for the church public. Reflecting on what she detects as a “growing contradiction between demand and supply sides of information” (2003: 222), her conclusions point to the difficulty in mediating between the two sides (2003: 232).
The second classificatory principle operating in KiA’s organisation is hierarchical. People working in different positions have their working spaces organised differently. Within Kerkinactie Buitenland, team leaders are the only staff members with their own private offices. Relationship managers shared rooms with three or four desks each, organised by region, while all secretaries worked in the same room, at the end of the busiest corridor of the organisation, where the three team leaders, the whole team ENLA and part of the team AFMOL are located.

The third principle is geographical and the abundance of maps spread around offices is a good sign of its importance. It is, firstly, expressed in the division between the national (Kerkinactie Binnenland) and the international (Kerkinactie Buitenland) departments, with the former in the western and the latter in the eastern wings of the building, separated by the central block. Most evidently, the three different teams relating to different regions of the world each has its own working space. The mixture of maps, ethnic objects and art, pictures of people in the campaign posters, with the constant presence of visitors from the partner organisations abroad and foreign languages spoken in meetings and phone calls, creates an atmosphere of cosmopolitanism, engagement in the world and concern with global issues. The offices of Kerkinactie Buitenland are a window to the “South”, a materialisation of the global panorama. This materialisation of the missionary panorama in the PLD building (I cannot resist the temptation of calling it “embuildiment”) overlaps with the spatial expression of organisational classificatory principles. In this sense, a person walking from the west to the east in the PLD, through the corridor of communication and fundraising, travels from the “North” to the “South” in the missionary panorama.

This geographical principle also resonates in the relationships created between PKN parishes and projects developed abroad. Each regional team promotes its own continent in a pre-determined region in the Netherlands. For instance, the ENLA team is a showcase of the issues of these
correspondences between the map of the KiA missionary world and the map of the Netherlands, connecting the panorama of the missionary network abroad and the panorama of the PKN at its national level. The PLD in Utrecht, in this sense, articulates these two dimensions, insofar as it is the material expression of the Dutch national Protestant denomination, and a window to the global “South”, as conceived in the Protestant missionary world.

Finally, the fourth classificatory principle is thematic and, although extremely important in many aspects, it did not have a very clear spatial correspondence. At the time I was beginning my fieldwork, there were five different thematic programs active in the international branch of KiA: Zending (Mission), Werelddiaconaat (World-Diaconate), Kinderen in de Knel (Children at Risk), Noodhulp (Emergency Aid), and Klimaatplan (Climate Plan), and they did not have special offices or recognisable spatial expressions. The first two were responsible for most of the projects, traditionally divided according to the difference between mission and diaconate, as explained in chapter I. This difference and the historical variation in its definition will be discussed again in the next chapter, but in general lines it can be provisionally said that the Mission program handled the projects having explicitly religious contents, while World-Diaconate managed projects with more secular goals. Children at Risk was an attempt to create thematic unity, gathering all the projects (most of them from World-Diaconate) related exclusively to children. Emergency Aid was the program managing the funds raised for specific humanitarian disasters. Finally, Climate Plan was a comparatively small program set up to tackle a very specific issue, in cooperation with other European donor agencies (including ICCO, many years before the plans to forge the Alliance) and requiring its own specific network and expertise.

The forging of the ICCO Alliance meant the end of the regional departments and the instauration of a new thematic division, encompassing all KiA’s projects and partnerships. This is the topic of the next section.
4. The ICCO Alliance

The last inhabitant of the PLD to be introduced here is ICCO, which occupied the largest part of the eastern wings. Although for an outsider, its offices actually did not differ much from KiA’s, with the unfailing ethnic decor, maps and posters from former campaigns. At the time I began my fieldwork, I noticed only some minor differences: the ICCO offices looked busier and noisier, populated by a younger crowd and with an atmosphere that could be described as somewhat business-like.

ICCO moved to the building in September 2004, initiating a process of approximation between ICCO and KiA that, in January 2007, finally led to the forging of the ICCO Alliance. This complex managerial manoeuvre deeply transformed both participants, as well as the other four much smaller and more thematic organisations that joined them[^41]. This section will describe the tensions and movements that took place in the PLD a few months before and after the Alliance was forged, focusing on narratives of events and on the people inhabiting the PLD. Differently from the two previous descriptions, which offered but snapshots of the PKN and KiA sections of the building in 2006, this section will not focus on ICCO offices before the alliance, but will provide a motion picture of the critical moment of transition to the new configuration, and some flashbacks on the relation between ICCO and the Protestant public. In order to do this, I must first introduce some general information about ICCO and about the process that resulted in these arrangements.

[^41]: They are Edukans (education), Oikocredit (microcredit), Share People (support to small-scale entrepreneurs) and Prisma (the organisation for diaconate and development of some of the smaller orthodox Reformed denominations).
ICCO and the Dutch politics for development cooperation

For myself, as a researcher interested in KiA’s work and specifically in its relationships with Brazilian NGOs and churches, the surprise that the organisation was about to join an alliance with the much bigger and more visible ICCO was not exactly good news, insofar as it might render my data rather irrelevant within the larger picture and my findings might be considered outdated even before they were published. This fact may have led me to more or less unconsciously identify myself with the pessimistic view that was taking hold amongst a part of KiA staff, expressing their fear that their own organisation would be engulfed by its giant neighbour. What will actually happen still remains to be seen, and here I mention just a few of the immediate outcomes of the Alliance, which could already be captured a few months after it was established.

In 2006, the last year before the Alliance, ICCO was more than three times as big as KiA, managing a budget of 160 million euros and about 347 employees (the equivalent of 222 full-time positions). Moreover, it was one of the members of the select and prestigious group of organisations that had access to the billionaire budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, by far the main source of ICCO funds. Regarding development cooperation, the Dutch government is widely recognised as one of the most generous governments in the world, and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a powerful department for handling international development issues. To provide a sense of its prestige, it is enough to mention that the chairperson of this department has the status of a minister, that which in Dutch politics is called a “minister without portfolio”. This “ministry inside the ministry” develops its own projects through the Dutch embassies all over the world, but most of its budget is expended through donor NGOs such as ICCO (or since 2007, ICCO Alliance), which have their own projects, partners and networks.
The establishment of ICCO, in 1965, was an initiative of a group of experts from the two main Reformed churches, in direct collaboration with some Catholics. It must also be understood within the context of expanding ecumenical initiatives, following in the spirit of the so-called SoW process. Paradoxically enough, this progressive ecumenical group took over the task of creating a solid organisation that profited from its Protestant identity for gaining access to public funding. This complicated matter demands some extra explanation.

The Dutch state’s eagerness to engage in development cooperation is analysed by the historian James Kennedy (1995) within the scope of the broader process of fast modernisation and de-pillarisation of Dutch society in the 1960s. One of the main arguments of his dissertation is that the urge to compensate for the country’s relative backwardness, as compared to its European neighbours (1995: 4-5), led the Dutch state to pursue all possible short cuts to an imagined and desired modernity. In the 1960s, vernieuwing (renewal) was at the top of the Dutch agenda (1995: 31-39). This perception of backwardness and the need to modernise was associated to the deep influence religion had on almost all imaginable domains of social life, in the peculiar form of the system called verzuiling (pillarisation). Being a “way of living apart together” (Droogers, 2008: 85), this system was based on the division of the different spheres of social life (and therefore, of the state) along religious and ideological lines. There were Protestant, Catholic, Socialist and Conservative pillars, each one with their own political parties, schools, trade unions, clubs, broadcasting systems and so forth[42].

According to Kennedy, rapid modernisation and secularisation of the Netherlands in the 1960s (the vernieuwing) demolished the core structures of the pillars, allowing the reorganisation of the Dutch state along different lines. Not only are some vestiges of the old pillars still

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[42] For a detailed definition of the verzuiling, see Kennedy, 1995: 9ff.
visible (in the broadcasting system, for instance), but also, and more importantly, it is still written into law and custom in such a way that its logic reverberates in more contemporary issues. The classical example is the emergence of Islamic schools financed by the state, made possible through the recycling of the laws governing the pillarised educational system.

In Kennedy’s view, in the international arena, concomitantly with the demolishing of pillars associated with the rhetoric of the *vernieuwing*, in the 1960s, the Dutch political elite identified development cooperation as a short cut to modernity. It was seen as providing a way to becoming a relevant international player in times of decolonisation. In spite of the country’s modest size and lack of real military and strategic power, the new arena of development cooperation was to lead the Netherlands to a respectable position within the international community (1995: 125-131). Following Kennedy’s line of reasoning, this, together with a certain paternalism associated with bad consciousness about the war and the Holocaust (1995: 126), was the main practical reason for the Dutch state’s enthusiastic embrace of development discourse[^43].

An interesting fact that passes unnoticed in Kennedy’s analysis is that the Dutch governmental enterprise of development cooperation ended up being implemented following the logic of the pillars, precisely when the latter were being rapidly demolished[^44]. Paradoxically, an endeavour conceived as a freeway to the modern postcolonial arena, was in fact using the very system that the *vernieuwing* was supposed to overcome. This calls for a more nuanced understanding of the pillarisation system. It must be analysed not as simply opposed to secularisation

[^43]: I do not fully agree with Kennedy’s explanation, because it does not address the continuities between the religious repertoire of mission and diaconate and secular development cooperation. I will develop this argument in the next chapter.

[^44]: The most important of these organisations, established between the middle 1960s and the late 1970s were ICCO, CEBEMO, NOVIB and HIVOS, corresponding, roughly speaking, to the Protestant, Catholic, Socialist (or non-religious leftist), and Humanist pillars, respectively (Quarles van Ufford, 1988: 81-82).
and modernisation, but to a certain extent as a logic that could operate together with that of the *vernieuwing*. This analysis corroborates van Harskamp’s (2005: 44) view of pillarisation as part of modernisation in the rather peculiar case of the Netherlands[^45]. The pillarisation of the governmental development cooperation in the mid 1960s is a good, late expression of this peculiarity.

This short digression was necessary to shed some light on the relationship between ICCO and the Protestant churches in the Netherlands before the Alliance. What is important to comprehend is that ICCO was founded as an organisation connected to the Protestant churches, yet one that profited from a high degree of financial and ideological independence in relation to them, receiving support from the Dutch government. ICCO connections with the ecclesiastical organisations – churches and the international ecumenical movement – unfolded primarily at high administrative levels, where some of these organisations have always been represented. At the grassroots level, however, ICCO ended up quite distanced from the church public. Since fundraising was not necessary, the organisation enjoyed the freedom of making its own decisions for many years, taking political positions that were not always very popular and pursuing goals that were quite often controversial for the churchgoers. ICCO’s position in relation to the Dutch public was, thus, a direct outcome of the paradox between pillarisation and *vernieuwing*. For the non-Protestant public, its Protestant identity could be seen (often negatively) through the lenses of the outdated pillarisation system, while for the Protestant churchgoers, the organisation was negatively associated to secularisation and modernisation. In 2006, thus, right before the establishment of the Alliance, ICCO was a strong, large and professionally respected organisation in the field of development cooperation, with links to the Protestant church and with the interna-

[^45]: Van Harskamp argues that pillarisation should not be understood in opposition to secularisation, but rather as part of this process, insofar as it is understood as social-structural differentiation.
tional ecumenical movement, but with virtually no appeal among the Dutch public, Protestant or not.

The forging of the Alliance

Following international neoliberal tendencies, during the 2000s the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created new rules for applying for funds, broadening the spectrum of organisations that could be eligible and stimulating greater competition among them. I will not describe in detail the quasi-hypnotising bureaucratic documents of the ministry, but only mention one of these rules that had the greatest impact in the processes I am describing here. This rule stipulated that the organisations applying for funding find their own means to raise twenty-five percent of the budget they present to the Ministry. Thus, agencies that for decades had been almost exclusively funded by the government suddenly had to prove that they would be able to come up with one quarter of all the resources they needed on their own. As I mentioned above, ICCO had rather limited fundraising capacity and expertise, given its very weak relationship with the general public. The solution, thus, was to find partners with experience in this field and, yet more important, a faithful body of supporters. KiA was, of course, a natural choice. Besides the fact that they share the same roots, the PKN in general, and KiA in particular, were facing a constant decrease in financial resources, as a consequence of the de-churching process already mentioned. Moreover, PLD building maintenance costs proved to be higher than expected and the idea of uniting efforts and sharing costs with the much richer ICCO seemed to be a feasible way of solving at least part of their financial problems. Thus, both partners had good reasons for joining the Alliance.

Bureaucratically, the alliance was made possible on the basis of two major conditions. First, the application for Ministry funding was sub-
mitted by the ICCO Alliance as a whole, with only one budget and one policy document to be assessed by the Ministry, namely, the ICCO Alliance Operational Plan. This document united budgets and actions of both partners. Second, in order to preserve the separation of church and state, and avoid the spending of public money on religious activities, KiA’s mission department did not become a full-fledged member of the Alliance, but maintained its own independent policy document which was not submitted for governmental appraisal. From the church’s point of view, there was also some suspicion in operating with state money, and therefore, the synod of the PKN approved the Alliance under the condition that, in spite of the common policy guidelines approved by the ministry, ICCO and KiA projects and budgets should be kept separate, meaning that public and church money should follow different paths inside the Alliance. The process of forging the Alliance, thus, was not a fusion of the organisations, but more an amalgamation.

Reorganising the PLD

Once the decision and the accountability manoeuvres to unite the organisation were made, management had to face the Promethean task of reforming both organisations in order to make the Alliance operative. Here I will return to my observations on spatial distribution inside the PLD building, analysing transformations related to the processes I have been describing up until now. The new configuration resulting from the Alliance led to the physical relocation of almost all positions in the PLD, reinventing institutional boundaries through the redistribution of physical space.

The immediately visible spatial rearrangements that took place in January 2007 were the dissolution of geographical teams, now reorganised along thematic lines, and the adoption of a new system of flexible distribution of workspaces. The most decisive, with outcomes that
affected the new organisation in varied ways, was the division of the departments and units by themes, instead of regions or continents. Four new programs were created to accommodate KiA’s and ICCO’s initiatives, partnerships and staff members: *Duurzame Rechtvaardige en Economische Ontwikkeling* – DREO (Sustainable Fair Economic Development), *Democratisering en Vredesopbouw* – D&V (Democratisation and Peace Building), *Toegang tot Basisvoorzieningen* – TtB (Access to Basic Facilities) and *Zending* – Z (Mission)[46]. The latter, as I mentioned above, had an independent status, since it was formed only by KiA staff and was not included in the general policy document approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some smaller teams dealing with specific issues, most of them originally from ICCO, did not fit this division and remained independent unities. The space of the eastern part of the PLD was completely redistributed to accommodate the new programs. Where there were once African, Latin-American or Asian rooms, there were now spatially flexible teams dealing with global issues.

The second spatial rearrangement mentioned above, which could be immediately perceived in the first weeks after the forging of the Alliance, was the implementation of the so-called *flexplek* system. This managerial technique aims at optimising the use of space, stimulating and facilitating staff’s mobility inside the building. All employees have a cordless phone and a small chart with all their things and everyday they must look for an available desk in one of the offices in the edifice. This measure was part of the effort to use the space as a means to redefine organisational borders, but it also had a more practical motive. With the high number of part-time employees, the idea of creating flexibility seemed to be a good way of reducing facility costs. The need to rearrange spatial distribution in the building was a good opportunity to implement it.

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46 The translation of the names of the departments was based on the English version of the ICCO Alliance Operational Plan.
The *flexplek* did not affect everybody equally. Staff members with functions that for some reason required a more fixed basis or who had higher positions in the hierarchy maintained their permanent desks or offices. Furthermore, the case of the missionary department is quite interesting. Its exceptional character, as the only department with its own policy document and completely independent from governmental funds, was expressed spatially. While DREO’s, TtB’s and D&V’s staff floated flexibly around their own areas in the PLD, Z’s staff had their fixed desks and rooms in one of the corners of the eastern part of the building.

My fieldwork at the PLD ended one month after the implementation of the Alliance, thus the description of these spatial arrangements is based more on plans and intentions than on the reality observed in those first very confused and messy weeks at the “new” PLD. I wrote in my field notes that the most frequently repeated expression in the building those days was *kip zonder kop*, a Dutch idiom that literally means “headless chicken”, describing states of confusion and disorientation. Therefore, I cannot provide an account of the effectiveness of the organisational changes. I can only state that in 2008 I returned to the PLD a few times, and on these occasions I was able to see that the *flexplek* system was still in place while the missionary department continued in the same fixed location.

Together with these spatial rearrangements, another visible sign of the operational transformation of ICCO and KiA was the variety of formal and informal preparatory events that took place in the few months preceding the implementation of the Alliance. Most of them took reflections on the organisations’ identity before and after the Alliance as their main theme, sometimes connected to broad theological and ideological assumptions and on other occasions connected to daily life in the office. The seminar *Hebben ICCO en KiA één ziel?* (Do ICCO and KiA have one soul?) is exemplary. It began with a special morning service,
in the chapel, attended by an unusually large number of employees. The main activity was the guest lecture delivered by Ioan Santa, a Romanian Catholic theologian who, while talking about the Christian fundamentals of diaconate and development work, provided an enthusiastic “yes” as an answer to the question that was the title of the seminar. In the subsequent group discussions, the main conclusions moved around the idea that a new identity must be built, taking KiA and ICCO’s common Christian roots as its foundation. Participants were aware that this could be a painful process, since the current identities of both organisations would have to perish in order to make room for the new identity to flourish.

Another preparatory event was especially meaningful in its expressive way of rendering the new organisational boundaries visible and approachable. It was the meeting that took place right after the publication of the final draft of the list allocating people to new departments. The idea was to provide an opportunity for staff members to get acquainted with their new colleagues and to facilitate the creation of links and cohesion within the new organisational unities. In front of PLD’s biggest meeting-room, where the event took place, tables were placed with lists of the employees of all new departments and teams. Scarves in nine different colours, corresponding to the four biggest departments, the management team and four other smaller units, were distributed to everybody, following the recently published lists. After getting their scarves in the colours corresponding to their new departments, people could see who their new colleagues were and seat together for the second part of the event.

After some speeches had been delivered by the directors of ICCO and KiA in which the word “identity” was repeated many times, the chair of the committee that coordinated the organisational and practical aspects of the transition showed maps of the building where the fixed offices of each new department would be. Humorous comments
popped up about mission’s little corner, for this department had the smallest space, located in one of the corners between two blocks. Other comments were about the concentration of the higher levels of KiA and ICCO in the western and central blocks, closer to PKN management. The meeting ended with a promotional video announcing the new Microsoft software designed for development cooperation work that the Alliance would adopt to manage its partnerships.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the three main organisations related to the Dutch Protestant network of mission, diaconate and development, describing the two most dramatic processes that have recently transformed their institutional configuration: the establishment of the PKN and the forging of the ICCO Alliance. I analysed the shape of their organisational borders as temporary and unstable achievements, outcomes of the dynamic and constant process of ordering and organising the enterprise.

The establishment of the PKN was understood as the result of two main processes: the decrease in the number of members of the Dutch traditional churches and the long ecumenical approximation of the two major Reformed denominations, which would later also incorporate the Lutheran church. The former process was situated in the perspective of the secularisation (or more precisely, de-churching), which is the main characteristic of the current Dutch religioscape. The latter was analysed highlighting the leading role played by the missionary organisations in the so-called SoW process, pointing out how the establishment of the PKN was made possible through the negotiation of a common otherness.
KiA, the second organ approached, was described as the central node of the network. Its managerial structure, before the forging of the ICCO Alliance, was based on principles that were analysed as mirroring a certain panorama of the world. The organisation was subsequently described as a “window to the South”, insofar as it articulates the missionary world and the parishes and communities of the PKN in the Netherlands.

Finally, I addressed the process of forging the ICCO Alliance. ICCO was introduced and its relationships with Dutch government and public analysed in the scope of their high levels of investment in international development cooperation. The analysis situated ICCO’s position in relation to the processes of verzuiling (pillarisation) and vernieuwing (renewal) of Dutch society. Comprehension of this position was necessary in order to understand interests and forces underlying the formation of the Alliance.

In the introduction of this dissertation, I explained that the expression “Dutch Protestant world”, in the title of the book has three different meanings. The first refers to the network of organisations active worldwide, gathered around KiA and the ICCO Alliance. The second describes Protestant circles in the Netherlands, made up of parishes, ecumenical and denominational organs and councils somehow connected to the PKN, the biggest Protestant denomination in the country. The third has to do with the panorama of the globe that emerges in the missionary and diaconal enterprise, the phenomenological landscape of the church in action. In the present chapter, I have shown how these three meanings are intricately intertwined and are completely inseparable in practice. In analysing the ways in which the physical space of the PLD is distributed among the PKN, KiA and ICCO, I have pointed out that the temporary arrangements that result in their organisational configuration, visible in the way they inhabit the building, are simultaneously affected by processes and changes in
these three dimensions. In the chapters that follow, I will address some particularities of these processes, relating them to the way otherness is negotiated in the Dutch Protestant world.
CHAPTER III

Symbolic repertoires of mission and development: religious and secular constructs
1. Introduction

An ethnographic account of documents

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the discourses and ideas about otherness that guide the missionary, diaconal and developmental enterprise of the Dutch Protestants, as they can be apprehended through official documents circulating in KiA and ICCO Alliance bureaucracies. The text looks at ruptures and continuities between the secular and religious repertoires at issue in the network, highlighting elements that form a common basis for both sides of the endeavour. The key to detecting these common elements is, once again, the negotiation of otherness. Thus, the main question that runs through this chapter inquires into the differences and similarities in the images of otherness emerging from the different religious and secular repertoires used to define the missionary, diaconal and development enterprise of the Dutch Protestants in Brazil in different moments over the last fifty years.

I contrast here the symbolic repertoires I analyse in this chapter with the experiences of daily practice, which are the theme of the next chapter. It seems almost gratuitous to have to affirm that the two are, in reality, inseparable. The division I establish here exists only for methodological and analytical purposes. While in the present chapter I analyse official discourses registered in written sources, in the next one I focus on data obtained in fieldwork, participant observation carried out at KiA offices in the Netherlands and in an NGO it supports in Brazil. This shift from discourses to practice paves the way for an analysis of processes related to the body and the senses that are the core of chapters V and VI.

By studying how otherness is negotiated, I seek to discover how secular and religious repertoires are put to use. Moreover, it can also be
a means for identifying continuities over time. This chapter focuses on documents produced in different historical contexts by some of the organisations that would later become KiA. With this goal in mind and addressing the actions of Dutch Protestants in Brazil over the course of time, I decided to centre my analysis on relationships between the Dutch organisations and the *Igreja Evangélica Reformada* – IER (Evangelical Reformed Church), the denomination of Dutch Protestant migrants in Brazil. The existence of a Reformed migrant community in the south of Latin America was very important in the strategic decision to move the attention of part of the Protestant missionary apparatus to the continent, in the aftermath of decolonisation conflicts in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The IER represented the first and for decades the most important local partner the Dutch Protestant missionary and diaconal organisations had in Brazil, a decisive actor in the establishment of the network that is the subject of this study.

Although based primarily on documental sources recording past events, this chapter does not intend to trace a line connecting historical developments of the relations between the Dutch Reformed churches and their missionary field in Brazil. The text is divided in three main sections, conceived as ethnographic accounts of documents selected because of their relevance to the issue of the negotiation of otherness. They are not organised in chronological order. The first is an analysis of two documents that represent two opposite views on mission and diaconate: the travel report written in 1959 by two GKN pastors who visited Brazil to check the possibilities of starting a mission in the country, and a policy document written in 1982, which consolidates the influence of Liberation Theology on the missionary policies regarding Latin America. The second section deals with the definitions of “the far-away other” in the religious and secular discourses informing two ICCO Alliance policy documents: the Policy Paper for Mission (2004) and the ICCO Alliance Operational Plan (2006). These were the two main policy papers that were operative
during my fieldwork. Although they do not relate directly to the IER, they are important for our understanding of the current symbolic repertoires of the Alliance, especially in relation to ruptures and continuities between the definition of their secular and religious domains. The third section introduces another dimension to the analysis, moving beyond the symbolic repertoires found within the documents themselves. The first part of the section introduces the missionary work of the Dutch-Brazilian denomination, examining some specificities of the migrants’ ways of negotiating otherness. This subsection, differently from the rest of the chapter, is not based on documental sources, but on data collected through participant observation. The second part of the section analyses documents produced around the conflicts that arose between the IER and its “mother-church” during the 1990s. The conflicts are analysed contrasting the migrants’ and the Dutch churches’ ways of negotiating otherness that result from the different ways they engage with the missionary field. Introducing the issue of experience and engagement, the two parts of the section bridge the gap between the symbolic repertoires in focus here and the practices and encounters that are the topic of the next chapter. Yet before moving on, I will describe the nature of the documents that I consulted.

Policy documents and travel reports

Official and large scope missionary and development endeavours, such as those carried out through KiA and the ICCO Alliance, produce mammoth amounts of bureaucratic papers that can be classified in many different types. The documents I will analyse in the next sections belong to mainly two categories: policy documents[47] and travel reports. Since

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[47] I am classifying here as policy documents not only those papers that have the Dutch word beleid (policy) in their names (beleidsnota, beleidsnotitie, beleidsstuk), but also a bezinningsnota (reflection document), a voortgangsverslag (progress report) and a Business Plan. They all have enough in common to be considered policy documents.
the goal of this chapter is to address the official discourses of the organisations involved in mission and development, my choice was to select documents that are the result of prestigious institutional processes, thus invested with symbolic power and efficacy. Moreover, some documents that cannot be classified in these two categories, such as letters and minutes, will be included in the text, complementing and supporting my analysis.

Policy documents are, in general, produced within elaborate processes involving a wide spectrum of people, ranging from staff members in leadership positions, possessing highly developed expertise on the issues of mission and development, to laypersons representing the synod or other organs. Outside experts (academic theologians, other scholars and former missionaries, for instance) are often consulted, as are members of special committees of the national and regional synods, and occasionally, representatives from the “South”. These documents aim, primarily, at providing guidelines for the activities developed in the domain they cover, whether this means the organisation as a whole or a particular theme or region. As the outcome of complex processes involving various actors, they encapsulate opinions that are authorised as official views of the organisations. In this regard, they are privileged vehicles of the theological and moral discourses orienting the actions. In order to become effective, they often must be approved by organs that in different ways represent the public, the ultimate donors. In the case of KiA (and its predecessors) this organ was normally the national synod; in the case of ICCO Alliance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Travel reports (*Reisverslagen*) are normally elaborated by relationship managers after they have paid their visits to projects and (would-be) partners in the “South”. Sometimes the organisations also invite external experts to make these trips and write up reports, most commonly former missionaries or expatriates who used to work in the region of destination. Besides their evident practical use as assessment of
partnerships and projects and as a source of information to support decisions, travel reports also enjoy a prestigious position within the missionary imaginary, in general, as one of the important vehicles of narratives of missionary adventures. In the KiA bureaucracy, specifically, they are treated as authorial pieces, through bureaucratic procedures that consecrate their privileged position among internal documents. They are discussed in a variety of official meetings and archived in accessible ways[48]. Moreover, their format differs a lot from any other report or regular document: they have special covers with the name of their authors; they sometimes have special titles[49]; and they quite often contain coloured maps and pictures. Old travel reports are also not easily disposed of, and former relationship managers or missionaries often carefully keep them for many years[50].

Although these two categories of documents, policy documents and travel reports, differ in many respects, both are structured around four common discursive domains: (1) religious and moral foundations of the enterprise; (2) diagnosis of the current political, social and economical (sometimes also religious) situation in the region the document is referring to; (3) practical instructions, rules and deliberations; and (4) anecdotic and pictorial construction of people and places that are the targets of the action.

The first discursive domain has its most elaborated examples in the policy documents, although it is also regularly present in travel reports. Bible texts, articles of the Human Rights Declaration, Millennium Goals and the Kerkorde, the constitution of the PKN, are among the

48 When I was doing my fieldwork at the PLD, for instance, I participated in a teamoverleg, in which a travel report was submitted to the appraisal of the regional team, with questions, comments and suggestions. I will describe this type of meeting in more detail in the next chapter.

49 For example: “Een druppel op een gloeiende plaat of het zout der aarde: verslag van een werkbezoek aan Brazilië” (A drop in an ocean or the salt of the earth: report of a work trip to Brazil).

50 Almost all the retired workers I interviewed gave me piles of old travel reports that they kept in their attics for many years, which were very useful in writing this chapter. I am deeply grateful.
most common sources of the sections or paragraphs that morally justify mission, diaconate and development. In the case of travel reports, policy documents can be quoted as a source for this sort of justification, invari-
ably appealing to the duties and responsibilities of good Christians or good “Western” citizens, depending on the origin of the document.

The second type of discourse is specially developed within travel re-
ports, whose introductory sections are normally an analysis of the situ-
ation of the country the report is about. Policy documents also provide
overviews of political and socio-economical conjunctures of the specific
regions they discuss (which can be the whole world), but such discus-
sions are normally less extensive and detailed than in the travel reports.

The third discursive domain is the most substantive part of both
types of papers, containing all sorts of practical deliberations that guide
the action and measures that must be the outcome of the document.

Finally, the fourth type relates to the depiction of “them”, those who
the work targets, people to be converted, helped, improved, supported,
known, heard or loved, depending on the religious/secular repertoires
invoked in the documents. In some of latter, pictures are abundant. In
others, short anecdotes about encounters and remarkable moments
“there” are the main tool to introduce “real people” within these bu-
reaucratic accounts.

These four discursive domains can be found in both policy docu-
ments and travel reports. These two categories of documents, however,
are produced by different actors, in different conditions and with dif-
f erent goals in mind and, therefore, they also differ in many respects.
The most evident of them is the individual authorship of the travel re-
ports, as opposed to the collective anonymous character of the policy
documents. While the latter clearly represent the results of institutional
processes that transfigure varied individual opinions into one collective
institutional voice, the former have recognised authors who are simul-
taneously narrators and participants and often venture into personal in-

interpretations and feelings, embodying the church in action. This difference crosscuts all four discursive of the domains I listed above, but are especially visible in the depiction of the “other”. Opposing the rather stereotypical pictures and descriptions of the colourful “South” presented in policy documents, travel reports narrate actual encounters and immediate interactions. They are one of the rare niches in the bureaucratic edifice where personalised interactions find refuge, testifying to the connections between the discourses of documents and the practices of encounters, to be explored in the next chapter.

2. From heathendom to poverty: comparing otherness in two documents

The first travel report – 1959: spiritual darkness in a new terra incognita

In 1959, following a decision taken in the Synod of Utrecht two years earlier, two pastors of the GKN\(^\text{51}\) went to South Brazil and to Argentina, as part of the GKN effort to find new missionary fields\(^\text{52}\). Their task was to check the feasibility of missionary work in the region, in cooperation with local Protestant churches, especially the Reformed communities organised by Dutch migrants. The presence of these migrants was considered a good platform from which to start the exploration

\(^{51}\text{Most of the missionary work performed in Latin America by the denominations that would later become the PKN started under the auspices of the GKN. The privileged target of NHK’s mission was Asia and only many years later would it start cooperating with the GKN’s projects in Latin America. All the relationships this study is directly concerned with occurred among partners that were formerly connected to the GKN.}\)

\(^{52}\text{Three oriëntatie-reizen (orientation trips) were organised by GKN’s Synod between 1957 and 1960, to Argentina/Brazil, West-Pakistan and Ruanda/Burundi.}\)
of this new terra incognita, to use the words of one of the former missionaries I interviewed, when referring to this first adventurous journey.

The result of this effort to find new fields was a long document entitled (in translation) “Report of the general deputies for mission among heathens and Mohammedans”[53], which was officially presented to the national synod of the GKN in 1960. The twenty-three pages about Brazil, which directly concern this study, are organised in five sections: (I) “Entrée”; (II) General orientation; (III) Further orientation (in broader circle); (IV) Further orientation (in narrower circle); and (V) Conclusions concerning Brazil[54].

The first section introduces the country through an anecdotic account. Exactly in the same week they arrived, Brasil Presbiteriano, the monthly newspaper of Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – IPB (Presbyterian Church of Brazil), launched a series of articles on the history of Calvinism in the country, which the authors of the report describe as hardly more than an appreciation of the work of the Dutch Reformed in the North-Eastern part of Brazil in the 17th century[55]. The two GKN pastors found this fact very “encouraging”[56] and observe that, based on their meetings and conversations with representatives of this church, the Presbyterians seemed to be eager to resume this “history”[57]. Furthermore, they mention the satisfaction of the Dutch Reformed communities with the possibility of cooperating with the GKN in fulfilling their missionary obligation, since “(...) they were placed there by God, and in this country they must fulfil their Christian vocation”[58].

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53 Rapport van generale deputaten voor de zending onder heidenen en Mohammedanen.
54 (I) Entree; (II) Algemene oriëntatie; (III) Nadere oriëntatie (in bredere kring); (IV) Nadere oriëntatie (in engere kring); and (V) Conclusies inzake “Brazilië”.
55 Parts of the North-eastern coast of Brazil were under Dutch rule for a few decades in the 17th century.
56 bemoedigend (p. 24)
57 ... bleek dan ook wel, dat men een voortzetting van die “geschiedenis” in Brazilië, van harte begeerde. (p. 24)
58 ... zij door God daar geplaatst, in dit land een christelijke roeping hebben te vervullen... (p. 24, emphasis in the original).
introductory section the travellers also expressed appreciation of the hospitality of the families that hosted them and mention some difficulties of “(...) a trip of about 5000 km, most of it by car on roads with complicated surprises”[59].

The second section is a diagnosis of the religious context in Brazil. It depicts an immense country covered with spiritual darkness and ignorance of the true love of Jesus. The section starts with a subsection analysing the situation of the Roman Catholic Church in the country, followed by four other subsections describing what, in the authors’ view, constituted the worst spiritual illnesses lurking in Brazilian society: Paganism, Syncretism, Secularism and Spiritism. Relying on the testimony of their new Protestant friends and on books of the “prominent Brazilian writers”[60] Gilberto Freyre and Hernane Tavares de Sá, as well as on some critical books written by Catholic (missionary) priests, their prospects for the Catholic faith is quite gloomy. Although softening the Protestant opinion they cite, which states that the claim that Brazil is a Catholic country can be considered “…not only a simple exaggeration, but a clear lie”[61], they use academic knowledge and Catholic “friendly fire” to present a more nuanced version of the same picture. Their conclusion, summarizing the opinions of W. Stanley Rycroft, a Maryknoll missionary - is categorical: “Precisely this latter circle [the Maryknoll fathers – JR] has very honestly pronounced that most of the Roman Catholics in South America have no idea about what means to be a Catholic, emphasis going to appearances and futilities and not to the essence of the faith; that people live in great indifference; and that, in most cases, ‘a Catholic in Latin America is so just in name’.” [62]

59 … een reis van ongeveer 5000 km – merendeels per auto afgelegd langs wegen met gecompliceerde verrassingen. (p. 25)
60 …prominente Braziliaanse schrijvers (p. 25)
61 …niet slechts een gewone overdrijving maar een duidelijke leugen (p. 25)
62 Doch juist deze laatste kring heeft in grote eerlijkheid uitgesproken: dat de meeste R. Katholieken in Zuid-Amerika geen idee hebben van wat betekent om Katholiek te zijn; dat alle nadruk gelegd
In their section on paganism they present a vivid picture of the African religions, especially Candomblé:

“When arriving in Rio de Janeiro, a remark about the beautiful Copacabana beach immediately evoked the objection that the beach could also look very differently. This was followed, then, by the story about what had taken place on that beach about one month before. On New Year’s Eve, thousands of Negroes flocked together there, where an endless crowd danced in ecstasy for hours, without interruption, around an altar to the ‘Maë d’Agua’ (‘mother of the water’). Many were in complete trance, the feast leading to repugnant excesses.”[63]

This description is followed by a short introduction to Candomblé, based on some other “prominent Brazilian writers”, namely Ruth Landes and José Medeiros. It is depicted as a primitive religion, originated in heathen Africa. The argument that “Candomblé is matriarchal in character; women are the path to the gods”[64] was presented as a definitive proof of the heathen/primitive character of Afro-Brazilian religion.

The impressions I record in the next three subsections (on syncretism, secularism and spiritualism, respectively) follow the same style. With eyes wide open to all that could justify the establishment of the mission, the travellers summarise the main symptoms of the spiritual disease the country suffered, combining authorised sources and their own observations as narrator-participants. The outcome of their eagerness to prove Brazil’s need for a Protestant mission is a description of

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63 Een opmerking, bij aankomst in Rio de Janeiro, over het prachtige Copacabana-strand, ontlokte al dadelijk de tegenspraak, dat dit strand er ook anders uit kon zien. Daarop volgde het verhaal over hetgeen er een maand tevoren op datzelfde strand had plaats gevonden, toen op de Nieuwjaarsdag duizenden negers daar waren samengestroomd en een onafzienbare menigte daar urenlang onafgebroken in extase gedanst had rondom een altaar voor de “Maë d’Agua” (“moeder van het water”), waarbij velen volkomen in trance waren geraakt en het feest tot weerzinwekkende excessen had geleid. (p. 26)

64 Candomblé is matriarchaal van karakter, de vrouwen vormen de weg naar de goden. (p. 27)
the country that foregrounds everything that could remotely relate to religion. For instance, in the subsection on syncretism, they interpret the name of a roadside lodge – *Hotel Brahma* – as a sign of the influence of Asiatic religion on Brazilian society. In this case, however, *Brahma* is more likely to be connected to the name of one of the most traditional Brazilian beer brands.

The following sections of the report bring more practical information about strategies for the establishment of the mission and possible partnerships the Dutch churches could establish in the country. The division between “broader circle” and “narrower circle” – the titles of these sections – conjures up a spatial metaphor to classify possible new partners according to religion and ethnicity. In the narrower circle were the Dutch migrant Reformed church communities, whose organisation as one unified denomination they promoted and supported. Some other Brazilian Protestant churches, especially the Presbyterian IPB, were also included within the broader circle. Founded one century earlier by American missionaries, the IPB was presented as a strategic partner for three main reasons: its common Calvinist roots, good relationships with Dutch migrants in the Brazilian states of São Paulo and Paraná and the excellence of missionary facilities that were the result of many years of North-American investment, especially in training (language and theology) and radio broadcasting.

The report of the visit to the Dutch colonies in Paraná is a rich and varied narrative that can be analysed from many different points of view. The text starts with an honest recognition that, before getting to the “Paraná-churches”, the authors were not very optimistic about migrants’ willingness to fulfil their missionary duties. They state that “within the context of a colony [migrant community – JR], as is the case there, the risk of an isolated and inwards-oriented life is always
very present, and this holds for the relation to the church as well”. In the account that follows, to the authors’ satisfaction, they have discovered that they were wrong. Dutch emigrants are very concerned with their environment, they contribute to missionary organisations in Brazil and they regularly promote church services in Portuguese, aiming at spreading the gospel among their Brazilian neighbours. The relation between mission and youth is highlighted in the text. The authors summarise this point quoting an opinion frequently heard among the Dutch emigrants: “It is not possible to live here as a Christian without carrying mission in your heart. Our children are Brazilian by birth and are growing up seeing their own compatriots in the darkness. The youngsters, above all, have a clear notion of the missionary vocation they have here.” The connection between youth and mission points to a relation between religion and kinship that will be addressed in the last section of this chapter.

This recognition of the migrants’ missionary élan is followed by a series of practical measures that should be taken to get cooperation going. Although the authors were on an explorative trip, observing and checking out conditions and possibilities with no mandate to make commitments or implement actions, the report shows they worked very actively to approach the different Dutch church communities spread throughout the states of Paraná and São Paulo. After a series of meetings, a “Brazilian Committee” (Braziliaanse Commissie) was established with representatives of each church community (São Paulo, Carambei and Castrolanda), which then became the authorised interlocutor of the GKN in Brazil and, as I will describe later in this chapter, the germ of the IER, established a few years later.

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65 In een kolonie-verband, zoals dit daar het geval is, ligt het gevaar voor een – ook kerkelijk – geïsoleerd en naar-binnen-gebogen leven zo dichtbij. (p. 39)

66 Het is niet mogelijk als christen hier te leven zonder dat de zending je op het hart ligt. Onze opgroeende kinderen zijn Braziliaan van geboorte en zien hun eigen landgenoten in het duister. Vooral de jongeren hebben dan ook een duidelijk besef van de zendingsroeping, die hier voor hen ligt. (p. 40)
Diaconate is a concept that is absent from the document. Medical and educational services are mentioned, yet just as “attractive missionary means”[67] and not as diaconate as such. Poverty, a word that appears in almost every section in virtually every paper I found in the PLD archives diagnosing Brazilian problems, is not pointed out here as a concern. A focus on ideas and beliefs characterises the whole document.

The spatial metaphor of the circles is an eloquent summary of their missionary worldview: an inner circle with their fellow Dutch Reformed emigrants, with whom they religiously and ethnically identify and a broader circle including Brazilian Presbyterians, with whom they could possibly work, despite slight differences and difficulties. Outside those two circles, the darkness of Brazilian “false Catholicism” and “heathendom” ruled the terra incognita that so desperately needed to be (re)Christianised.

The 1982 beleidsstuk: two-way traffic and elective affinities

The paper named “Progress report – Three years after the publishing of the Notes of Reflection on Mission in South America” (Voortgangsverslag – 3 jaar na het uitschrijven van de Bezinningsnota Zuid-Amerika Zending) is a long policy document aimed at assessing and updating another document, the Bezinningsnota of 1978. The 1982 document shows an inclination towards Liberation Theology, which although already present in the text of 1978, now becomes more explicit and decisive. Moreover, it includes assessments of incipient partnerships and projects based on the 1978 guidelines, as well as some answers to criticism received during those three years. Thus, it allows a quite detailed view on definitions of mission aired by the Dutch Protestant churches

[67] aantrekkelijk missionair middel (p. 43)
with regard to South America at the beginning of the 1980s. It was produced by the Zuid Amerika Orgaan – ZAO (South America Organ), the organ responsible at that moment for GKN action on the continent. The committee was made up of professional staff working at the missionary office in Leusden, and the so-called deputies representing the regional synods.

The most outstanding characteristic of this long, dense and energetic document is the deep influence of Liberation Theology, which can be perceived throughout, from the organisation of the chapters to the contents of the descriptions of projects and relationships. The corollary of this liberationist imprint is a profound questioning of the roots of the missionary effort, representing a patent and undeniable break with regard to the traditional missionary worldview as it was conceived, for instance, in the 1959 report. The concept of mission and the definition of the attributes of otherness in relation to which missionary work unfolds are radically new. Nonetheless, continuities can also be pointed out. The boundaries between “us” and “them”, a constitutive feature of any missionary endeavour, are clearly defined within the report, despite the new contents that colour this definition. While concepts of and some attitudes towards otherness have shown deep change, the cognitive frame for processing and understanding difference remains intact. I will develop this point while presenting the document section by section.

The report is divided into six chapters and one conclusion (Slot hoofdstuk), complemented by five annexes. I will focus on the three first chapters, which constitute the most substantial part of the document. Chapter one, entitled “The current social situation” (De huidige maatschappelijk situatie) is a short analysis of the conjuncture in South America. Chapter two, called “Biblical basis” (Bijbelse grondslag), is a reflection on the specific hermeneutics orienting the missionary action of the ZAO. Chapter three – “Elaboration” (Uitwerking) – is the longest part of the document, with eight sections addressing the practical
topics considered the most relevant for the action in the continent at that moment.

The last three chapters, which I will not directly analyse here, review actual relationships and partnerships that constitute ZAO’s network in South America and in the Netherlands. Chapter four, named “Partnerships – old and new” (De partnerrelaties – oud en nieuw) is an account of the relations in progress in the region. Chapter five and chapter six, respectively entitled “With two pairs of eyes” (Met twee paar ogen) and “The support of the Latin America Mission” (Het draagvlak van de Latijns Amerika Zending), approach the connection between the work implemented overseas and the communication of the Latin American experiences in the Netherlands, leading to the practical action of the churches in their own environment. While chapter five points to the conceptual aspects of this twofold approach, chapter six suggests some practical measures that should be taken in order to strengthen it. Finally, “Policy considerations and guidelines of the ZAO, February 1982” (Beleidsoverwegingen en beleidsvoornemens van het Zuid-Amerika Orgaan, februari 1982), the conclusion of the paper, summarises the main issues addressed in each chapter, reaffirming commitments made in the Notes of Reflection of 1978 and presenting new guidelines and challenges.

Chapters one and two are especially useful to observe the deep changes and ruptures I mentioned above. The short analysis of the social situation in Latin America, in the first chapter, detects signs of an incipient democratic construction taking shape on the continent. The few paragraphs about Brazil, for instance, mention the improved position of labour unions in the cities and the “prophetic role”\[68\] played by Brazilian churches. The lack of agrarian reform is also pointed out as one of the most important and urgent issues in the country. The section ends

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68 profetische rol (p. 2)
with a summary postulating that the social and economic situation in “countries in the periphery” is connected to that of “rich countries”[^69], echoing the neo-Marxist theories that were very influential in development cooperation at that time[^70]. The document concludes: “With an increasingly clear emphasis, we learn from our friends there, that the most effective way to help them is to understand our political and economic responsibility here.”[^71] The clear leftist accent of the analysis is reinforced by the Dutch spelling used in the document. The phoneme “k” is always spelled with the letter “k”, even in cases in which it would be more natural and traditional to use a “c” (for instance, in “conclusie/konklusie” or “commissie/kommissie”). In the 1970s, this reform of Dutch spelling rules was a platform of left-wing parties claiming that it would simplify the writing of the language, narrowing the gap between highly educated upper classes and less educated citizens[^72].

The section named “Biblical basis” starts with a meta-reflection on function of biblical texts in this sort of document. Answering the criticism that “in the ZAO’s Notes of Reflection there is too little room for the biblical basis of the work”[^73], the paper proposes to reflect upon how the scriptures must be read and used in these cases. Severe criticism is meted out to de-contextualised ways of reading the bible which simply introduce selected quotes like “raisins in bread”[^74], without connecting to reality. According to the paper, one of the great contributions

[^69]: landen van de periferie (…) rijke landen (p. 2)
[^70]: One of the most influential was the so-called “dependency theory”, developed by Latin American intellectuals connected to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean – ECLAC, such as Raúl Prebisch, Celso Furtado and later, Fernando Henrique Cardoso.
[^71]: Met steeds duidelijker aksent vernemen we van onze vrienden ginds, dat de meest efficiënte wijze hen te helpen daarin bestaat, dat wij hier politiek en ekonomisch onze verantwoordelijkheid verstaan. (p. 2)
[^72]: I thank Oscar (or Oskar) Salemink for his explanation about the political implication of Dutch orthography.
[^73]: …in de bezinningsnota van het Zuid-Amerika Orgaan te weinig zou zijn ingegaan op de bijbelse grondslag van het werk. (p. 3)
[^74]: krenten in het brood (p. 3)
of missionary contact with other cultures and ways of reading the bible was that the use of the scriptures to affirm “Western” certainties was challenged. A paragraph about establishing two-way traffic between the “West” and the second and third worlds, celebrates the new “complex questions”[75] that Asia, Africa and Latin America raise in response to their “mother-churches”[76]. The text, then, instead of quoting the traditional biblical texts associated with mission, offers an overview of the kind of hermeneutics the ZAO was proposing, based on Liberation Theology. In a nutshell: the message of the New Testament cannot be read only as a message about the (individual) salvation of the soul, but ought also be read as the fulfilment of the (social) liberation message of the Old Testament, with Jesus as the incarnation of the law and justice of God’s Kingdom. Thus, the biblical history of salvation is inseparable from the actual history of existing peoples.

A careful analysis of these two chapters and of the relation between them reveals the contours of a new way of defining the missionary world. These contours are not only present in concerns about labour unions and agrarian reform, that is, in the contents of the imagery produced about Latin America, but also in the relation established between “here” and “there”, which points to the understanding of the interconnectedness of world problems and the “two-way traffic” the document celebrates. What is even more interesting here is what is expressed through the relation between the two chapters: analysis of the socio-economical situation has precedence vis-à-vis biblical grounding, as illustrated by the actual order of the chapters (first the socio-economical analysis, and then the biblical basis) and by the contents of the criticism of traditional ways of quoting texts. It is not the bible that informs the way the ZAO looks at Latin America, but it is Latin American hermeneutics that informs the way ZAO members look at the bible. The authors are enthusi-

75 ingewikkelde vragen (p. 3)
76 moeder-kerken (p. 3)
astically embracing the “complex questions” with which Latin America is challenging their “Western” certainties.

In making this rather radical move towards a closer relationship with their friends in Latin America, however, the authors create an image of a homogeneous continent, whose way of thinking and reflecting upon the world dilemmas of that time fits their own agendas. Referring to questions posed by Latin America, the paper creates a metonymical link between the authors of the “complex questions” (the Liberationists theologians, in this case) and the Latin American continent as a whole. This metonymy of two-way traffic describes too broadly and too generously an actually quite limited range of possibilities for encounters and partnerships, echoing the model of circles drawn in the 1959 report. The part – the limited circle of partners that fit ZAO’s concerns and agendas – is substituted for the whole – the Latin American continent. To clarify this point, an analysis of the third section of the document is necessary.

This long chapter on practical deliberations has eight different sections, which the paper introduces as the outcome of discussions of several different study groups, each one formed by one staff member of the missionary organisation and three or four deputies for mission and diaconate appointed by the regional synods. Among the eight topics discussed, four were about Latin American issues: (1) Liberation Theology (Bevrijdingstheologie); (2) Christian base communities (Basisgemeenschappen); (3) Pentecostal movement, Syncretism and Spiritism (Pinksterenbeweging, syncretisme en spiritisme); and (4) The role and position of women in Latin America (Rol en positie van vrouwen in Latijns Amerika). The other four topics were about partnerships and practical measures, two being about ecumenism ((5) Bilateral – multilateral (Bilateraal – multilateraal) and (6) Inter-church cooperation – there and here (Interkerkelijke samenwerking – dáár en hier)) and two about practical deliberations: (7) The relationship with Instituto Cristão (De
relatie met het Instituto Cristão) and (8) Duration of permanence of Dutch staff abroad (Duur van uitzending van Nederlandse krachten).

The first two sections relate directly and explicitly to Liberation Theology. Their few pages do not add much to the 1978 paper, stating that Liberationist movements in general and Christian base communities in particular should be privileged partners on the continent. Besides the rather evident importance of Liberation Theology, appearing here as the first and second topics of the practical agenda for the continent, the attention paid to women’s position in South America is worth noting. The ten pages of the subsection dedicated to the topic (more than half of the section) provide an elaborated study of the subject, almost an independent paper within the document. Machismo, the cult to the Virgin Mary, the overlap between gender and class, aspects of reproductive health and the position of women in the labour market are described in detail, followed by an assessment of the role of women in the churches, country by country. The subordinate position of women inside the absolute majority of churches that the ZAO cooperates with is pointed out. The paper mentions that the role of women is not even an issue for the majority of them, and that in some contexts merely raising the issue of women’s position was already a remarkable change. The final part presents some guidelines for the elaboration of policies, stating that women must be seen as key-agents of ZAO action on the continent. Two main practical points are made: the possibility of influencing theological education including relationships between men and women on the agenda of the institutes and schools supported by ZAO; and further study of the issue by the church committee, not only reading letters and literature, but especially through visits to the continent.

In contrast with the detailed and developed account on women’s position, the part of the document dedicated to the Pentecostal movement and Spiritism is short and disheartened. This subsection is no more than half a page, consisting of a single paragraph stating that despite the at-
traction these movements exercise on millions of South Americans, it has been difficult for the ZAO to think about ways to cooperate with them. “As it looks now, there is little possibility of a real encounter, let alone ways of cooperation”.\[77\]

What becomes clear in the section is that the discussion of the counterpart that ZAO’s agenda for Latin America was seeking in order to complete its two-way traffic was restricted to some sectors and actors on the continent. The process of establishing a dialogue with the “other” is possible insofar as there is identification between the agendas “here” and “there”. Beyond these limits there is not much room for encountering, learning and cooperating. Thus, within the paper the process of negotiating otherness as a two-way street is based upon two principles: the elective affinity with Liberation Theology, which leads to the definition of a limited circle of possible partners; and the metonymical association of this specific circle with Latin America as a whole. Beyond this predetermined group, there is no two-way traffic. Either encounters are avoided, as in the case of Pentecostalism and Spiritism, or the “other” must be patiently corrected, through a traditional missionary work of conversion, as in the case of the churches that are not concerned about the position of women.

In comparison with the 1959 travel report, thus, what did not change much is the way both papers produce imagery of the missionary world based on the existence of a circle of partners that facilitate the mediation between sameness and the radical otherness. Moreover, the negotiation of otherness relies upon the depiction of the world from the perspective of the missionaries’ own agendas and cosmologies. In 1959, the agenda was evangelisation; therefore the description resulting from the missionary gaze on Brazil was a country lacking faith. In 1982, the agenda is liberation and justice; therefore the im-

\[77\] Zoals het er nu uit ziet lijkt de mogelijkheid van een echte ontmoeting klein, laat staan dat we wegen zouden zien van samenwerking.
The age of Latin America that emerges from the missionary observation is one of a continent afflicted by poverty and oppression, but whose marginalised people formulate important questions and challenges. Contrasting their different views on the position of women is particularly revealing. In 1959, the fact that women played a relevant role in Afro-Brazilian religions was interpreted as a sign of their primitivism and backwardness and, therefore, a justification for missionary work. In 1982, it is precisely the absence of women in relevant roles in the churches supported by the missionary organisation that justifies the sending of missionaries to influence and convert their Latin American partners[78].

If continuities can be detected in the way of depicting the world according to predetermined agendas, one fundamental difference between the two documents is visible in the way their agendas relate to the definition of secular and religious obligations towards the “other”. The chapter on biblical foundations of the 1982 report is a good example of the approximation between secular and religious vocabularies that I mentioned in chapter II as a “homeopathic treatment” for the secularisation of Dutch society. Biblical history is read and analysed as inseparable from people’s history. Fighting against oppression, injustice and poverty is regarded as a religious duty. Mission, in the document, is completely inseparable from a socio-political agenda, whose cornerstone is diaconal work. In contrast, the world depicted in the 1959 report is exclusively religious, with no explicit reference

[78] It is important to clarify that I am not a participant in these debates. My goal here is to analyse how ZAO perceived its missionary world and what sort of panorama its documents exhale, which I am describing in comparative terms. My intention is not to judge ZAO’s elective affinities or the genuine commitment its dedicated employees and volunteers had with Latin America. Moreover, it is not my role to criticise or defend the rather Christian commandment that all mankind should be loved and respected (or to phrase it in a more secular way, that all cultures should be encountered and respected), even oppressively sexist macho churches or some alienating and sometimes exploitative Neo-Pentecostal communities. My interest here is, more precisely, to identify how different conceptions of things such as “all mankind” or “different cultures” are produced and experienced, mobilising people and things in different ways.
to political, economical or social issues. The sole and extremely subtle reference to Brazilian poverty is the use of quotation marks to indicate the precarious conditions of services and infrastructure of the country. For instance, the document places “doctors”, “roads”, “teachers” and “education”, within quotation marks, thus suggesting that their quality is so low that they can barely be considered as such. Especially in relation to health and education, precariousness is not regarded as a problem that concerns the Dutch churches, but as a good missionary means, an opportunity for conversion. In other words, there is no explicit diaconal agenda independent from evangelistic goals.

3. The absence of diaconate: documents of Alliance times

In this section, I will introduce the two policy documents that were providing the guidelines for KiA and the ICCO Alliance missionary and development work during the time of my fieldwork. One is the ICCO Alliance Operational Plan, the document that prepared the forging of the Alliance which brought ICCO and KiA’s world-diaconate programs together. As explained in the previous chapter, KiA’s missionary program remained relatively independent from the Alliance, having its own separate policy document, the Policy Paper for Mission (Beleidsnotitie Zending), with which I will start my discussion.

Policy Paper for Mission – 2004: the vagueness of the other

Launched two months after the official establishment of the PKN, the document reveals tensions and contradictions between different groups inside the new church. The theological orientations that can be appre-
hended in the paper demonstrate a certain oscillation between two rival definitions of mission. On the one hand, words such as “liberation” and “dialogue” point to a definition that inherited concerns connected to Liberation Theology and the approximation of missionary and diaconal agendas, which since the early 1980s had been dominant in the organisations that would later become KiA. On the other hand, expressions such as “church-planting”, “testimony of the Name”[79] and “conversion” point to a return to a more explicitly Christian content in missionary work, advocated by more orthodox emergent groups inside the recently established PKN.

These tensions and oscillations affected the document in two major ways. First, it is written in a language that stresses its institutional and organisational character, showing considerable concern about attuning positions, distributing tasks and consolidating organisational borders. Second, the image of otherness emerging from its pages remains vague and open-ended, with no clear definition of whom the missionary effort is directed to. I will summarily develop these two points while I describe the first two sections of the paper.

As normally occurs with this kind of document (with the remarkable exception of the 1982 report), the first section starts with a moral justification of mission, accommodating the enterprise within some broader legitimate theological framework. The first and second paragraphs of the “Starting Points” quote and interpret two articles of PKN’s Kerkorde, the brand new constitution of the recently established church. Paragraphs three, four and five make statements pointing towards the two definitions of mission I mentioned above. While paragraphs three and five use the words “liberation” and “dialogue”, respectively, paragraph four stresses that mission and diaconate should be confounded, although they must always walk side by side.

79 getuigenis van de Naam
Furthermore, paragraphs six to twelve, thus half of the “Starting Points” section, are related to organisational issues. The basic question they answer is who is responsible for what, “here” and “there”. The paper states that “there”, on the missionary front abroad, KiA is the one responsible for planning and implementing the work, under the auspices of the national synod. It must do so through the support of local partner churches, which are responsible for testimony and service in their own societies. KiA also must support, together with ecumenical partners, church-planting in places where no Christian organisation is present. “Here”, in the Netherlands, the document states, local parishes are also responsible for missionary work, but the church as a whole, through KiA, will be the coordinator. The latter must also support the missionary activities of the local churches in the Netherlands, to facilitate their fulfilment of responsibilities. However, after this concise division of responsibilities “here” and “there”, the last paragraph declares, however, that this division has been overcome, and “mission is mission in six continents”[80], everywhere. These propositions reinforce the role of the organisations in Utrecht in articulating the church in the Netherlands and in the missionary world, as I analysed in the previous chapter. I will resume this point when addressing the local level of the missionary work, in chapter V.

“Exploring the environment”, the next section, is organised in parts A and B, following the principle that had just been declared overcome: part A analyses the situation in the Netherlands, and part B in the rest of the world. The seven paragraphs on the Netherlands are actually only about the PKN, mentioning current debates inside the church and explicitly oscillating in the ways I mentioned above, through the recognition of the existence of different groups supporting different definitions of mission within the PKN. It does so in a peculiar way, introduc-
ing the two definitions through citing negative stereotypical images the two groups have of each other. Thus paragraph three evokes the image of the “diaconalisation”\textsuperscript{[81]} of the mission, and the replacement of testimony and spirituality with the exclusive attention to justice and presence. Paragraph four describes criticism of the “evangelicalisation”\textsuperscript{[82]} of the mission and the emphasis on “the testimony and conversion, without service in the world being taken seriously”\textsuperscript{[83]}. Despite attempts to balance the two sides, paragraph seven states the concerns of the Synod about the need for a new missionary élan, and the “testimony of the Name”. “Missionary pursuits are again allowed”\textsuperscript{[84]}, concludes the paper.

The seven paragraphs about the world start with the recognition of the influence that globalisation has on the context where churches operate and in the churches themselves. The main topics described in the section are the growth of fundamentalism, the expansion of the Pentecostal movement, especially in the “South”, the decrease in ecumenical dialogue, the individualisation of religion and the AIDS epidemic. The last paragraph refers to the return of the concept of church-planting among the main “Western” denominations, such as the Lutheran and Anglican churches. The text summarises: “in the general sense, the discussion revolves around the issue of the form Christian presence should take in places where it does not (yet) exist”\textsuperscript{[85]}.

The highly institutional character of the document, thus, is evident in its grounding on the Kerkorde, its long discussions of organisational distribution of tasks and its analysis of the Dutch context enclosed in PKN’s own limits. On the one hand, emphasis on the church as an insti-
tution emerges as an answer to the need for the creation of an identity for the missionary action of the new church. On the other hand, the institution is invoked to legitimate the decision to increase the importance of testimony and church-planting, representing a significant change in the organisation of KiA missionary work.

The production of a new identity for KiA action depends on the possibility of creating some form of consensus on the definition of mission. This fact explains the careful choice of words that is made, meant to attenuate and balance any reference to the keywords of the rival sides in the discussion, leaving room for diverse interpretations and attempting to promote compromise. The idea of liberation, for instance, is immediately explained as having not only a social meaning, but also an individual (spiritual) meaning. Another example is that right after affirming that mission and diaconate are distinct things, the text states that they cannot exist without each other. Furthermore, the choice to give voice to the stereotypical images that the two groups have of each other is a means to representing these views as external to the document, recognising their existence without endorsing any of them. But the decision to increase evangelisation and testimony is rather clear.

This urge to reach a consensual definition relies also on the vagueness of the negotiated otherness. The targets of the missionary enterprise do not appear as specifically defined people, but as places that should be reached by the gospel, through the support of Christian churches or organisations in regions where these are weak, small and often threatened. Conversion as the movement of specific individuals to Christianity is not explicitly depicted in the document, but is implicit in the images of places where the gospel should be spread, and where the strengthening of Christian minorities surrounded by non-Christian peoples should be attended to. Instead of engaging in the now politically incorrect task of describing non-believers, as the travel report from 1959 did, the paper represents places as empty landscapes where the gospel should be spread.
ICCO Alliance Operational Plan: looking for accountable entrepreneurs

In relation to its form and conditions of production, this document, which bears the subtitle “Partners to Enterprising People”, is the most unique in the selection I present in this chapter. It is the longest, with 79 pages, registered and protected by copyright, with an ISBN number. It can be downloaded or ordered in five different languages (Dutch, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese). Finally, it is printed in full colour and has 23 pictures and plentiful diagrams.

The Operational Plan is the main policy document providing guidelines for the ICCO Alliance from 2007 to 2010. It was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its approval marked the beginning of the Alliance. It is divided into seven chapters, but as I did for the Policy Paper for Mission, I will focus mainly on the two initial ones (following the introduction), in which the moral principles animating the organisation are expressed, global context is analysed, and partners and target groups are defined. Chapter two is entitled “Mission, Vision and Core Values” and Chapter three “Strategy and Policy”.

Chapter two starts with a short account about the forging of the Alliance and a short introduction of each of its members. This is followed by two sections describing “vision” and “core values”, respectively. In the introductory paragraph of the chapter, before the first section, ICCO Alliance’s mission is defined as based on the biblical mandate “mercy, justice and the integrity of creation” (p. 16). Without further details about the biblical roots of the mandate, the text goes on to explain the terms of the mandate using a more secular vocabulary: human rights, co-responsibility and respect towards life on earth.

The section on vision provides a very short depiction of the current world, opposing, on the one hand, information and communication technologies, free market, knowledge and prosperity to, on the other hand, terrorism, migration, fundamentalism and intolerance. After that,
the paper states: “There is no longer a typical ‘North agenda’ or a typi-
cal ‘South agenda’. North and South are increasingly bound together in
one global agenda.” The section on core values lists eleven principles,
with brief paragraphs explaining them\(^{86}\).

The chapter on “Strategy and Policy” positions the ICCO Al-
liance within the broader networks of international development in
the “North” and formulates its policies towards its partners in the
“South”. As is also the case for the Policy Paper for Mission, the
“here” and “there” are reproduced in the pages that follow a decla-
ration that such demarcations have been overcome. In relation to
cooperation in Northern networks, the document refers to the Mil-
leennium Development Goals and to other multilateral declarations as
foundations to ICCO Alliance initiatives. The role of ICCO in broad
ecumical European organisations is highlighted. In relation to the
“South”, the document provides a detailed description of policies and
strategies to select and assess partnerships. Criteria are “[partners who
have – JR] legitimacy in their own society; [who maintain – JR] prin-
ciples of gender and human rights; [who are – JR] value-driven; [who
– JR] see people as bearers of change; [who are – JR] transparent and
accountable; [who maintain – JR] openness and willingness to cooper-
ate” (p. 22).

In relation to people who will be supported by these partners, how-
ever, the ICCO Alliance Operational Plan does not offer a more detailed
characterisation. The foreword to the document mentions people who
are “prisoners of poverty and injustice and deprived of freedom” (p. 7)
as the ultimate targets of projects and actions. One of the statements
listed under the label “Core values” says: “we ally ourselves with poor

\(^{86}\) It is not important to explain in detail each of these principles, so I will simply mention the titles
of the sections, which are in most cases self-explanatory: (1) Solidarity with the poor; (2) Belief in
justice; (3) The power of religion; (4) Equality for women and men; (5) We choose to do what we
are good at; (6) People as a gauge; (7) Thinking of solutions; (8) We are at the centre of the world;
(9) A liveable Earth; (10) Standing strong together; and (11) ICCO Alliance Transparent.
women and men, with people who are excluded, people who are seeing their dignity and rights attacked. We have made their agenda our agenda” (p. 16). The Operational Plan bears no further definitions of the target groups, although 19 pictures of “Southern” people (and 4 of European people) are distributed throughout the 79 pages of the paper.

These elements in the document show that the most important connection between the mission, vision and core values of the Alliance (described in five pages at the beginning of the paper), and their practical accomplishment in reality (as depicted in approximately sixty pages on programs, strategies and methodologies) seems to be the relationship with its partners in the “South”. Clearly defined partners are directly engaged in the implementation of projects that the ICCO Alliance finances, as it is the main gear connecting donors and target groups. Here, as in the documents analysed in the previous section, the image of a circle of local partners mediating between sameness and radical otherness is very important. The difference, however, is that in the ICCO Alliance model, as far as it can be apprehended through the Operational Plan, the most important criteria for selecting partners seem to be their transparency, accountability and economic efficiency, as the detailed description of procedures in the document suggests. This focus on partners is part of the effort to efficiently and professionally establish certain parameters for target groups’ improvement. Thus, the thorough description of methods and technologies for implementing development, from the selection of the partners to the assessment of results, is clearly the main point of the document. The careful definition of good partners is based rather on their ability to fulfil complex technical and managerial requirements than on elective affinities based on elaborate political and religious principles. The description of methods and procedures is much longer than the presentation of principles and values. Moreover, the most distinguished among these values, being part of the slogan printed on the document’s cover (ICCO Alliance –
partners of enterprising people) is entrepreneurship, which rings many capitalist and corporative bells[87].

Furthermore, in defining Alliance endeavours, the document privileges secular repertoires. Religion is confined to a timid presentation of biblical commandments and the ecumenical foundations of the organisation’s action, which are immediately translated in secular vocabularies pointing to the Millennium Development Goals and other multilateral declarations. There is no room for the concept of diaconate, although the document also governs all KiA projects that receive this label within church circles. They are included in the Operational Plan encompassed by the secular repertoires of development cooperation.

From the KiA point-of-view, the very existence of two different documents (the Policy Paper for Mission and the Operational Plan) is worth noting. One of the outcomes of the Alliance is that the separation between missionary and diaconal activities gained organisational expression. Before 2007, the projects and partners classified and distributed among the different programs (Mission, World-diaconate, Children at Risk, etc.) were handled by bureaucratic structures divided by region. What normally happened, then, was that the same relationship managers were responsible for both missionary and diaconal projects in the same region. The emergence of the Alliance created the necessity of keeping a clearer divide between secular and religious activities, expressed in the existence of two separate documents. The projects classified as mission were all gathered in an independent department with its own policy document. The diaconal work of the PKN was spread along ICCO’s thematic departments, governed by a secularised policy document in which the concept of diaconate is absent.

87 The use of corporative and business-like jargon in the Operational Plan was interpreted by some of the partners in Brazil as a sign that ICCO was following neo-liberal policies, a perception which caused some protests during a meeting held in Salvador, which I will describe in the next chapter. The objections started with the name of the document. In good Dutch, the document is entitled “ICCO Alliance Business Plan”, which was literally translated into Portuguese as “Plano Empresarial”.

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4. Mission and migration: otherness beyond theologies

In this section, I will introduce a comparative dimension to the analysis, examining the relationships between the missionary organisation of the GKN in the Netherlands, which would later become part of KiA, and the IER, the denomination of the emigrated Dutch Reformed in Brazil. The first part of the section presents the IER and some characteristics of its missionary work. Differently from the rest of this chapter, this text is based on the ethnographic description of one of the Dutch villages in Brazil, positioning IER’s mission in relation to other spheres of the migrants’ lives in which the denomination plays an important role. Beyond contacts that are strictly related to mission and diaconate, migrants are engaged in a variety of economical, social and familial relationships with their “Brazilian” environment. This has had a deep effect on the negotiation of otherness at issue in their missionary efforts.

The second part of the section briefly describes the conflicts between the IER and the GKN as they can be apprehended in documents gathered in an ad hoc report entitled (in translation) “An incentive towards dialogue” (Een aanzet tot overleg), elaborated in 1997. Dealing with these conflicts, the text shows how different ways of relating to the targets of the missionary effort led to different conceptions of mission itself. Contrasting the missionary ideals of the migrants and of their compatriots in the Netherlands allows for the observation of some continuities in the way otherness is negotiated by the latter.

The Igreja Evangélica Reformada and its others: wheat, weeds and araucaria pines.

The beginning of the cooperation between the Dutch Reformed church communities in Brazil and the GKN can be seen as one of the immedi-
ate factors leading to the establishment, in 1965, of the IER. As I mentioned above, meetings that resulted in the so-called Brazilian Committee, gathering representatives of São Paulo, Carambeí and Castrolanda (Arapoti, the third Dutch settlement that joined IER would be established a few years later) are extensively described in the 1959 report. It is worth noting that this process of overcoming internal differences in the implementing of missionary work anticipates, on a much smaller scale, the SoW process.

The three Dutch colonies in the state of Paraná would become the core of the IER, defining most of its missionary agenda. The parish in São Paulo, composed of some Dutch and Indonesian families that migrated to Brazil separately, was also very active in missionary cooperation, but its distance (some hundreds of kilometres of “complicated surprises”), its numerical inferiority and, in many respects, its distinctiveness in relation to the churches in Paraná kept its trajectory a bit apart from the numerically much bigger parishes in the migrant villages. In 1959, the parish in São Paulo had a Dutch pastor. He would return years later as the first missionary officially sent by the GKN, through cooperation with the Presbyterian IPB, as advised in the 1959 report.

The three Dutch villages in Paraná were established under different circumstances. Carambeí, the first settlement, was founded in 1911, under the quite severe conditions of a poorly organised migration process, which resulted in a colony that faced long initial years of poverty and hardship, developing into an organised village only much later. Castrolanda, in its turn, was the outcome of an organised and heavily subsidised migration plan in the early 1950s. It was founded by a group of Dutch Protestant farmers in an area about 50 kilometres from Carambeí, but still in the same municipality, Castro. Most of these farmers came originally from Drenthe and Overijssel, two predominantly rural provinces in the Northeast and East of the Netherlands, where two agricultural organisations connected to the Protestant pillar – the
Christelijke Emigratie Centrale (Christian Emigration Centre) and the Christelijk Boeren en Tuinders Bond (Christian Farmers and Gardeners Association) – promoted and facilitated the move to Brazil. Arapoti, the most recent settlement, was founded in 1961 through an initiative similar to the one that ten years earlier had resulted in Castrolanda.

Thus, the IER brought together four different parishes that were composed of people who originally came from different denominations in the Netherlands. Most of the IER’s first members came from the GKN and, to lesser extent, the NHK, but there were also some from smaller and more orthodox denominations, especially the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk – CGK (Christian Reformed Church). Before the establishment of the IER as an independent denomination, the church communities of Carambeí, Castrolanda and São Paulo had an official link with the GKN (and also with the Christian Reformed Church, the denomination of the Dutch migrants in North America) through a synod that included the Dutch Reformed in Brazil and Argentina. The GKN is considered, then, the “mother” of the IER.

The characterisation of the relationships the IER maintains with its “Brazilian” environment that I present here is based mainly on data collected in Castrolanda in 2001 and 2002, while doing work for my masters’ thesis. Knowing Carambeí and Arapoti quite well, and visiting these villages in 2007 to interview members of the missionary committee of the IER synod there, I can assert that in general terms, the specific type of relationship between religion and kinship verified in Castrolanda also exists in the towns of Carambeí and Arapoti. Since these three parishes together represent the absolute majority of the denomination, IER missionary work is as a whole deeply influenced by the processes that I will describe in the next few pages.

In my masters’ thesis on Castrolanda (Rickli, 2003) and in a subsequent article (2004), I argued that because of a specific type of overlap between religion and kinship, the IER becomes the most important actor
in tracing the symbolic borders that separate the Dutch migrant community from its “Brazilian” surroundings[88]. There is not enough room here for a detailed explanation of this argument, but I will introduce some of its elements, insofar as they touch upon the issue of otherness, influencing the theologies that guide the missionary efforts of the migrant church.

Firstly, I suggest that belonging to the IER is the most important factor in determining whether a person belongs to the community or not. Dutch descendants living far away from the village are still considered part of the group if they remain connected to the church, while those living in Castrolanda who are not members of the church are not considered full-fledged members of the community.

Secondly, I point to the fact that, in practice, people only become IER members if they have a kinship relation (of affinity or descent) with one (or more, in the case of descent) of its members. Thirdly, I described the main rituals of the church (Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage) as organising elements of different levels of inclusion in the community. These rituals draw a classificatory continuum going from the most inner circle, including those who went through the three rituals in Castrolanda – or in the Netherlands, before the migration – to the furthest outer circle, composed of “Brazilian” individuals who, married to a member of the IER, have access to the church.

Since being a member of the IER is the key to belonging to the group and marriages are the only way available to outsiders to get access to the IER, it can be argued that affinity is the critical and vulnerable point in the definition of group boundaries. Every new union is a kind of wager. In some cases, Castrolanda “gained” a new member, incorporated into different domains of the community’s life through her entrance into the church. In other cases, however, a person from Castrolanda ended up

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88 Rigorously speaking, the absolute majority of the people in a migrant community that originated in the early 1950s have been born in Brazil and are thus officially Brazilian. In Castrolanda, however, the term “Brazilian” designates only those who are not Dutch descendants. In this text, when I use the word “Brazilian” within quotation marks, I am referring to this emic meaning.
gradually cutting off her ties with the community and engaging in new relations and networks in the “Brazilian” surroundings. Something that almost never happens, however, is the establishment of alliances between families from Castrolanda and “Brazilian” families through these cross-marriages.

The combination of religion and kinship offers a possibility of encompassing (or losing) individuals, thus placing the disaggregating potential of affinity, expressed in cross-marriages, under control of the church. This fact produces a kind of mediation between endogamy and exogamy that is operated by the church\[89\].

In contrast to this delicate balance between inside and outside, whose fluxes are carefully (although not always successfully) controlled by the church, other spheres of life in Castrolanda can be considered accessible and open to flux and exchange. The most outstanding example is the economy. Castrolanda’s agricultural cooperative is one of the most respected enterprises in Brazilian agribusiness, with a strong and successful presence in national and global agricultural commodity markets. Another side of this openness is the generosity of Castrolanda’s people. In addition to their contributions to different sorts of social initiatives in the region, they have the reputation of being good employers, paying salaries that are much higher than the local average.

IER missionary efforts (which include the two other migrant communities) are deeply influenced by this way of tracing symbolic boundaries and relating surroundings. This influence can be perceived especially in the two main points that I will discuss: the tendency not to attract new “Brazilian” members and the symbolic association between migration and mission. These two points illuminate the way the IER negotiates otherness in relation to its Brazilian neighbours, being indispensable for understanding conflicts with the GKN.

89 The processes summarily described here are analysed in detail in Rickli (2004).
I will introduce the first point quoting from an interview with a member of the missionary committee in the synod of the IER (in translation):

“You see, proselytism is what we are not doing. We are not proselytising. So, if because of our evangelist work, perhaps one or two want to, let’s say, become members of the church, they are welcome. It is not the case of... But our work is not meant in this way. It is just to spread the gospel and the knowledge about the faith and the bible. So, what is interesting is that there are a lot of members of other churches [joining the evangelist’s work – JR], isn’t it? And precisely people who are leaders in the communities where they are members. So, in a sense, we influence what is going on there. And I believe this is good. We do not influence in the sense of controlling, but in the sense of supporting, of [influencing – JR] the theological view.”[90]

Thus, missionary effort is directed to supporting and influencing other churches through the establishment of partnerships which guarantee that the IER is fulfilling its missionary obligations without really opening its doors to new members. This model of missionary action contributes to the overlap between IER membership and membership in the migrant community. Moreover, it could be considered a reproduction, within the context of migration, of a model based on partnership, which is a constant characteristic of the Dutch Protestant missionary and development action in Brazil. It is present in the four documents previously analysed in this chapter.

In order to describe the association of migration and mission, the second point I mentioned above, I will turn once more to my ethnogra-

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90 Agora o que nós não fazemos é proselitismo. Nós não estamos proselitizando. Então, se do trabalho que o evangelista está fazendo, de repente tem um ou dois que querem, vamos dizer, ser membros da igreja, eles são bemvindos, não é o caso de... Mas o trabalho não é destinado para isso. É só levar o evangelho e o conhecimento etc, sobre a fé e sobre a Bíblia. Agora o que é interessante é que tem várias pessoas que são membros de outras igrejas né? E justamente essas outras pessoas estão na liderança da igreja lá onde elas estão membros. Então, de certa forma, a gente influencia o que está acontecendo lá. E isso eu acho bom. Não influencia no sentido de controlar, ou coisa assim, mas no sentido de apoiar, de visão teológica.
phy of Castrolanda. In 2001, on the occasion of the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first Dutch migrants who established the village, a Thanksgiving Service was celebrated in the IER. The sermon was about Genesis 12, the biblical text narrating the moment Abraham is called to leave his fatherland and family to seek out go the Promised Land, founding a new nation.

An elaborated liturgical decoration in front of the pulpit was prepared by a committee of church members. A large bouquet with 50 roses and some wheat was placed on an old school desk, together with a bible opened on a text on Christian love. On the floor, alongside a bed planted with weeds, six big stones held up a silver basin filled with water. The last element was a vase with a young araucaria pine (*Araucaria angustifolia*), the native tree that is the symbol of the state of Paraná.

At the beginning of the service, the pastor gave a long explanation of the meaning of each element. The 50 roses symbolised, of course, the fifty years of Castrolanda, and the wheat represented the prosperity of the village, fruit of God’s blessings and migrants’ hard work. The school desk stood for the necessity to learn a lot in a new land and the bible, for the Christian love that kept the community united. The bed of weeds symbolised the land before the arrival of the migrants and the cultivation of the soil. The six stones represented the six Corporal Works of Mercy[^91^], one of the biblical foundations of Christian diaconate, and the water represented Baptism and life. Finally, the araucaria pine symbolised the young descendants of the migrants, who are Paraná natives, like the *Araucaria angustifolia*.

The connection between migration and mission, which is common in migrants’ discourse, is evident in the text chosen for the sermon. The existence of the settlements and the daily life of their members are

[^91^]: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matthew 25: 35-36).
invested with a religious meaning and interpreted as being missionary by nature\textsuperscript{92}. This association is also present in liturgical decoration, which expressed many of its elements: the link between prosperity and God’s blessings; discourses on unity and Christian love grounded in the bible; the explicit reference to missionary and diaconal obligation (water and stones). Economic success, discipline and religious fervour are intrinsically interconnected. In a nutshell, this liturgical décor could be understood as making the following statement: God’s blessings allow migrants to fulfil their mission, rendering the soil productive, replacing the weeds with wheat. This makes them prosperous, united in God’s word and in Christ’s love and call for mercy and compassion.

The way Brazil is depicted in the liturgical decoration is also very important. The country is implicit in two elements: the soil covered with weeds and the young araucaria pine. The latter suggest the kinship relations connecting the Dutch migrants and their new land, a concern that was already expressed in the travel report of 1959, in the note on the specific missionary obligations of migrants’ children born in Brazil. The former depicts Brazilian soil as land to be cleaned and cultivated, conquered and transformed. The opposition wheat x weeds is, thus, an eloquent image of the moral aspects of economical success. Moreover, the image of the soil covered with weeds can also be analysed as a depiction of Brazil as an empty land ready to be conquered and improved by the migrants, a blank sheet on which the Dutch migrants will write their history. As I analysed in the previous sections, negative qualities (emptiness, darkness, vagueness) are quite often employed in missionary or development narratives to describe the “there”, the terra incognita. Therefore, mission and migration appear intrinsically connected in the migrants’ discourse in this sense as well.

\textsuperscript{92} It is interesting to look at this religious interpretation of migration in the light of Weber’s classical work on Protestantism (2001: 82). In the local narratives, the motivation to migrate is not only explained in economical terms (to escape the hardships of rural life in the post-war Netherlands), but also in religious terms (to fulfil a missionary and ascetic call).
While the reference to the weeds highlights a common thread linking migrants’ and their compatriots in the Netherlands’ views on otherness, the reference to the young araucaria pine points to a fundamental difference between them. For the churches in the Netherlands, mission and diaconate are all the relations they have with Brazil and there is no other parallel domain in which exchanges and fluxes can possibly occur. For the IER, however, mission is only one very limited way of being in contact with “Brazilians”, one among lots of other possibilities. Kinship is probably the most important and delicate of these possibilities. The natural “Brazilianness” of their own children is a reminder of the role of religion to maintain the existence and unity of the group, insofar as “Dutchness” is not guaranteed and must be carefully cultivated. The borders between “here” and “there”, which are not at stake in the case of the Dutch churches, are a delicate achievement for the migrants, requiring considerable symbolic investment.

*Een aanzet tot overleg – 1997: conflicts between “the mother and the daughter”*

In September 1997, the *Latijns Amerika Sectie* – LAS (Latin America Section), the new name of the ZAO, decided to carry out archival research on the history of its relations with the IER. The two main objectives of the project were to look into the causes of the evident decrease in cooperation between the two organisations and formulate possible alternatives for the future. The percentage of GKN funding in Brazil for projects managed in cooperation with the IER had decreased from 40% of the total amount destined to the country in 1992, to only 12% in 1996. The exchange of letters between the LAS and the Synod of the IER included “a recent history of hard
words”[93], above all, on the issues of ecumenism and Liberation Theology.

The document that resulted from this research, intitled (in translation) “An incentive towards dialogue” (Een aanzet tot overleg) characterises the link between the GKN and the IER as “…a sort of mother-daughter relation. Very sensitive, therefore”[94]. It presents a cultural explanation for the misunderstandings between the two denominations:

“Every church develops inside the culture that surrounds it. And the cultures around the GKN and the IER have strong differences. Moreover, the IER is a church established by people who have migrated. In general, emigrants are not a cross-section of the population from which they originate. In addition to different cultures, members of both denominations go through different social and emotional developments”[95].

Most of the misunderstandings and hard words mentioned in the document can be recovered in the exchange of letters between the missionary organs in the Netherlands and the Synod of the IER. My argument does not require reproducing the discussion in detail, so I will summarily describe its main points.

The epicentre of the conflict is the 1980s ZAO decision that was made to support some Brazilian ecumenical organisations, in addition to cooperation with the IER. On the one hand, the IER questions the legitimacy of these organisations and criticises their leftist political positions. On the other hand, the ZAO reaffirmed its commitment to social justice as well as the involvement in the political sphere proposed by the ecumenical movement. Another key issue is Liberation Theology,

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93 ... een recente geschiedenis van harde woorden...
94 ... een soort moeder/dochter relatie. Dus heel gevoelig.
95 Iedere kerk ontwikkelt zich binnen de haar omgevende cultuur. En de culturen waarin de IER en GKN staan zijn sterk verschillend. Daarenboven is de IER een kerk die is opgebouwd door mensen welke geëmigreerd zijn. Doorgaans vormen emigranten geen dwarsdoorsnede van de populatie waaruit zij vertrokken. Naast de verschillende culturen maken de beide kerkbevolkingen ook verschillende sociale en emotionele ontwikkelingen door.
severely criticised by the migrant church as too secular and political. ZAO’s position on this theme focuses on the social responsibility that it considers essential to Christianity in Latin America and also in the Netherlands.

At the harshest moments in the discussion, the IER synod questions the legitimacy of ZAO’s positions, suggesting that they might not represent the opinion of the majority of the GKN’s members. The ZAO, in its turn, accuses the IER of being conservative, closed and blind to the Brazilian reality, exhorting it to assume its social responsibility and to play an active role in the ecumenical movement.

Besides the discussion of conflicting theologies that can be apprehended in the report and the letters, the documents also mention significant changes in the distribution of GKN money destined to the missionary and diaconal work in Brazil. Until the early 1980s, decisions on budgets and projects were made through consultation with the IER and most of GKN budget to be spent in Brazil was somehow connected to the IER. Gradually, however, the Dutch church established new partnerships, an outcome of the closer relationship with the organs in the Netherlands dealing with world-diaconate and development. A new partnership, agreed upon with the Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil – IECLB (Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil), also played an important role. The IECLB was an active member of the ecumenical movement, both within Brazil and internationally. It had close relationships with Catholics, especially the Christian base communities inspired by Liberation Theology.

Furthermore, the missionary organs of the GKN, aware of the economic success of the Dutch migrants, began to demand a larger IER financial contribution to the missionary and diaconal projects developed in the surroundings of the three above-mentioned villages. The combination of new partnerships connecting the Dutch organs and Brazilian churches and organisations without IER interference, together with the
constant decrease in the financial contribution from the Netherlands to the missionary work implemented by the IER, led to the end (in financial terms, at least) of cooperation between the GKN (later PKN) and the IER. In 2007, the IER did not receive any support from its mother-church.

These conflicts and tensions in the definition of the missionary agenda can be analysed from the point of view of the negotiation of otherness. On the one hand, Dutch society in general, and the GKN in particular, went through important changes during the 1960s and 1970s, causing a transformation in the content of the desired type of relation with the “other”. The four documents I analysed in the previous sections of this chapter testify to these undeniable transformations. Yet, notwithstanding significant changes in the content of relations, the line drawn between “us” and “them”, ecumene and terra incognita remained more or less the same. Despite visible variation in the symbolic repertoires used to negotiate otherness, the theologies of mission and diaconate preserved the framework that localises people “here” and “there”.

On the other hand, the situation of the Dutch migrants in Brazil is almost the opposite. Symbolic repertoires informing IER’s missionary action had not changed much since it was established in 1965. The borders between “us” and “them”, however, are in constant flux, negotiated on a daily basis in an arena that is much broader and much more complex than that of the European mission. Once the migrants have children that are “Brazilian by birth” who will most likely have a Brazilian spouse, the church together with kinship, takes over the crucial task of, drawing symbolic boundaries that can no longer be taken for granted. In such a context, the missionary agenda has to be grounded on a different basis, playing a different role in the negotiation of otherness. The establishment of a religious “two-way traffic” is a luxury that the migrants cannot afford without jeopardising the reproduction of the
distinctiveness of their own group. In a world of intense transit and exchange, God must be with the IER, blessing their prosperity and calling them to sow the seeds of the gospel and of economic success, improving Brazilian soil and Brazilian partner churches, while preserving the unity and solidarity of the group.

The metaphors of wheat, weeds and araucaria pine are helpful in clarifying migrants’ position. The opposition wheat x weeds points to migration as mission, aligning migrants with European missionaries, spreading Christianity and modernity along the boundaries of the “civilised world”. This image translates the experience of migrating in religious terms, bringing Dutch migrants and Dutch missionaries closer, insofar as they share a similar symbolic repertoire to define otherness. The araucaria pine, however, refers to a process of localisation based on kinship and on notions of belonging that the European missionary organisations cannot possibly experience. It refers to a relation to otherness that goes beyond the limits of religious repertoire. In contrast to the churches in the Netherlands, whose relationship of mission and diaconate with the “other” is restricted to contacts promoted by the church, the migrants are engaged with their “Brazilian other” in almost every sphere of their lives.

A negligent analysis of the conflicts between the ZAO and the IER could easily lead to the conclusion that they were the result of the backwardness of the latter as opposed to the modern liberal positions of the former. A more perceptive gaze, however, can reveal quite a different picture. While the ZAO operates through relatively fixed and unchallenged symbolic boundaries between “us” and “them”, migrants experience constant fluxes and exchanges with the “other” and they can only produce difference through complex and costly processes in which the IER plays a decisive role.
5. Conclusion

This chapter addressed definitions of principles and guidelines visible in documents produced by some of the organisations that performed the missionary, diaconal and development work of the Dutch Protestants over the last fifty years. The text focuses primarily on the continuities between secular and religious domains of the enterprise, as they can be apprehended through selected documents. Moreover, the chapter elaborates on ruptures and continuities in the images of otherness these official discourses yield.

The empirical data selected to approach these two topics were organised around the transformations that occurred in the relationships between the GKN and the IER since the first missionary trip to Brazil, in 1959. In the first section of the chapter, the report written by the pastors who visited Brazil that year was compared with a policy document produced in 1982, a turning point in the missionary theologies orienting Dutch Protestant action in Brazil. Approximation with the ecumenical movement and the influence of Liberation Theology as they take shape in the document of 1982 can be seen as among the main causes of the conflicts that emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s between GKN’s missionary organs and the IER. A report about these conflicts and ethnographic data obtained during my master’s research were analysed in the last section of the chapter.

A comparative analysis of the two policy documents currently governing the ICCO Alliance was included as an intermediate section, not only because they represent the most recent developments within the organisations, but also because their very existence as two separate documents exemplify important changes in the definition of the secular and religious fields of action, which make up the main concern of the chapter.

In relation to this question, the ruptures and continuities detected in the different documents can be easily summarised by paying attention to whom the bearer of the concept of diaconate is. In the travel report of 1959, the only reference to activities that could be considered as diaconal
presents the latter merely as good missionary means. Strictly defined missionary action dominates the agenda. In the document written in 1982, political, economic and social agendas are interpreted through religious lenses and the differences between mission and diaconate become blurred and difficult to trace. The definition of the religious domain becomes a generous umbrella that covers traditionally secular concerns, such as human rights, political transformations and the just distribution of income. Finally, with the forging of the ICCO Alliance and the consequent need to maintain two separate policy documents for religious and secular activities, there is no more room for the idea of diaconate within the organisations’ major guidelines. While within the 2004 policy document for mission the urge to keep diaconate apart from missionary action is reinforced and their complementary character is stressed, in the ICCO Alliance Operational Plan, diaconate disappears under the (at least rhetorically) secular idea of development cooperation.

Finally, in relation to the negotiation of otherness, the text focused on the persistence of a model opposing sameness and radical otherness, mediated by a circle of carefully selected partners. Although radical changes in contents and attitudes are acknowledged, analysis suggests that the cognitive frame underlying the missionary and diaconal endeavour in relation to otherness remains more or less the same. Comparison with the way the IER designs and performs its mission illuminates this point. Conflicts between the migrant denomination and its mother-church in the Netherlands can be seen as the outcome of their different ways of engaging with the other. While for Dutch people and organisations the symbolic border separating “us” and “them” is fully encompassed by the missionary and diaconal endeavour, migrants are confronted with encounters occurring in other spheres of their lives. For them, negotiating otherness becomes a much more complex task, involving not only the symbolic repertoires at issue in mission and development, but economic exchanges and kinship relations as well.
CHAPTER IV

Practices and encounters in mission and development
1. Introduction

encountering the other in a continuous world

This chapter is about the daily life and routines of different organisations connected to the KiA network in Brazil and in the Netherlands. The text focuses on movements and encounters occurring in activities that involve actors, things and meanings, promoting the links and connections that make up the network. The main question guiding this chapter concerns the continuous process of negotiating otherness in various kinds of encounters occurring in different places on both sides of the Atlantic. How are otherness and sameness negotiated in the daily practices of mission, diaconate and development?

In the previous chapter, I focused on official discursive constructs giving meaning and coherence to the movement and flux of the KiA network, bearing secular and religious symbolic repertoires of mission, diaconate and development. In the present chapter I will address meetings, encounters and ordinary (and often highly bureaucratic) practices, highlighting their performative aspects.

As I have already suggested, documents bearing missionary, diaconal and developmental policies and discourses are designed to be interpreted as sources of concepts and ideas that give shape to the action to be performed by the organisations that produce them. Because of this specific programmatic nature, function and discursive structure, they tend to hide the inherent connection their production has with daily practical experiences. In placing themselves as sources of meaning and guidelines to the work that will be implemented in their wake, they tend to neglect the role played by the existing web of relationships and links in the process of producing these guidelines. They mobilise different symbolic repertoires – from anthropological knowledge to the Bible, from academic theology to the Millennium Development Goals – to or-
ganise their narratives through a logic of cause and consequence, overlooking the fact that, in addition to these repertoires, these narratives are also grounded on experiences and encounters that occur before their elaboration and that nourish these repertoires.

The main consequence of this fact, which will be discussed in the present chapter, is that the panorama that emerges from official documents of mission and development evokes a world of relatively clear-cut conceptual boundaries, in which there is not much room for blurred, chaotic and often confusing contacts between the diversity of actors involved in the network. In official documents and narratives, the complexity of the network is organised and often simplified, giving rise to a series of generalised abstractions. One of the most evident examples of these abstractions is the dichotomy I address extensively in this dissertation: “us” and “them” and its spatial version “here” and “there”. This way of organising and simplifying the world, whatever vocabulary it mobilises (theological, philosophical, anthropological), invokes a grammar of differences that seems to be the only (and natural) way to address the issue of encounter. This grammar tends to become an overarching and all-encompassing framework to make sense of the world of mission and development and one of the most important tools to explain the successes and pitfalls of projects and partnerships.

In the present chapter I will try to avoid taking this grammar of differences for granted, analysing how it is negotiated in extensive and minute interactions occurring in the daily life of the network. Instead of building only on dichotomies explicit in images such as “North/South” “two-way traffic”, “top-down/bottom-up”, and implicit in images like “frontiers”, “borders” and “translation”, I am using ethnographic data to present the encounters as disordered, chaotic and complex experiences. Beyond the image of the world as a patchwork of cultures, whose borders people cross to encounter the “other”, there is the constant cognitive work of ordering (Law, 1994: 9) blurred, confusing and fluid
experiences occurring in a continuous world (Ingold, 1993: 228). This
cognitive work mobilises categories picked up from different symbol-
ic repertoires to create a temporarily stable cosmology of boundaries,
which are carefully maintained and reproduced and re-enacted on a
daily basis. In other words, the differences that inhere in the encounters
I look at in this chapter will not be part of the explanation but, as an
important component of the missionary cosmology, one of the things to
be explained.

Besides the cosmological boundaries between “self” and “other”
and between “here” and “there”, there are two other more practical
clear-cut categories that I will not take for granted in addressing the en-
counters occurring in the KiA network. Firstly, the practical and concep-
tual difference between objectives and methods, which is always clearly
drawn in the documents, is in practice much more confusing and mixed.
Thus, I will avoid taking this separation a priori, demonstrating instead
that “what is to be done” and “how to do it” are inseparable domains.
Most of the power struggles I observed on my journeys through the KiA
network were related to the ability to control methods and procedures,
in spite of objectives and goals. Secondly, I will not focus exclusively
on events that are explicitly conceived and interpreted as encounters
with the “other”. I will demonstrate that “encounter” is a leitmotiv in
the KiA network, even on occasions when the “other” is not physically
present. Neither will the difference between meetings with the “other”
and meetings about the “other” be taken for granted.

While in the previous chapter I presented a selection of documents
showing continuities and ruptures over time, here I will present a se-
lection of ethnographic accounts showing continuities and ruptures in
space. Most of the data relate to the fieldwork conducted in Brazil be-
tween February and September 2007, but some observations from the
Netherlands will also be employed, concerning KiA’s headquarters in
Utrecht. In the Brazilian data, the few events and encounters described
are related to two different arenas: a meeting organised in April 2007 by the ICCO Alliance in Salvador, bringing together almost all its partners in the country, and various activities organised by *Corrente Viva* – CV (Living “Chain”[96]), the organisation that was the main focus of my 2007 field research.

The choice to analyse meetings occurring in different circles and organisations connected to KiA, involving a variety of actors and dealing with a range of issues, aims at the identification of common principles and procedures present at different points throughout the network. Rigorously speaking, the negotiations and power plays at issue in events as distinct as an internal meeting of one of the KiA teams and the discussion of the CV model of management are not exactly the same, insofar as the mediators, actors and forces they mobilise do not coincide. Nonetheless, the comparison between procedures and processes occurring in different encounters may reveal important continuities that help to understand the network as a whole and in a broader sense. Despite the differences between the means that people have to act upon the network, and the repertoires they cast out to make sense of their roles and positions, similarities and regularities can be detected in these processes.

All the ethnographic accounts I have chosen to be analyse here encapsulate some of the characteristics of the KiA network that are important in answering the main questions guiding this dissertation. In section 2, while analysing a meeting in the KiA headquarters, I will introduce the main issues concerning the distribution of power within the network. Section 3 presents a description of the meeting in Salvador, analysing how images of sameness and otherness are negotiated during an encounter between ICCO Alliance staff and partner organisations. Finally, the last section introduces CV and develops the analysis of power introduced in section 2.

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96 In Portuguese, it is common to use the word “corrente” (chain) as a synonym for network, stressing the image of links connected to each other.
The occasion I will briefly describe in this section was a rather ordinary event occurring within the routines at KiA headquarters, in Utrecht. This was a teamoverleg (team meeting) that took place in October 2006, bringing together all the members of the ENLA team, the branch of KiA responsible for work in Latin America and Eastern Europe. Teamoverleg was the official monthly meeting of KiA’s regional teams, in which activities that demand immediate attention of the team as a whole, such as new projects and campaigns, official visits from and to the “South”, new partnerships, expiring contracts to be finished or renewed, etc., were discussed. The most important decisions concerning the team were made on this sort of occasion.

The ENLA team meeting held in October 2006 brought seven staff members together – the team leader, a secretary and five relationship managers. The person responsible for communication and fundraising related to ENLA came for the second half of the event. Ideally, team meetings must be attended by every member of the team, but I heard that this rarely happens since very often at least one of the relationship managers is abroad, visiting partners. The agenda for the meeting had 7 main points: (1) introduction; (2) discussion with an ICCO representative; (3) discussion of the previous meeting’s minutes; (4) decision on new projects; (5) discussion of a travel report presented by a relationship manager; (6) the 2007 budget; (7) procedures for the involvement of local communities in the Netherlands in projects abroad.

The first aspect of the meeting to be highlighted in this description is its official and ritualised character. A few measures and procedures invest the teamoverleg with an extraordinary quality, such that it comes to occupy a more prestigious position in relation to other regular team activities. The most evident of these measures relates to the place where
it normally occurs – in the meeting-room area, on the western block of the PLD building (see chapter II). Another measure to officialise the meeting is its inclusion in the building official schedule, appearing in the organisations’ calendars and announced on the TV screen in the main hall. On that particular morning in October 2006, about five minutes before 10 o’clock, when the meeting was supposed to start, all relationship managers and I left the ENLA wing in the eastern block and walked together to the other side of the building, stopping at the main hall to check the number of the meeting-room announced on the screen. When we got to the room, we met the team leader and the secretary, who had left the ENLA wing a few minutes earlier to get the room ready. Moving all participants from their contiguous workspaces on one side of the building to the opposite side helped to create a special atmosphere around the meeting, distinguishing it from the ordinary activities of the team.

The ritualised and structured character of the meeting is also evident in the clear-cut division between scheduled discussions and improvised conversations, visible in the team leader’s rigorous time management. At the beginning of the meeting, about three minutes after 10 o’clock, he interrupted the small talk and the distribution of coffee and tea, officially welcoming everybody and introducing me, the only participant who was not part of the team. He invited me to say a few words about my research and immediately proceeded to the next point in the schedule. The flow of subjects, procedures and discussions remained under his control during the three hours that the meeting lasted. Every time distractions (caused, most of the time, by the distribution of coffee and tea) and, more important, digressions and attempts to introduce new subjects or to prolong discussions of hot issues were about to break the predetermined order of the schedule, he invoked his power as team leader and chair of the meeting to interrupt the other participants and return to the program.
The second aspect of the meeting that is important to mention relates to decision-making processes and the consecration of documents. Points 3, 4 and 5 of the agenda, which follow directly after the introduction (point 2 was postponed because the representative of ICCO was available only at noon), offer good examples of these processes. They reveal how the bureaucratic liturgies at issue in the team meetings perform a translation of personal experiences and opinions – especially those acquired by the relationship managers in their encounters with partners in “South” – into official views of the team and, sometimes, of the organisation. Team meetings were privileged moments for the authorisation of personal views as documents circulating within KiA bureaucracy.

The brief evaluation of the minutes of the September meeting, elaborated by the secretary, and its approval by the participants, despite its common and conventional character, is a good example of this sort of officialising procedure: participants suggested some changes, corrected some inaccuracies and finally approved the draft, which became, then, the official bureaucratic vehicle for the decisions and opinions manifested in the previous meeting.

Point 4, concerning decisions on new projects, was surprisingly short. After the meeting, one of the relationship managers explained to me that the actual analysis and consultations on new projects (or renewal of ongoing contracts) occur before the meeting, in formal ad hoc committees formed by the relationship manager responsible for the region or country where the project is supposed to be implemented, and two colleagues who have been invited to assess the project and give their opinion. If they agree about its pertinence and adequacy, the team leader is also consulted, particularly in relation to budget and available resources. Thus, the consultation made during the team meeting was more a way of formalising the decisions made by the ad hoc committee and by the team leader, rather than an actual assessment
of the projects presented. However, meeting participants could present objections, in which case the project would be discussed again during the meeting. Yet this was not the case in the meeting I am describing here.

Since KiA did not have any sort of call for applications, with procedures and deadlines defined beforehand and accessible to the general public, projects normally originate from organisations and people in the South who are somehow connected to the KiA network. Some of the relationship managers told me they sometimes stimulated partners, or simply people from the “South” they know and trust, to present projects that fit the organisation’s guidelines. However, they reported that the initiative of applying for KiA support could also come from the partners themselves. In any case, many of the relationship managers I interviewed stressed the importance of personal relationships, built through many years of cooperation, to have access to the organisation’s resources.

In contrast to the brief formality of confirming the approval of new projects, point 5 on the schedule, the discussion of the travel report presented by a relationship manager who had recently visited Bolivia and Brazil was the longest section of the meeting. The format of the discussion could be compared to an academic seminar, with the report analysed, appraised and criticised as a paper. Participants asked for clarification and more information on some points, criticised style and minor language mistakes, and made comments and suggestions concerning both contents and format of the document. However, as I mentioned in chapter III, travel reports are authorial pieces and peers’ opinions may or may not be accepted by the author. After the final editing, the last draft of the report was officially deposited for filing by the secretaries, normally a few days after its official presentation in the team meeting. Thus, it became a subsidiary for future decisions about the region visited and an official KiA document.
The third aspect of the team meeting that is important to analyse here relates to the invocation of broader panoramas of the network to legitimise opinions, measures and decisions. During the meeting, relationship managers, team leader, secretaries and communication and fundraising professionals not only defend and perform their own positions inside KiA hierarchy, but some of them also represent actors outside the organisation’s ranks. Polarisations, agreements and disagreements occurring during the discussions were related to positions and interests that reach far beyond the limits of the organisation team. Despite the team leader’s time management, the final sections of the meeting were less formal and more open to digressions and improvisation, allowing for clearer insight on the variety of positions at issue.

The discussion with the ICCO representative, who arrived right after the travel report had been presented, unfolded around the new managerial techniques to be implemented after the establishment of the Alliance, especially the so-called “chain approach” and the decentralisation of the organisation, with the creation of regional offices in specific regions and continents. These same points would be a most substantial item on the agenda of the meeting that occurred about 6 months later, in Salvador, which I will describe in the next section. The “chain approach” is the privileged method adopted by the ICCO Alliance in its 2006 Operational Plan. It addresses the development of determined areas or groups based mainly in four principles: (1) involvement of different actors that are judged relevant in that context; (2) construction of consensus among these actors about the goals to be fulfilled; (3) cooperation between different levels (international agencies, local NGOs, companies, local governments, etc); and (4) complementarities of the roles played by the different actors involved. Although the objective of the presentation was merely informative, since the main decisions on these issues had already been made in the higher spheres of ICCO and KiA, some of the relationship managers demonstrated their discontent.
with the new methods. Their position could be summarised as follows: the “chain approach” was based on a strong emphasis on themes, in spite of long-term relationships established with trustworthy partners in “South”. This approach contradicted consolidated KiA practices, which privileged relationships and the partners’ choices and themes. In relation to decentralisation, relationship managers had questions and complaints regarding the establishment of regional offices, which could make the bureaucratic pathway between donors and receivers longer, more complex and opaque. This measure could make their efforts to create proximity between the parishes in the Netherlands and partners in the South even more difficult.

The discussion of the budget for 2007 started immediately after the ICCO staff member had left the room. The figures the team leader presented were received by the relationship managers with profound disappointment and a lot of complaints. The drastic decrease in KiA income and the uncertainties in relation to the new Alliance meant a reduction in available resources. These were not only insufficient for starting new projects and partnerships, but would also clearly result in cutbacks and interruptions of ongoing contracts. Relationship managers’ strong reactions led to a polarisation between their position – defending the partners’ interests and trying to avoid cutbacks – and that of the team leader, who represented the KiA higher managerial committee that distributed resources among teams and departments. At a certain point, when disagreements had reached a peak, the team leader interrupted the discussion, on the grounds that they were running out of time, and promised to invite the director of the organisation and chair of the committee that elaborated KiA’s budget to explain the cuts and reductions from a broader perspective.

The team leader’s explicit reference to a superior and the relationship managers’ constant invocation of their partners demonstrate how broader panoramas of the network permeate actual oppositions and
polarisations. Moreover, they exemplify how the difference between encounters with the “other” and encounters about the “other” are much more difficult to delineate in practice than in theory, as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. Although the partners from the “South” were not present at the meeting, polarisation between members of the same team was justified by the relationship managers, as their defence of their partners’ interests. As I will suggest in the following sections, in the mission and development encounters I attended during my fieldwork, people were always representing somebody else, conjuring images about the “other” who benefits from the enterprise.

The last point of the schedule, the discussion of the procedures for the program connecting local communities and projects abroad, brought the church public into the discussion. The person from the communication department asked for themes, narratives and pictures to include in the liturgical suggestions for the ZWO services to be scheduled for 2007. One relationship manager ironically commented that without money, they would not have anything to offer for church activities. Subsequent discussions about the best procedures to promote and control direct partnerships between parishes and projects placed the team and the KiA within a broader panorama, as an intermediary in relationships whose scope is much broader than the limits of the office. The latter involve a complex variety of actors: churchgoers, pastors, regional synods, local committees, on the one hand; and NGOs, churches, target groups and Southern networks, on the other hand.

The final aspect of the team meeting that is important to analyse relates to the way power was distributed and exercised, permeating all discussions and points on the agenda. Decisions and practical results of the meeting depended on a complex balance. On the one hand, the distribution of power along the different levels of the network obeys a more or less fixed structure, based on organisational rules and circulation of resources. In the team meeting, this type of institutional power
was expressed through the mobilisation of micro-level mediators – rituals, rules, arrangements, or even an announcement on a TV screen – to invest the meeting with the capacity to authorise documents as official views and empower them with organisational efficacy. Ultimately, it is this sort of power that translates experiences and encounters into the official principles and policies. This sort of institutional power is embodied by the team leader, who represented the higher circles of the organisations. His practical means for exercising power during the meeting involved control of time and procedures. This point will be further developed in the following sections.

On the other hand, the objections and resistance of the relationship managers point to the existence of a different and often contradictory form of power. Personal experiences, regular contacts with partners and the constant proximity with the “other”, inherent to their work and position, allowed relationship managers to question institutional decisions based on figures or local politics, as demonstrated by discussions about the budget and about the Alliance, respectively. The needs of the “far-away other” are the ultimate sources of legitimacy for an agenda of improvement and, therefore, personal experiences and knowledge of their desires and expectations may be a source of power that can be effective at different points throughout the network. Thus, the meeting could be analysed as the clash (and accommodation), inside one of KiA’s departments, of these two different types of power. Final decisions and the balance of power achieved are not only the result of a rigid and structural configuration, shaped by resources and ecclesiastical and governmental politics. They also depend on access to convincingly “real” needs of the “other”, which leaves some room for negotiations beyond hard institutional power. This idea will be further developed in the following sections.
3. ICCO Alliance encounters its partners

The meeting in Salvador

In April 2007, the ICCO Alliance brought its entire list of partner organisations in Brazil together for a meeting in the city of Salvador. During three days, some dozens of representatives of partners, a delegation of nine staff members from different ranks of ICCO and KiA, and a group of external experts invited to observe and comment gathered in a Catholic venue on the famous beach of Itapoã. They discussed ICCO Alliance action in Brazil for the coming years. The main goals of the meeting were: (1) explaining the forging of the ICCO Alliance to Brazilian partners; (2) clarifying the outcomes of the new Operational Plan (one of the documents I analysed in chapter III); (3) consulting partners on the general plans and strategies of ICCO and KiA within the country; (4) discussing the long term implementation of a new agenda for decentralisation and shared responsibilities with the “South”; and (5) discussing the policy document for Brazil.

There is not enough room here for an extensive description of the many aspects of the Alliance network in Brazil that became clear over the three days that the meeting lasted. Thus, I will use a narrative of the first evening, which anticipated most of the tensions and negotiations that took place along the whole event, as a way to introduce the main points of my argument. This narrative will be complemented by some observations made in the two days that followed.

The meeting in Salvador started with a speech by the chair of the Alliance delegation, the head of one of the Alliance’s thematic programs. He welcomed all participants, listed the objectives of the event, as mentioned above, and summarily introduced the main changes in
policies and strategies of the ICCO Alliance in Brazil that would be discussed over the following days. His talk, further developed in a longer presentation the next morning, highlighted the link between the direct goals of the meeting and changes in Dutch government policies concerning development cooperation. He gave especial attention to the implementation of the new methodological framework described in the Operational Plan. In his view, the “chain approach” and the decentralisation of decision-making were means to make cooperation more effective, responding to the stricter rules imposed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for assessment of the quantitative balance between inputs and outputs in development initiatives.

As the chair of the Alliance delegation and the highest representative of the ICCO hierarchy present in Salvador, he performed the role of official host of the event. In this opening speech, he welcomed guests and expressed his appreciation for the fact that they all had managed to respond to the invitation. Two days later, in the last plenary, he was the one responsible for pronouncing the closing words, thanking participants for their contributions and summarising and assessing the main results of the meeting. Except for a few questions and comments that he made in some of the sessions, whenever he addressed the participants he was sitting at a table placed in front of the audience, while the facilitators and other presenters were always standing and walking around the room, where most of the time people were seated in a circle. This position gave an official and formal character to his interventions. Furthermore, that was his first time in Brazil and he was the only member of the Dutch delegation addressing the plenary in English, with an interpreter who translated his words, followed him around and translated presentations and discussions for him.

His inexperience with Brazilian issues and his lack of command of the language certainly contributed in creating a significant distance be-
tween him and his guests. The need for an interpreter for his not so frequent interventions and his formal way of addressing the audience, in contrast to other presenters, created some difficulty and awkwardness in his interactions with representatives of the Brazilian partner organisations. This general feeling of distance was reflected in the way the participants referred to him in small talk and conversations during breaks: the chefão (big boss).

After the opening speech rendered by the head of the Alliance delegation, the two Brazilian professionals hired to facilitate the meeting took over. They began by proposing an experiential group activity to get people acquainted with each other and to increase solidarity and cooperation. It consisted of walking around the room greeting the other participants in both usual and less usual, comical ways determined by one of the facilitators, who was playing the guitar and singing. Every time he stopped singing, participants were supposed to share a few words, in pairs, expressing their expectations regarding the meeting and relating whatever anecdotes they had on their relationship with ICCO.

After this icebreaker, there were three more points on the evening’s schedule. The first was the interactive elaboration of two lists, one listing all the conditions that would be necessary for the event’s success and another suggesting what should be avoided to achieve that same goal. The main points emerging in the former were: objectivity, transparency, respect for different positions, clearness, openness and full knowledge about what the Alliance had already decided and what could still be changed in the documents to be discussed. The negative list mentioned: unilateral views and positions, repetitive interventions, delays in resuming activities after coffee breaks and answering mobile phones during the meeting.

The next activity was the presentation of the schedule of the next two days, prepared by the facilitators in consultation with ICCO. The pre-
sentation also included the election of a person to represent partner organisations within the committee that would provide daily assessments of the progress of the discussions and make whatever changes became necessary in the schedule of activities. Some disagreement about the proposed election procedures led to a long, hard discussion about the very nature of the meeting, unleashing conflicts and clashes that marked the whole event, as I will describe in the following paragraphs. On the one hand, some of the Brazilian participants, particularly those representing the big, highly professionalised and highly politicised NGOs, attributed a lot of importance to positions on the evaluating committee, insofar as it was the only opportunity offered partner organisations to have some effective power on decisions related to the meeting schedule. Thus, they wanted better elaborated election procedures, with more transparency, more time to negotiate candidacies and some room for a proper presentation of the candidates, since the meeting was just beginning and most people had not yet gotten to know each other. On the other hand, the Dutch delegation apparently tended to see the election more as a formality and the committee was not considered important enough to justify time-consuming discussions and procedures for the election.

Organisers’ resistance in accepting partners’ proposals to change election procedures triggered questions about the format of the event. Brazilian organisations wanted to know exactly when there would be room for the discussion of the new methodologies and documents and, more important, to which extent their critical comments would really be taken into account. They manifested their suspicions that the meeting was only a means to legitimise, as democratic and decentralised, a package of decisions that had already been made in the Netherlands without the partners’ participation. Thus, the election was taken as an example confirming their suspicions, since the ICCO Alliance refused to accept partners’ demands regarding something as trivial as an election for an ad hoc committee.
One of the ICCO delegation members calmly but firmly reminded everybody that the ICCO Alliance was the organizer of the event, and therefore, its delegation had the final word on how to proceed. He explained that the chain approach, the main change in the Alliance’s methods at issue in the meeting, had already been definitively adopted, as stated in the Operational Plan approved by the Dutch government. The general frame of the action in Brazil, as explained in the ICCO policy document for the country, would not change structurally although questions about it would be welcome the next morning, from 10.45 to 12.30, in the plenary session coordinated by the head of the ICCO delegation. Then he clarified that the contribution the Alliance expected from partners was to be formed by their views and ideas about the implementation of the chain approach in relation to the Brazilian situation as a whole and to their specific organizational contexts. The core of the action would not be negotiated. With the remark that time was precious, he said that despite the protests, the election would proceed as planned. Reluctantly, everybody voted.

The long debate around the election caused a deviation from original plans and an accumulated delay of about one hour in the schedule. The words of the ICCO representative, reminding how precious time was and stipulating an appropriate and precise moment for the questions that were being raised (from the point-of-view of the organizers) at the wrong moment, represented an attempt to regain control of routines and to prevent long digressions and improvisations. Finally, then, the participants proceeded to the last activity of that evening: a “spiritual moment” led by the representative of an organization supported by the KiA missionary program. It began with a Brazilian religious song that was very popular in the ecumenical movement[97]. The lyrics invite people to entrar na roda (join the circle), work together and transform

[97] The name of the song is “Momento Novo” (New Moment) and the main image in the lyrics is that of God calling people to walk side by side and together build this new moment.
the world. A circle was formed and people were invited to close their eyes and think about the face of one person who motivates them to go on with their fight against injustice. After a few moments in silence, the coordinator invited people to raise an arm to point to “every corner of Brazil” and speak aloud the name of this person. Common names – João, Severino, José, Maria, Aparecida – with no last name popped up in the group, names of ordinary people (gente do povo), in the words of the leader. The “spiritual moment” ended with another song, a popular composition by Dorival Caymmi, about fishermen going to the sea in their small boats, praying for good fish. Caymmi comes originally from Bahia and many of his lyrics refer to life on the coast sometimes mentioning Itapoã, the beach where the meeting was held. This was the end of the official program of the first evening.

Between sameness and otherness

In order to analyse the encounter in Salvador, I will highlight two different and competing images related to otherness being constantly conjured by organisers and participants. The first was visible in the experiential activities, in the rhetoric of partnership and cooperation, in the common commitment celebrated during spiritual moments (they took place every day) and in the images of unity and solidarity: we are all on the same side, colleagues struggling together to improve the lives of our common “other”. The central image, here, is sameness and continuity between the different parties of the meeting, produced in relation to Marias and Severinos, whose benefit is the ultimate goal approximating Northern donors and Southern NGOs.

The second image focused on otherness rather than on sameness, establishing a clear-cut boundary between the two groups represented in the meeting. It created an opposition between organisations in
the “South” and the cooperation agency in the “North”, mobilising a series of overlapping dichotomous images and stereotypes: Europe (Holland) x South America (Brazil), Dutch culture x Brazilian culture, givers x receivers, rich x poor, and so on. This clear image of difference was not only explicit in the conflicts that broke out, but was also implicit in the format of the event, in which the organisers – the Dutch delegation – hosted some dozens of partners that, as guests, were supposed to accept the terms of the encounter promoted by the hosts. In Salvador, the opposition hosts/guests (organisers/participants) governed the practicalities of the distribution of power during the meeting. It overlapped with the opposition givers/receivers.

The two groups present in Salvador enacted these images of identity or difference in their own specific ways. The Brazilian organisations, among which the representatives of the big NGOs immediately took over the position of spokespersons for the whole group, expressed difference in relation to the Alliance delegation through the images of Brazilian culture, people and poverty that they evoked, acting as their authorised representatives. This evocation of the target of their organisations’ actions occurred not only in spiritual moments, but also during discussions and meetings, especially vibrant when participants attempted to make their position stronger and more legitimate in divergences and confrontations with the representatives of the ICCO Alliance. Moreover, making use of traditional repertoires of Brazilian leftist social movements, they sometimes claimed for themselves the position of the oppressed and excluded from power, while the Alliance was referred to as the “cash holders” (*donos da grana*), as I often heard in informal (and sometimes rather conspiratorial) talks during the breaks. They stressed their contiguity to the delegation’s “other”, performing this role and stressing the distinction between the powerful givers from the “North” and the poor and powerless receivers in the “South”. At these moments, they embodied
Brazilian poverty and the meeting was enacted as an encounter with the other.

However, in other moments, they evoked people and topics related to poverty and to the work they perform in their own organisations in order to produce a sense of unity in relation to the objectives of network action as a whole. Poor people in Brazil, thus, could also be evoked as a sign of the existence of a common “other”, people that depend on the concerted efforts of mission and development professionals. At these moments, claims for power and influence on decision-making processes related to the network were linked to professionalization, efficiency and partnership with their Dutch “colleagues”. Their plea, then, was to make the meeting an encounter of professionals discussing a common “other”. Thus, their engagement (Ingold, 1993: 220) in the meeting oscillated between the embodiment of Brazilian “otherness” and the performance of shared efficiency and professionalism.

The leaders of the Dutch delegation addressed images of difference and identity from another perspective. They fluctuated between the discourse of partnership, which was the motive of the meeting, and an appeal to the binomial organisers/participants which they employed whenever they needed to justify the fact that it was they who had the final word regarding issues discussed and procedures put into practice. The performance of Alliance hospitality, with the head of the Alliance delegation in the leading role, framed the experience of encounter as a reunion of partners with shared objectives who would together discuss how to implement the newly designed methods to achieve them, yet within the terms proposed by the ICCO Alliance, as meeting organiser and host. Activities should follow a predetermined schedule conducted by the facilitators, but controlled by Alliance staff. The paradoxes implicit in this proposition encapsulate the switch between the images of sameness and otherness enacted by the members of the Alliance: on the one hand, they genuinely intended to create an atmosphere
of unity and commonality with partners; on the other hand, the differentiated positions of givers and receivers was implicit in the performance of hospitality and consequent authority over meeting procedures.

These two different ways of invoking identification and difference point to the core aspect of negotiating otherness at issue in this chapter. Beyond the grandiloquent theological and moral statements present in official documents, negotiating otherness is related to the diverse ways of engaging with actual encounters in a way that the paradoxical images of sameness and otherness are temporarily accommodated together in liturgical forms. *Mutatis mutandis*, the idea of engagement here resonates with the processes Ingold described in relation to perception “as the ongoing activity of the whole person, moving around in – and exploring – an environment, and seeking out what it affords in the context of current projects” (1993: 220, italics in the original). The cosmologies expressed in the official repertoires of the documents are accepted or contested, reproduced or transformed according to the various micro-level relationships developed during encounters between whole persons engaging in interactions, governed not only by religious or moral rationales, but also by the senses and the emotions. That is why a deeper understanding of the network can only be achieved through an analysis that goes beyond its theological and philosophical bases.

In the Salvador meeting, a variety of factors led to the contesting of the proposed accommodation of paradoxes inherent to the meeting format. First of all, the distance established between the head of the Alliance delegation as the main character of the host/guest performance and the Brazilian partners present at the meeting generated a gap between the tangible experience of interacting with him and the message he was trying to convey. This distance, expressed in the image of the “big boss”, was constructed through bodily attitude, small and prosaic interactions, and the fact that he does not speak the country’s language. His way of engaging with the moment of the encounter, mediated by an
interpreter, speaking behind a table that served to differentiate his position, contradicted the very images of partnership, decentralisation and horizontal relationships he was supposed to support.

Thus, it was not only the previous existence of a structural difference between givers and receivers that inexorably led to the contestation of the terms proposed by the Alliance. A point of equilibrium between images of sameness and otherness, whose formulations seemed to be inherent to the meeting, had to be re-produced in loco, by whole persons engaging with the encounter. This delicate balance would be found not only in the official discussions and dialogues, but also (and perhaps primarily) in the microscopic dynamics of being together. One more ethnographic example can clarify this point.

The head of the Alliance delegation, acting as host in a country he had never been to, could not help but delegating all practicalities of the hosting position to somebody else. The details of the meeting were dealt with by CESE staff members, a large NGO based in Salvador, in direct contact with one of ICCO’s most experienced relationship managers linked to Brazil, also the meeting’s main practical organiser. The power of micro-level personal commitments and debts (in the Maussian sense), as created in the daily exchanges between hosts and guests, was therefore not accessible to the head of the Alliance delegation. The empathy, solidarity and engagement that could result from the liturgies of hospitality were solemnly ignored by the Alliance. In the end, CESE’s role led to the creation of other connections and empathies, instead of those that would have been important for the successful accomplishment of that delicate balance between images of sameness and otherness I mentioned above. The inclusion of another actor created other empathies and relationships that had nothing to do with Alliance partnerships.

For instance, the dainty banquet CESE organised for the last evening of the event was a celebration of Bahia in all its splendour. The beautiful “ethnic” decoration transforming the sober atmosphere of the Catholic
venue, the delicious and “exotic” flavours of the typical dishes and the caipirinhas made of tropical fruits rendered the sensational experience of hospitality into an encounter with Bahia, phrased in the grammar of cultural difference. Talking to the participants during and after the banquet, I encountered many enthusiastic opinions about the way CESE performed its task as organiser, almost invariably followed by the remark that their staff members were the real hosts. In my field notes, I wrote down this phrase pronounced by one of the participants: “the baianos (people from Bahia) did everything. ICCO has just footed the bills”.

Alliance authority to control meeting procedures was grounded on the difference between hosts and guests. The delegation, however, failed to perform hospitality properly and to mobilise the power of the experience of being together in order to play a role in defining the terms of the negotiation of difference and identification. Moreover, its delegating of practicalities to another actor led to accusations of one of the capital sins in missionary work: giving nothing but money, without personal involvement in the work. I will address this point more extensively in the next chapter, but for now it may be enough to say that my observations on the circulation of money through the KiA network suggest that money may have a dubious character, often obfuscated by (and sometimes even disguised amidst) other relationships and invested with other meanings. The exoticism of the banquet, which could perhaps be defined as “meridionalism” – as compared to Saïd’s orientalism (1978) – conjured meanings that could not be even remotely linked to the Alliance. It exposed, in the broad Bahian daylight, the somehow embarrassing monetary relationship linking givers and receivers.

As I stated in the introduction to this chapter, cultural or ethnic differences should not be taken for granted as a way to explain encounters, but should rather be approached as ingredients cast out to negotiate oscillation between images of continuity and rupture. In order to achieve a better understanding of this negotiation, I would not only focus on the
grammar of difference that is performed in missionary and development encounters, but also address the continuous character of their transnational networks. In the previous section, I described how polarisations within the same team took shape when people occupying specific positions in the KiA hierarchy took over the role of representing other people involved in the network. A similar process will be addressed in the next section, in which I will describe an internal meeting of one of the organisations KiA supports. In both cases, although cultural or ethnic differences are not at issue, polarisations and negotiations of sameness and otherness developed around other repertoires and topics.

In the case of the meeting in Salvador, cultural/ethnical differences between Dutch and Brazilian people should not be taken as a fait accompli capable of explaining the characteristics of the encounter. In my point-of-view, they are just one more component mobilised by the participants in their attempt to make sense of the meeting, whose arena is a continuous world in which sameness and otherness are constantly negotiated. It is not possible to analyse all the complex interactions in the encounter by simply opposing the Dutchness of the delegation to the Brazilianness of the organisations, since a number of representatives of the partner organisations were Dutch people living in Brazil and managing local NGOs, and one member of the delegation was a Brazilian ICCO employee. Not to mention that more than half of the members of the Alliance delegation had lived for many years in Brazil (two of them had grown up in the country), and thus were able, for instance, to sing Brazilian popular songs by heart at evening meetings, over a beer savoured in the garden kiosk. Moreover, the moment in which this grammar of cultural difference was most explicitly used was during the banquet celebrating Bahia, whose strong regional accent was equally “exotic” for Dutch and Brazilian participants, a majority of the latter coming from other regions of the country.

Finally, the power dynamics I exposed in the previous section are even more explicit in the example described here. On the one hand, the
opposition guests x hosts expressed the institutional power the Alliance had, based on the direction of the flow of resources and its position as giver. Moreover, Alliance representatives constantly invoked the “real donors” – the Protestant church members and the Dutch government – to justify some contested measures and aspects of the documents they presented to the partners. As in the team meeting, they exercised their power through control over time and procedures, avoiding digressions and containing improvisation. On the other hand, the experience of the meeting and the different ways of engaging with the encounter reveal a different form of power. Its legitimacy is based on personal experiences and on proximity with the “real other”, which in turn becomes the partners’ main source of power in negotiating with Alliance representatives.

4. Encounters in São Paulo

Corrente Viva

Before describing one of the many meetings I participated in, during my fieldwork in São Paulo, I will briefly introduce Corrente Viva – CV (Living “Chain”) explaining some of the conditions underlying the encounter. CV is a network of NGOs and organisations active in impoverished neighbourhoods of the gigantic city of São Paulo. It was founded in the 1990s as an attempt to find a new basis for a network of organisations that used to be supported by a project known as Samuel Fonds, connected to the IER diaconate in São Paulo. A few years after this project came to an end, one of its former employees took over the task of gathering the organisations once again, under the auspices of KiA. He created an organisational format that aimed at facilitating cooperation, mutual strengthening and
exchange of experiences and know-how among the members. This initiative led to the CV.

Although the *Samuel Fonds* network was a starting point, the new organisation was never connected to the IER and since its beginning it was built on rather different grounds. Its founder was active in different arenas related to development and social action and preferred to articulate many different and rather vast networks. Thus, through his influence and from the very start, CV assimilated organisations that had no connection to the IER. Furthermore, he also managed to diversify the sources of financial support for CV activities, although most of these sources operate on an ad hoc basis. The most guaranteed and substantial contribution came from KiA. In 2007, during the time I was doing my fieldwork in São Paulo, the CV network brought together some twenty organisations spread throughout three zones of São Paulo (South, South-West and East), which formed the so-called *elos*, the links of the living chain.

Under the general mission of constituting a “meeting point” for small organisations and NGOs, CV provided opportunities for their mutual empowerment. Its practical and short-term goals varied considerably during its early years of existence, reflecting the different demands of its members. The most successful programs were related to the personal development of the managers (*gestores/gestoras*) of local organisations. In CV vocabulary, which was inspired by anthroposophical repertoires, personal development meant not only development of social and professional skills, but a holistic empowerment of the person encompassing many different levels: psychological, social, communitarian, spiritual, etc[^98]. The expression “taking care of those who take care” was often used to refer to this aspect of CV.

[^98]: As far as I could observe, anthroposophy’s influence on CV was never a problem to the Protestant KiA and the parishes that had a special relationship with the Brazilian network. I attribute this fact to two main factors: (1) CV’s anthroposophical orientation was not an official policy, but rather a matter of daily influence through some members of the technical team; and (2) CV was enrolled in the world-diaconate program in which religious orientation was not an issue (at least in theory). Moreover, I believe the subtle and diplomatic manners of CV’s founder, who was the person who was primarily responsible for contacts with KiA, also contributed to sidestepping potential religious disagreements.
In addition to personal development, mentioned in all my interviews with the local managers as the major gain they obtained through association with CV, some ad hoc “task forces” set up to tackle urgent common issues were considered very successful. For instance, the so-called “task force construction” brought many different organisations together to raise funds for the improvement of buildings and facilities. “Task force education” handled the issue of access to proper professionalising education for teachers and nurses working in the many childcare facilities connected to CV. During my fieldwork, however, CV was undergoing a deep process of restructuration and redefinition of its mission and goals and there was no specific task force active at that moment.

The CV organisational model was the main topic of the thorough and exhausting discussions during the restructuration process to which the meeting I will describe below belongs. It consisted, up until this time, of a couple of committees and positions. The most structured and effective of these committees was the so-called “technical team”, composed of eight professionals, most of whom worked part-time, hired by CV to take care of specific tasks. The team was composed of a full-time team coordinator, a part-time financial manager, a part-time communications manager, two full-time secretaries, a full-time and a part-time fundraiser (the latter was the founder of the CV) and a full-time development agent, responsible for visiting and supporting local organisations on a more frequent basis. Although not all of them were officially employed by CV and some had flexible contracts, members of the technical team were considered CV’s permanent staff. With the exception of the secretaries, they all had university degree and most of them were originally from intellectualised middle and upper middle class families.

Besides the “technical team”, some other committees played an important role in the organisational structure of CV. The most active and organised ones were the fundraising team and the communication team. They were formed by managers (gestores/gestoras) of local organisations
and enjoyed the assistance of one or more members of the technical team. The local managers were employees of their own organisations and the time and energy they dedicated to CV’s activities was done on a volunteer basis.

Furthermore, each of the regional elos had a coordinator, who had been chosen among the managers of the organisations in the region. The three coordinators of the elos and the technical team formed a managerial committee called “shared management” (gestão compartilhada), which would ideally coordinate the implementation of CV actions. Furthermore, an assembly gathering representatives of all organisations linked to the network made decisions regarding strategies and long-term CV policies. Lack of interest in partaking of the decision-making processes within the assembly and the ineffectiveness of “shared management” were pointed out as the main motives behind the deep restructuration that CV was going through during the time of my fieldwork.

The search for a new organisational model that would be simultaneously efficient and decentralised was the main point of the discussions. The format previously adopted by CV had horizontality as its cornerstone, and the technical team made considerable effort to involve the local organisations and their managers in decision-making processes. The model I described above, with an assembly and the shared management committee, was created to facilitate local managers access to decision-making processes related to the CV network as a whole. The role of the technical team should be restricted to providing help and assistance, rather than leadership and decision-making. In practice, however, the model did not create the desired horizontality, and the restructuration was aimed at finding new forms to manage the CV, substituting the shared management committee.

Almost everybody agreed about the failure of the model and its main cause. There was considerable consensus that CV daily management had become too heavy a burden for a small group of local managers who
voluntarily dedicated time and attention to accept the responsibility of co-
ordinating the elos and, therefore, joining the shared management com-
mittee. Beyond this recognition, however, opinions varied quite a bit. The
most common pitfalls listed in the endless meetings to discuss the restruc-
turation of CV management were: excess of attention to the daily needs
of the local organisations and lack of practical and tangible results of CV
initiatives; excess of long and time-consuming discussions and negotia-
tions at CV; lack of interest and commitment from the local managers;
low educational level of the local managers does not enable them to cope
with the complexities of the network; and lack of ability of the technical
team to understand the reality of the grassroots organisations. These long
discussions and sometimes fierce disagreements reached their summit in
a meeting in April 2007, which I will describe as an illustration of the
processes I have been discussing in this chapter, related to experiences and
practices of encounters within the KiA network.

When I left CV, in July 2007, its managerial crisis seemed still far from
reaching its end. In my last visits to the organisation’s headquarters, an
outbuilding annex to its founder’s home shared with another organisa-
tion, I could clearly perceive that a structural impasse was still blocking
practical decision-making and actions. For most people, the future of the
network seemed rather uncertain. I talked to many local managers and
members of the technical team who manifested their disappointment with
the exhaustive process of restructuration, sometimes making this explicit
and on other occasions repeating countless anecdotes about the “good
old times” when “CV did real work” and “nós botávamos a mão na
massa”[99]. In 2008, a KiA relationship manager told me that KiA had
helped CV to buy its own headquarters, but that the funding contract
would not be renewed.

99 This expression in Portuguese means, literally, “to put one’s hands in the dough”. It is widely used
in Brazil, especially in NGO circles, to refer to practical work, directly connected to the broader
objectives of the organisations, as opposed to bureaucratic work.
In April 2007, CV organised a meeting to plan activities for the subsequent year. All members of the technical team and representatives of most of local organisations connected to CV gathered for two days in a venue located in a rural area in Arujá, a small city near São Paulo. Although the official objective of the meeting was planning, everyone agreed that a solution for managerial problems should be sought. The intention was to think together about ways to restructure the network. The meeting, thus, ended up as an opportunity for thorough reflection on CV restructuration and a day of follow-up was arranged within a few weeks for the planning. In the words of the facilitators that the technical team chose to coordinate the event, CV was a heavy, homely caterpillar that needed to become a light and beautiful butterfl y. The objective of the meeting was to facilitate this metamorphosis, helping the butterfl y to get rid of its heavy and now useless cocoon.

This image was the leading metaphor, repeated on countless occasions during the long sequence of group discussions, plenary sessions, experiential activities and informal talks during the breaks and meals that filled the schedule of those two days in Arujá. The attempt to reach a consensual position on the problems affecting CV was at the centre of the concerns. This common position would enable a search for solutions that everybody could consider satisfactory.

The “shared management” model was the core of almost all discussions. The idea behind this way of managing the network encapsulated the main problems CV was facing at that moment, polarising opinions and positions that gradually led to the crystallisation of an opposition between the local managers and the technical team. In the team’s opinion, shared management was not working for two main
reasons. First, the majority of the local managers were not really committed to the network and did not want to help carry the burden of its daily management. Second, some of the people who took over important positions in the network did not have enough education and training to handle all the complex tasks that the shared management model demanded.

From the local organisations’ point-of-view, CV had became a too heavy burden to be carried. Their representatives complained about the long and time-consuming meetings that, in their opinion, lacked practical and effective results. For some of them, the advantages of belonging to the CV were not clear enough, especially in the last few months, when no practical “task force” was active and no tangible result could be envisaged in the short term.

In the harsher moments of disagreement, some local managers raised the issue of payment, suggesting that the technical team had more responsibility for daily management of the network because of their salaries. Team members retorted by asserting that their obligations lay in promoting personal development and assisting the organisations, and that the local managers were shirking the responsibilities that come along with horizontal management.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, although the people present at the meeting in Arujá and the practical issues discussed were not directly connected to CV’s relationship with KiA, contrasting some processes may reveal regularities and similarities that help to understand the network as a whole. At the time of the meeting, CV was one of KiA’s Brazilian partners, a sort of partnership which not only included the latter’s financial support, but also meant that objectives expressed in KiA policy documents were to be implemented and updated through CV daily practice. This sort of link had to be constructed through actual mechanisms and mediators that guaranteed that CV action was in sync with KiA objectives.
In this sense, participants and discussions in Arujá, at least to some extent, reverberated broader processes at issue in the network. This reverberation, however, was not mechanical. As I have pointed out in the example of the meeting in Salvador, actual encounters *in loco* between whole persons engaged with each other play a determinant role in the course of the negotiations.

Evocation of broader panoramas of the network, as in the other examples presented in this chapter, played an important role in giving shape to these negotiations. On the one hand, members of the technical team, especially the CV founder, intervened many times in discussions reminding the group that the CV had obligations and contracts with KiA and other sponsors and they ought to solve their problems as soon as possible, in order to be able to honour their commitments. On the other hand, local managers constantly referred to their proximity to the target groups and their experiences in São Paulo’s *periferias* to legitimise their opinions and claims.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that the polarisation between the technical team and local managers was not clearly given before the beginning of meeting, but it became increasingly explicit during activities. As I had observed in Salvador, the ways people engage with encounter, to use Ingold’s words, were an important part of the negotiation of sameness and otherness that ended up characterising the discussions and the search for possible solutions for the existing impasse. The contents and the symbolic repertoires cast out to negotiate these images of identification and difference varied considerably in the two meetings. In Salvador, the difference invoked could be roughly described as creating an opposition between the rich Dutch givers and the poor Brazilian receivers. In Arujá, the image of difference between technical team and local managers had different bases. Some of the local managers mentioned, for instance, that almost all members of the technical team lived in nice middle class neighbour-
hoods, and only a few of them go to the *periferias* often, while the majority of the local managers lived in the neighbourhoods where they carried out their projects. Educational level was also a critical point, invoked by both sides to stress their differences.

Despite this variation in the repertoires invoked to establish difference and polarisation, in both meetings the production of unity and sameness was based precisely on the same principles: the constant reference to a common “other” and to discourses of decentralisation and horizontality. Similarly, the same kind of power play counterposing institutional power and proximity to “other’s” demands and needs that I identified in the meetings in Utrecht and Salvador could also be observed at the CV meeting. One last example can help to analyse the implications of these common points.

One of the most revealing moments of the meeting in Arujá was an activity proposed by facilitators, based on the image of the caterpillar and the butterfly. They developed the metaphor by arguing that as long as the caterpillar is focused on its own hunger, it cannot complete its metamorphosis. It must forget its selfish satisfaction and pay attention to the perfume of the flowers in order to leave its heavy body behind and become the new, light butterfly. Then, people were invited to reflect on their own for a few minutes and think about what, in their own routines and daily activities, would correspond to the perfume of the flowers, associating it with the needs and demands of the poor people “out there”, whose satisfaction could be provided by their organisations’ work. In these moments of silent reflection, they were to make a list of needs concerning their organisations that would motivate them to work and struggle. After a few minutes, people were invited to present their lists to the assembly.

Most of the local managers listed concrete and tangible demands associated with the work they perform. Their rosters contained things like better buildings and equipment, education for childcare teachers
and nurses and strengthening political participation through local social movements. The assignment became rather confusing, however, when one of the members of the technical team added investment in the personal development of local managers to the list. This immediately raised objections in the group, with one of the local managers saying that, although she understood the importance of personal development, this was not a demand coming from the target groups, but an idea imposed on them by the technical team. The answer of the technical team member was that nothing in that list was actually a demand from the target groups, but rather things that the organisations believe are important for the development of the people they work with. Therefore, she did not understand why something that she believed was important for her target group – the local managers – should not be on the list. Since the assignment began to generate confusion, the facilitator decided to proceed to the next point on the agenda.

The dilemmas the activity made explicit eloquently summarise how the negotiation of sameness and otherness overlaps with the paradoxical power play at issue in all encounters I have described in this chapter. Local CV managers, when handling their own projects and organisations in their impoverished neighbourhoods, have their own agendas of improvement to be implemented in the benefit of their own “others”. When interacting with the CV technical team, they participate in the switching back and forth of images of identification and difference, sometimes incorporated as colleagues and others, “othered” as target groups of CV action. Sameness and otherness are negotiated in loco, in the different ways people engage with the encounters.

In relation to power, this example reveals the same contradictory principle I have pointed out in the other examples. On the one hand, there is institutional power based on the flux of resources and
the politics governing larger organisational structures. On the other, there is the power obtained in the direct contact with the people who benefit from the endeavour, whose otherness is always relational and contextually negotiated. The needs and expectations of the “other” – the perfume of the flowers – are the ultimate source of legitimacy of any action; yet it is only institutional power, based on organisational principles and access to resources – the caterpillar’s hunger – that translates disconnected, chaotic and impressionist perceptions based on experiences and contacts with contextual “others” into an organised and ordered agenda of improvement that can be included within larger frames of development cooperation.

5. Conclusion

This chapter addressed daily routines and practices related to the KiA (and ICCO Alliance) network in Brazil. Three different occasions were described: a team meeting in KiA’s headquarters; a meeting organised in Salvador, in which a delegation of staff members from the ICCO Alliance met representatives of Alliance partners in Brazil; and an internal meeting of CV, in which its managerial model was thoroughly discussed.

The analysis of these events highlighted a few issues that are fundamental to understanding how otherness is negotiated in the encounters occurring within the KiA network. First, I analysed how negotiation occurs between whole persons engaging with each other
in actual experiences that occur in a continuous world. Moreover, I showed how specific bureaucratic liturgies mobilise institutional power to organise and consecrate these experiences in official documents.

Second, I approached the issue of power, suggesting that there is a contradictory principle that creates an opposition between institutional power, based mainly on resources and politics, and the power that derives from proximity and experiences with the “other”. Very often, the conflicts that result from this contradiction were visible in the disputes around methods and procedures governing the encounters. While people invested with institutional power were entitled to control schedules and routines, people representing those who will benefit from resources and actions of the network, when necessary, tried to introduce their divergent opinions and issues in the interstices of the structured procedures, relying on improvisation and digressions. Moreover, they often used their proximity to otherness to legitimate their positions and claims.

The third issue approached in my analysis was the constant interchange of images of sameness and otherness that was an important component of the negotiations. In meetings and encounters, people sometimes used images of identification to state that the different positions in the network were actually part and parcel of the same endeavour. In other moments, however, different repertoires were mobilised to highlight the differences between the parties of the encounters, revealing the contextual character of otherness. Furthermore, broader panoramas of the network were also invoked to legitimate positions and opinions.

Finally, the third example suggested that agendas of improvement are an outcome of the combination of the processes described above. Feasible and implementable goals depend on the complex balance between the negotiation of otherness in encounters and the com-
plex contradictory power principle governing practices of mission, diaconate and development.
CHAPTER V

Local parishes: tangible church and tangible action
1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on how mission and diaconate relate to the ritual and financial life of local PKN parishes. While the previous chapters were based on documental and ethnographical data related to KiA’s central office and to projects supported and implemented in Brazil, this chapter builds on ethnographic accounts of local Protestant communities in the Netherlands. A crucial part of the Dutch Protestant mission and world-diaconate centralised in KiA (and the ICCO Alliance) is their connection to parishes and churchgoers, not only as KiA’s main financial backers, but also because the religious meanings attached to its activities are intrinsically dependent upon the ritual life of the local communities. Gifts, campaigns and celebrations bring the main issues associated with mission and diaconate to the agendas of PKN members everywhere in the country. The negotiation of otherness at issue in the endeavour is not only restricted to the offices of professionals in Utrecht, but it is a matter that extends out over the different levels of the church, influencing its organisations and the life of the local parishes.

For the immense majority of the churchgoers, donating money is the only actual connection they have with the missionary and diaconal endeavour of the church. Money, therefore, plays an important role in the processes this chapter addresses. Varied mechanisms stimulate and control the monetary fluxes among the different levels of the church, not only to raise the necessary funds to support KiA action, but also to invest these fluxes with a religious meaning, stimulating the involvement and the commitment of network’s ultimate donors. I will suggest that the involvement and commitment that is sought is directed toward the body and the senses of the church members, insofar as the diverse activities developed in the local communities relating to mission and
world-diaconate seek to promote the sensory and lively experience of otherness. Mission and diaconate in the PKN are not only a matter of intellectual understanding of the missionary and diaconal rationale, or even a simple matter of faith in the principles and goals guiding the enterprise, but also a matter of pursuing an embodied experience of otherness. The main question guiding this chapter, thus, is how otherness becomes a bodily experience in local PKN communities, through the financial and ritual activities related to mission, diaconate and development cooperation.

The chapter is composed of three sections. The first describes the ZWO-commissies, the local-level committees that promote missionary activities throughout the Netherlands. They are the main actors responsible for making the idea of mission and world diaconate come alive in PKN parishes. In addition to providing a description of the main features of the committees and the focus on their relationships with KiA, I will describe two different occasions that exemplify the most important activities they developed: ZWO services and special campaigns.

The second section addresses links between missionary activities and the donation of money. The section briefly introduces some theoretical elaborations on money and gift, and describes the most common pathways the money follows in its transit between the individual donor and KiA, analysing three mechanisms of consecration and purification of the monetary gifts.

Finally, the third section elaborates on the role played by missionary action in the ritual life of the community, analysed from the perspective of body and sensations. The section analyses metaphors of and for (paraphrasing Geertz’s models of and for) the body that simultaneously render the mission tangible to the senses of the churchgoer, and transform the targets of mission and development in sensational forms that mediate the relationship of the church to the global world and the transcendental domain.
This chapter is based mainly on data collected in different cities and villages in the Northern provinces of Groningen, Drenthe and Friesland. As I explained in chapter II, each continent of the globe is associated with a region in the Netherlands and Latin America is connected to the three Northern provinces. This is why all parishes that had a relationship with projects in Brazil and where I did participant observation were located in Drenthe or Friesland. In addition to the more intensive fieldwork in the North between October 2007 and March 2008, I have been intermittently visiting services and campaigns related to mission and diaconate in different regions in the Netherlands since 2005. Data collected on these occasions are also used here.

2. The local church in action

The ZWO-commissies

As I described in chapter II, the official missionary action of the PKN is centrally planned and managed by KiA through church headquarters in Utrecht. Most of the locally organised missionary efforts of PKN parishes consist of supporting initiatives designed in Utrecht, donating money and stimulating churchgoers’ involvement in specific projects abroad.

At the local level, mission, world-diaconate and development cooperation, the activities gathered under the abbreviation “ZWO” (zend- ing, werelddiaconaat and ontwikkelingssamenwerking), are normally managed by committees of laypersons, the so-called ZWO-commissies, which are the most important interlocutors of the centralised missionary and diaconal organisations. Present in almost every PKN parish,
they are the real gear connecting Dutch Protestant missionary action, as it is conceived and implemented by KiA, with the ritual (and financial) life of the communities in the Netherlands.

Their structure and organisation are not fixed nor rigorously regulated at the national level by the church; thus, they may vary a lot from parish to parish. Some common features, however, can be observed in relation to their composition, managerial structure, tasks and activities. I will introduce here some of these characteristics, based on data collected in the communities I visited during my fieldwork. In order to draw a more vivid picture of the activities developed by ZWO committees I will also describe some church services and campaigns I took part in.

ZWO committees are composed of church members, volunteers devote some weekly hours of their time to organising the missionary and diaconal work of their parishes. According to my interviewees, there is no fixed set of requirements or conditions to become a member of a ZWO committee and the most important characteristic of a good candidate is to be an active member of the church. Belonging to one of these committees is seldom considered a desirable or prestigious position. It is quite rare for somebody to voluntarily asks to join the group (‘once in a thousand’, in the words of an interviewee) and new members are most commonly invited by senior committee members. In general, people are expected to remain in the committee for about four years, but the majority of them stay on for much longer than that. Almost everybody I met in the committees I got acquainted with in Friesland and Drenthe had been involved with ZWO activities for more than eight years.

The profile of ZWO committee members may vary, depending on parish characteristics, such as its size, location (in rural or urban areas), province, average income of the neighbourhood it is located in, etc. Almost all those I mention in this chapter were originally from rural areas, are now living in small and middle size cities, and can be considered members of the large Dutch middle class. The majority of them are
women around their fifties who work part-time (sometimes in volunteer work) or are recently retired, with grown children. The few men I encountered were mostly in their sixties and were, with only one exception, recently retired pensioners.

As part of the volunteer work structure of the church, ZWO committees vie with other types of church activities for people’s attention and time (and money, of course). From the point of view of the church member, thus, ZWO activities are one possible choice among a large list of diaconal obligations, which included, for instance, attention to elderly and youth, or support to organisations that provide basic assistance for local poor, undocumented migrants or asylum seekers. As I stated in the introduction to this dissertation, at the local level people do not pay much attention to the distinctions between mission, world-diaconate and development cooperation, and the three branches of the ZWO work are usually considered as one sole category, in opposition to other activities and obligations. Its distinctive characteristic is its orientation towards the far-away “other”, rather than to local, regional or national issues. An interest in involvement in ZWO work, therefore, depends on what is called a “ZWO profile”, which means, above all, some experience with or some connection to “overseas”. People who have lived abroad for some reason, who speak a foreign language, who have relatives living abroad, or even people who simply enjoy travelling show more empathy and interest to the work of the committees and may end up being invited to join them.

Despite the existence of a “ZWO profile”, what happens in many cases is that involvement in missionary work is connected with people’s social networks. For example, one of the most active members of the ZWO committee in Heerenveen, Friesland, was a 54-year-old man who had never left the Netherlands, never lived outside the Frisian province, and did not speak any language other than Frisian and Dutch. He told me that since he got married he had become quite committed to the
diaconal work of the church, occupying many different functions in various committees and in the church council. Although he did not have a “ZWO profile”, he had been invited to become a member of the ZWO committee because one of his best friends, who was the ZWO deacon at that moment, thought that he could be helpful as a member of the committee and that they would have a good time working together.

The number of members of each ZWO committee varies according to the size of the church community and the amount of work the committee is ready to get involved with. In cities or small regions with more than one PKN community, it is common to form only one joint committee involving members from various parishes that develop their projects, campaigns, and activities together. It is also common for regional synods to have their ZWO committees (the *classica*le ZWO-commissie) coordinate activities involving all local committees in the region. The groups I came across during fieldwork all had about ten members, although not every member was involved in every activity developed at each specific moment. I heard, however, about small parishes that, instead of a committee, had only a ZWO deacon who alone dealt with the activities related to mission and world-diaconate in her parish.

There is no fixed rule for the distribution of functions inside the committee, but I have noticed that there are two more or less indispensable positions: the chair, who coordinates the work and, of course, chairs the meetings, and the ZWO deacon, the only person on the committee who is also a member of the church council, responsible for the official connections between the ZWO committee and the council that manages the parish. Depending on their size and activities, the committees may appoint a secretary and a treasurer.

In general, ZWO committees promote a varied range of activities, most of them with two main objectives: raising funds to provide financial support for diaconal and missionary work abroad and promoting activities to engage church members in the experiences and religious
meanings of mission and diaconate. Among the different types of activities linked to these objectives, the following sections will focus on the two that are considered the most important and effective: ZWO church services and the special fundraising campaigns. Before introducing the activities, however, I will summarily describe and analyse the different ways in which local committees relate to the national level of the church and the projects developed abroad.

*Kerk in Actie Interactief* and the free-competition in the “charity market”

ZWO committees connect the local parishes with the broader world of mission and diaconate, which does not immediately mean that all their initiatives are linked to KiA and to missionary guidelines from PKN at the national level. The production and reproduction of the relationships connecting the service organisation centralised in Utrecht and the local PKN communities are not taken for granted and demand some effort on both parts.

On the one hand, there is a widespread feeling among KiA staff that the professionalization and specialisation of their operational methods have caused some difficulties in maintaining proximity and cooperation with the parishes, particularly in comparison to the former missionary organs of the GKN, such as those described in chapter III, in which volunteers from the parishes – the *deputaten* – and professionals from the missionary organs worked together. In almost all my interviews with KiA workers, improving relationships with church members was mentioned as the biggest challenge for the organisation in the coming years. This concern is also present in the Policy Paper for Mission of 2004, analysed in chapter III. Although mission is considered a responsibility of the church as a whole, the document emphasizes that in the division of tasks between national and regional/local levels, KiA is the organisa-
tion that must design and implement the actual work, with the support of the parishes.

On the other hand, within the parishes, most ZWO committee members comment that it is usually easier to get the church public involved in projects and initiatives outside KiA than to engage people in the official projects and campaigns linked to the national organisation. Small-scale projects managed by somebody who is known in the community, quite often involving a member’s relative or a former parish member, seem to be experienced as closer, more concrete and more approachable. Many ZWO committee members explained to me that KiA’s complicated and opaque bureaucracy, although trusted and valued because of its recognised reliability and professionalism, can create feelings of distance and disconnection among churchgoers. Therefore, it can be more difficult to promote KiA projects than private local initiatives. This sometimes motivates local committees to prefer supporting independent actions.

A former chair of the classical ZWO committee of one of the regional Friesland synods shared an anecdote that is a good example of the importance of these initiatives. A few years ago, her regional committee organised a meeting for all local ZWO committees in the area to discuss some common issues with a KiA representative who would be coming from Utrecht especially for the meeting. Because of some problem with the trains, this person did not make it in time and the chair of the meeting, instead of simply sending everybody home, decided to propose an alternative activity. She invited all people gathered there to say something about the activities their local committees organised outside KiA guidance. To her surprise, almost every parish was supporting a parallel project, most of them managed by somebody known in the community.

For a growing number of church members, thus, the traditional domains of Protestant missionary and diaconal organisations became only one more competing possibility in the so-called “charity market” (goede doelen markt). The increasing professionalization required to
operate efficiently in the complex world of international development cooperation, combined with the public’s preference for simple and concrete actions whose outcomes are reachable and tangible without the mediation of complicated bureaucracies made the once “natural” connection between KiA and the Protestant parishes a matter of careful attention and cautiously designed internal campaigns. The main measure to strengthen these connections has been the establishment of the program entitled *Kerk in Actie Interactief*. The objective of the program Church in Action Interactive is to create direct links between specific parishes (and their ZWO committees) in the Netherlands and determined projects and organisations abroad, narrowing the gap between the churchgoers and the partners in the “South”. This is considered the ideal model for the local communities to participate in PKN missionary and diaconal enterprise.

The program stimulates ZWO committees to choose from a list of partners and projects in the continents associated with the region where the parishes are located (see chapter II). Once the partner is chosen, the parish becomes its official supporter for a couple of years. During this period, KiA provides the community with information, pictures and reports about the partner in the South. The ZWO committee uses this material to organise its activities. The partner organisation becomes, thus, the main theme of the local ZWO activities for about three or four years.

Financially, the program is quite peculiar, since the amount of money received by the partner organisation abroad is fixed in a contract that both KiA and the partner sign. Contributions beyond the amount stipulated in the contract may occur only for special and determined goals, but within certain limits and without much incentive from KiA. The main objective of the program is not to increase the partner’s income, but rather to earmark and guarantee the financial contributions from the parish, linking it with tangible and concrete action abroad. In
this sense, *Interactief* is not really about fundraising to fulfil new objectives, but about adding objectives to funds that are already guaranteed by KiA. I will analyse the financial aspects in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

All ZWO committees I mention in this chapter were engaged in an *Interactief* relationship with a partner organisation abroad, most of them in Brazil, but also with some in other parts of the world. Nonetheless, many parishes in the Netherlands do not adhere to the program and do not hold ZWO issues at the top of their agendas. In these cases, their contribution to KiA is restricted to the organisation of a couple of ZWO services per year, following the calendar suggested by PKN national headquarters, which recommends about a dozen of these services per year. Some of the parishes also take part in the official national campaigns promoted by KiA. The most traditional one occurs annually during Lent, addressing a theme chosen by KiA management. Most PKN parishes take part in it, even those which are not very concerned with ZWO activities. Moreover, in cases of humanitarian disasters, ad hoc national fundraising campaigns may also be launched, which are in general quite successful in stimulating the support of PKN members all over the country.

ZWO in action: services and campaigns

The most prestigious activities organised by ZWO committees, thus, are the ZWO services and the special campaigns. The latter can be simply a replication, at the local level, of themes and actions designed nationally, as I have just mentioned. In the case of the *Interactief* program, local-level campaigns to raise funds for specific projects abroad can also be organised. The example I will describe below belongs to this second type.
ZWO services, in turn, are regular Sunday morning services that have mission and diaconate as their main theme, normally organised by the local ZWO committee. In these services, which in general follow the traditional Reformed liturgy, part of the offerings collected in the appropriate liturgical moment is destined to mission and world-diaconate. When the parish has an *Interactief* connection with an organisation abroad, the services will normally have issues central to the partner’s work as their main theme.

In this subsection, I will describe one example of each of these activities, occurred in the scope of the *Interactief* connection linking the ZWO committee of the two PKN parishes in Coevorden\(^\text{100}\), in Drenthe, and ADL, a Lutheran special school for impoverished small-scale farmers in Espírito Santo, a South-eastern state in Brazil. The whole month of October 2007 was declared *Brazilië-maand* (month of Brazil) in the Protestant communities of Coevorden. Different activities related to Brazil were organised by their ZWO committee to promote the recently established *Interactief* connection with ADL. I will focus on the *Brazilië-markt*, the main fundraising activity of the *Brazilië-maand* and on the church service that marked the closing of the special month, exemplifying two types of ZWO activities that are widely considered the most effective ways of reaching the church public in the Netherlands.

Before introducing Coevorden, I must mention that ZWO committees sometimes organise other events, such as “ZWO-avondjes” (ZWO evenings), which according to many people were much more frequent in the past. These evenings were open meetings, aiming at informing the community about missionary and diaconal work, often with special guest from the central office or from abroad. However, I constantly heard complaints that nowadays it is difficult to “drag” people to these

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100 In Coevorden, the merger of NHK and GKN was not accepted by the local communities, which decided to remain as two separate parishes, independently belonging to the PKN. The fact that the ZWO committee is one of the few organs that operate together at the local level corroborates some aspects of the analysis presented in chapter II.
special activities. In Heerenveen, for instance, a ZWO committee member remarked that ZWO evenings are no longer considered an attractive evening program to spend time on (vroeger was het ZWO avondje - JR een uitje, maar tegenwoordige niet meer). A few years ago, her committee simply gave up and decided to restrict their activities to services and campaigns.

During the Brazilië-maand in Coevorden this lack of interest in ZWO evenings was also evident. Members of the ZWO committee frequently commented and lamented the low number of people attracted to the events they promoted. The exceptions were the Brazilië-markt and the Sunday service. Besides, three special evenings were programmed: a Creatieve avond (Creative evening), an introduction to the Intercultureel Bijbellezen – IB (Intercultural Bible-reading) program[101] and a Schrijfavond (Writing evening). The first, in which people listened to Brazilian music and poetry translated into Dutch and packed small gadgets for the Brazilië-markt, was attended by 2 people (besides 2 ZWO-committee members and me). In the second, KiA’s advisor for the region presented the program for 8 people (being 4 from the ZWO committee and me). The third, an evening devoted to writing short messages for ADL students on old postcards of Coevorden, was only able to muster two participants.

The Brazilië-markt, however, was quite crowded. On the last Saturday of that October, it became a sort of indoor county fair to raise funds for ADL. It was advertised in the city and in nearby villages through posters that had been put up in public places (shops, stations, supermarkets, etc). It was organised inside the big communitarian room annex to the church-building of the GKN, with booths displaying different products to be bought by the visitors. Handicraft, Brazilian sweets

[101] The IB is a program developed by KiA and the Faculty of Theology of VU University. Using KiA’s network, it stimulates groups in the Netherlands and abroad to simultaneously read the same biblical texts, interpret them, and exchange written reports to compare impressions and interpretations. The introduction to the program in Coevorden will be described in chapter VI.
and cookies (brigadeiro and sequilho), Brazilian wine, cards, Christmas decoration, and antiques collected among the church members were on display. The antique booth was selling items with some relation to Brazil, such as old souvenirs from Rio de Janeiro, magazines, videos and DVD’s about Brazilian football and old cartoon books of Uncle Scrooge on an adventure in the Brazilian jungle. Coffee and apple pie could also be bought and at the end of the afternoon a Brazilian meal (rice, beans, farofa\footnote{Fried manioc flour with bacon.} and vinagrete\footnote{Tomato, paprika and onion chopped and mixed with oil and vinegar.}) was available. Lottery tickets were sold throughout the afternoon, with prizes donated by local shops. A grabbelton, a huge basket full of little packages (packed on the Creative evening), from where surprise gadgets could be scrabbled, was the attraction for children.

I observed a more or less structured and regular pattern in the way people visited the Brazilië-markt. First of all, right after arrival, visitors bought coffee and apple pie, finding a place to sit (there were seven big tables disposed in the hall). Then they bought the first round of lottery tickets, which people kept on buying throughout their entire visit to the fair. After a while, they began walking around to take a look at the booths, buying, asking questions about the products, chatting with the volunteers there (most of them from the ZWO-commissie or their relatives). After this first round, they had coffee once again and chatted with people. For those who came late in the afternoon, the Brazilian meal provided a final moment.

This sort of activity is meant mainly to raise funds and the religious meanings and motivations underlying this type of work do not have much visibility. ADL, the final destination of the money raised in the fair, was mentioned only a few times by the master of ceremonies (the chair of the ZWO committee), between lottery rounds. A portfolio lay on a not very prestige-inspiring table close to the entrance door provid-
ed some general information on Brazil and about the project that was being carried out in the state of Espírito Santo. Except for this portfolio, references to Brazil and Brazilian people were more folkloric, meant to give to the fair a picturesque tinge.

Another characteristic of these fundraising events is that they are aimed at reaching people beyond the church community, although every ZWO person I talked to during fieldwork recognised that this objective is almost never achieved\[104\]. In Coevorden, for instance, most of the visitors of the *Brazilië-markt* were members of the church or people directly invited by them. There were also a few people from outside the church circle, who came because of the posters hung in public spaces, but they represented only a tiny percentage of the visitors.

In contrast with these special campaigns, ZWO church services are mostly directed toward the religious meaning of mission and diaconate. In Coevorden, the service that closed the *Brazilië-maand* took place on the Sunday morning that followed the *Brazilië-markt*, in the impressive building of the *Hervormde Kerk*, one of the most important historical buildings in the city. Before the service started, members of the ZWO committee and people that visited some of the activities promoted during that month (me among them) could be found in the church council room settling the last details of the ceremony with the pastor and members of the council. We had been invited by the ZWO committee to participate in the service reading some prayers and texts. In the church we were seated all together, in a bench close to a microphone in front of the congregation. The church was full, as the special service was a gathering of the members of the two parishes.

The liturgy followed the traditional threefold structure of a Reformed service. The first part, entitled Call to Worship, focused on the preparation for the service, with worshiping hymns and confession of

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104 The same happens at the national level. Despite KiA's large fundraising ability, its staff members often showed some concern that the organisation is too much restricted to the church public.
sins. The second liturgical moment, the Service of the Word, was organised around the reading of the Bible and the sermon. Finally, the last part – Congregational Prayer and Giving of Offerings – was composed of the intercession prayer, giving of offerings and the final blessing.

The Call to Worship started with some words welcoming the congregation, followed by a silent prayer. An introductory hymn was sung – hymn 289 of the Dutch Protestant traditional hymnal, which compares the beginning of the morning with the rise of the eternal light over the Earth. Right after this hymn, the pastor pronounced the ritual greetings, and the first element related to Brazil appeared: a peace song was sung in Portuguese and Dutch. The song was originally in Spanish, but one of the members of the committee, who lived for many years in Brazil, translated it from Spanish into Portuguese. The Dutch version existed already in a songbook called “Hoop van alle volken” (Hope of all peoples), a compilation of religious songs collected worldwide and translated into Dutch to be sung in the churches. Part of the congregation tried to sing the words in Portuguese, but many people only sang the Dutch lyrics.

After this song a prayer was said by the pastor and two verses of Psalm 24 were sung. The verses describe the whole Earth as the kingdom of God, with geographical images such as rivers, land and oceans. The last verse says: “He comes, He makes his dwelling among us.” After this Psalm, the moment of confession was completely related to the theme of the service. ADL, the project in Brazil supported by Coevorden, was briefly introduced and an antiphonal prayer was said. In the printed liturgy this prayer was announced as “prayer for the affliction of the world”[105], which is a common name for this liturgical element. In the prayer different problems of the world were mentioned, starting with the issues of poverty and access to land, which are directly con-

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105 gebed voor de nood van de wereld
connected to the project supported in Brazil. The Call to Worship ended with a biblical text (Romans 12: 9-13).

The Service of the Word started with a short verse from hymn 410, asking for illumination from the Holy Spirit to understand the word of God, and the reading of the Gospel – Lucas 18: 9-14, on the Pharisee and the publican, followed by the sermon, whose main theme was the missionary call of the church and the unity of Christians worldwide. Afterwards, a Brazilian song (also from “Hoop van alle volken”) was sung in Dutch.

The last part of the liturgy was absolutely connected to ADL, the offerings collected that day to be destined to this project. The congregational prayer – normally the longest and the most important one in the Reformed liturgy – was preceded by a prayer I was invited to read, as a participant (observer) of the Brazilië-maand. It was a Dutch translation of a text written by Brazilian Catholic theologian Leonardo Boff – one of the prime spokespersons of Liberation Theology. The request that I read the prayer was justified by the fact that I would probably be the only Brazilian present at the service, and also because it would be nice for people to listen to Dutch with a Brazilian accent. After the prayer, the head of the ZWO committee pronounced some words on the project in Brazil and announced the amount that had been raised during the Brazilië-markt the day before. The figure was warmly applauded.

The collection of offerings was conducted in the same way I had observed in all services I went to during my fieldwork: the deacons made some dark velvet bags circulate through the whole congregation, into which everyone put some money (normally putting the hand a little bit inside the bag, hiding the coins or bills and, therefore, the amount given). Two different bags are circulated, one with a “K” embroidered, in which the donations for the local church (kerk) are deposited, and the other with a “D”, which receives the money donated for diaconate (diaconaat), meaning, in this case, church work with a destination abroad.
The money destined to missionary and development work goes into the “D” bag. After collection, one more hymn of worship was sung (number 20 of the hymnal) and the service ended with the apostolic blessing.

These two descriptions exemplify the main ZWO activities developed at the local PKN level. In the following sections of this chapter I will analyse some of their varied aspects, focusing primarily on the issues of money and gift (section 3) and the sensory aspects of liturgical performances (section 4), adding other ethnographical descriptions to provide an additional basis for my analysis. Moreover, the ZWO service in Coevorden also serve as an example of the processes to be analysed in chapter VI.

3. The meanings of money and the materiality of giving

Money as gift and mediator

Before presenting data on the monetary gifts of churchgoers and the circulation of financial resources between the parishes and KiA, a brief introduction to some theoretical discussions on money is necessary. Money has always received a lot of attention in social sciences. Since Karl Marx’s (1974) and Georg Simmel’s (1990) classic works, it has been considered one of the foundations of modernity and one of the main agents of transformation from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft, the cornerstone of the establishment of the economy as an independent domain[106]. In this sense, it is also often considered as an indicator of the “great divide” separating modern economies based on market

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[106] For an overview of money’s carrier in social theory, see Bloch and Parry (1989).
and commodities from traditional economies based on exchange and gift\textsuperscript{107}.

Marx’s elaboration on Capital, despite all subsequent developments and controversies, remains one of the clearest and most used descriptions of the function of money in modern economies. As a “yardstick that measures everything” (Bloch and Parry, 1989: 6), money transforms things into commodities, disconnecting them from their producers (or original owners) and allowing them to circulate as alienable goods. In this sense, money is often assumed to be a symbol, a non-indexical object, whose meaning does not come from its sensitive qualities as object (use-value), but from the social relations it mediates and symbolises (exchange-value). Some authors contest the (historical and geographical) universality of Marx’s assumptions, showing that in different times and places, money can have different functions and social meanings\textsuperscript{108}. Others argue that, even in modern economies, money not always acts according to Marx’s descriptions\textsuperscript{109}. Most of them agree, however, that money does function as an abstract exchange means. Their objections are that it does so in certain societies, in determined historical periods and that its abstract nature is not its only quality.

Because of its power as exchange-value, creating alienability and disconnecting objects and people, this view on money situates it as the opposite of gift, which since Mauss (1950a) is regarded as a producer of social ties and obligations. Monetary gifts, thus, have a contradictory status and are the object of many debates. I will not summarise the controversies that emerged in the abundant literature around this issue\textsuperscript{110},

\textsuperscript{107} This roughly dichotomous characterisation was developed, contested and refined in the many studies addressing the topic. See, for instance, Gregory (1982) and Appadurai (1994).
\textsuperscript{108} See, for instance, the contributions to the Bloch and Parry volume (1989) and Gregory (2000).
\textsuperscript{109} See Zelizer (1997).
\textsuperscript{110} See, for instance, the production of the group of scholars gathered around the M.A.U.S.S – Mouvement Anti-utilitarisme dans les Sciences Sociales, who since 1981 publish the journal \textit{La revue du MAUSS}. 
but only mention two important arguments. First, some authors suggest that there is a certain degree of inalienability in the monetary fluxes generated by modern donations when seen as gifts given by groups rather than by individuals (Silber, 1998). Second, mechanisms that link the quantities donated to their application on the receiving end restrict the free circulation of money. To the extent that the ultimate goals to which the money donated will be put are formulated, informed, represented and controlled by the donors, currency becomes not just the means to any end, but a form of connection between the goals that are at issue and the donor groups\footnote{Zelizer (1997) proposes this idea in her study of the donations made by North American philanthropic associations in the late 19th century. These organisations donated money rather than goods and immediately developed a variety of mechanisms for controlling the expenses of those to whom they donated, thus creating limitations on the free circulation of currency and an identity between the sources of the money and the ends to which it could be put.}. These two arguments point to ways of using money that contradict the assumption that, in modern economies, it always circulates as an abstract and depersonalised entity.

In the literature on mission, interest in money seems to be restricted to the numerous transformations, problems and misunderstandings that the introduction of monetary exchanges brought to the missionary areas\footnote{See, for instance, Comaroff (1997: 166-193) and Keane (2007: 270-284).}. The perspective of the “sending” societies and of the missionaries themselves on the relation established between money and mission is seldom at issue. When describing “native” views on money, authors tend to either silence missionaries’ perspectives, or simply take it for granted that, in contrast with the missionised “other”, they hold outlooks that simply overlap with the modern views on money as abstract exchange-value.

My suggestion here is that the relationship between money and mission is a privileged case for observing the complex character of money in modern societies, as postulated by authors such as Zelizer and Silber. Thus, I analyse how money, circulating as a gift in a network animated
by religious ideals, may be a complex mediator, conjuring and mobilising a plurality of meanings that must be limited and controlled. Moreover, as Keane points out, “even money shares with other objects the property of taking objective form” (2007: 274). My analysis suggests that the physical and objective form that the monetary donation takes in church services, campaigns or bank transfers has significant effects on the creation of the missionary network.

Giving to *Kerk in Actie*: symbolic, real and virtual money

In the ethnographical examples introduced in the previous section, two ways of giving money to KiA through local ZWO work were at issue: taking part in campaigns and contributing during ZWO services. This section will focus on these and other modalities of giving and analyse different processes associated with the diverse paths that money followed as it flowed between church members and KiA. For the overwhelming majority of PKN members, these flows and processes are the only connection they have with the missionary and diaconal endeavour of the church, thus making the matter extremely relevant for the argument of the chapter.

In its path towards KiA, the first turn that money takes relates to the role of the local parish. Members have the option of donating their contribution directly to KiA, through a bank transfer or a notarial gift, or to entrust their gift to the parish and the ZWO committee. About two-thirds of KiA’s resources come from parishes and the remaining third from direct donors. According to the Department of Communication and Fundraising, the most substantial part of these direct donations are ad hoc contributions that result from special campaigns (in the case of humanitarian disasters, for instance), whose donors are both members and non-members of the PKN. In addition to the sporadic campaigns, a
small part of these direct donations originate from regular contributions by people who do not belong to PKN, but still choose to contribute to KiA’s campaigns and goals. Another small fraction of the amount comes from church members that opt to make a direct transfer to KiA. The majority of them, however, prefer to make regular donations through the parishes they belong to and their respective ZWO committees. Thus, from KiA’s point-of-view, the latter is its most secure, regular and substantial source of financial funds.

Giving to ZWO work through parishes also has different modalities, as the examples described above already showed. The most important are (1) contribution to campaigns, such as the Brazilië-markt in Coevorden, or the national Lent campaign; (2) offers deposited in the “D” collection bag during the ZWO services; and (3) amounts transferred through bank and notarial transactions to the parishes’ treasuries. Each of these modalities has its own characteristics and plays a specific role in the relationship between churchgoer and the ZWO endeavour.

Gifts given during campaigns are aimed at a determined goal or organisation abroad and are normally associated with specific activities within the local community, such as fairs (like in Coevorden), competitions, parties, lotteries, etc. There is a more or less fixed repertoire of possibilities for fundraising activities organised through campaigns. These activities accommodate donations within everyday life, transforming simple acts like drinking coffee, buying small gadgets or playing a tennis game into charity. Small acts of sacrifice can also be connected to campaigns, particularly during Lent, the period of the Christian liturgical calendar associated with contrition and sacrifice. For instance, a woman in Friesland told me that she stimulates her children to stop buying sweets during the forty days of Lent. Instead, they deposit their pocket money in the special collecting boxes that are normally placed at the door of the church building, underneath the posters of the national Lent campaign.
If special campaigns place the act of giving to the ZWO work within everyday life, offerings during the ZWO services accommodate it within religious performance. The money deposited in the black collection bags after the Congregational Prayer is embedded within a larger liturgy that consecrates it as a religious objective. The act of donating, in this case, is simultaneous to texts, hymns and prayers that stimulate reflection on the meanings of mission and diaconate and evoke, in tangible liturgical elements, the far-away “other” who is the ultimate receiver of the offering. I will return to this point in the last section of this chapter.

Despite its liturgical importance, the money hidden in the black collection bags that circulates during services is just a small fraction of the amount people actually donate to KiA. The largest sums the parishes and ZWO committees gathered arrive through bank transfers or notarial gifts benefitting them. This option has the advantage of being tax-refundable, with turn-over rates varying from around 30 to 52 percent of the gift, depending on the donor’s income and the amount she donated. Although this modality is responsible for raising the largest portion of KiA funds, it is not accompanied by any liturgical or ritual attitude. The majority of people I interviewed told me they contribute through the internet, mostly as fixed monthly contributions. None of them reports saying special prayers or doing anything that connects the moment of giving to its religious meanings. “It is like paying my mortgage”, a woman in Drenthe told me.

The purification of money and the performance of the gift

The data presented up until now have referred to the fact that KiA faces different sorts of competition in gaining access to the money it needs to finance its activities. Outside the church, it holds only a timid share of the huge Dutch “charity market”. Within the church, it competes with
the independent small-scale initiatives carried out by people related to the church members’ personal networks. Moreover, ZWO activities are only one item on a list of obligations that demand people’s contributions, as the traditional liturgical way of collecting the offerings during the services makes clear. To begin with, the existence of two different collecting bags – “K” and “D” bags – divide the offerings between the local church and the diaconal activities. Moreover, D-bag money is disputed by diverse diaconal destinations, according to the calendar of services prepared by the church council.

However, ZWO people rarely manifest discontent or disappointment about the amounts they manage to raise. What they often complain about is the lack of interest that church members show regarding ZWO activities. When asked about the greatest difficulties they face in performing their tasks, ZWO committee members most frequently mention that Dutch people are too busy and the church promotes too many events, so it is difficult to find people ready to participate in their activities. In relation to money, however, the majority of ZWO committees I visited manifested their satisfaction with the financial support their activities normally receive. Time and commitment seem to be more scarce than money in Protestant parishes. In the words of a ZWO committee member, “ZWO is not only a matter of raising money, but mainly a matter of consciousness-raising. I always say that it is not a question of afkopen (buying off). It is about becoming aware. We have to repeat, over and over, at every opportunity we get, what the mission of the church really is.”

The opposition between personal commitment and monetary contribution, giving time and giving money, or awareness and afkopen, which in this case points to the idea of paying to get rid of a responsibility, was a constant issue for the people I interviewed at PKN’s local level. My suggestion is that this opposition points to the tensions provoked by the ambiguous character of money as a mediator and a “radical level-
ler” and its consecration to religious goals. As postulated above, many authors analyse money as a powerful and ambiguous entity, one of the cornerstones of various distinctive aspects of modern life. Some of these theoretical ideas can help to shed light on the role of money in the missionary activities of the PKN.

Since the seminal works by Simmel (1990) and Marx (1974), money has been considered a “radical leveller” (Marx, 1974: chapter II) which measures everything by the same yardstick and propitiates market exchange, based on universalised (within one economy or society) exchange value and depersonalised circulation of commodities. Although the corollaries of this statement are highly debatable, it has been widely accepted that currency represents universal exchange value, at least in the so-called modern societies, being an indispensable component of the existence of the economy as an independent domain. Money’s character of abstract exchange value is one of its facets, among the multiplicity of other social meanings that can be attached to it.

In the case of participation in the PKN missionary endeavour, it is precisely the fact that the practicalities of Christian missionary duty can also be valued monetarily that allows people to participate actively, without leaving their cities and villages, in an endeavour carried out thousands of kilometres away. The accomplishment of mission and diaconate is only possible through the mediation of money. Without the universalising and abstract power of money as exchange value, neither could a small-scale farmer in Espírito Santo be incorporated into the financial life of a churchgoer in Coevorden, nor could she become an actor influencing a determined agenda of improvement of Brazilian rural areas. The circulation of money is a fundamental mediator facilitating the links and connections that make up the network at stake here.

Money, as an abstract and powerful mediator, can create an unlimited number of links and connections. When circulating in a network infused with religious values, it brings economical and religious rationales
together, promoting an interpenetration of the two domains. My suggestion is that the concern about personal commitment I often encountered in the field, normally presented as opposed to monetary donation, reflects an urge to keep economic and religious domains separated. It may be interpreted as an attempted to control the logic of market, commodity and consumption (expressed in the idea of *afkopen*) that inevitably accompanies material donations.

Many characteristics of KiA’s fundraising apparatus point to this intrinsic relationship between monetary gift and consumption. For instance, interviewing professionals of communication and fundraising working in KiA’s headquarters, I learned how they apply marketing techniques to publicise the organisations’ goals and projects as market products. KiA has even a service-desk with complaint protocols (*klachtenprocedures*) through which donors can present their objections to how the money has been spent in specific projects abroad. According to the fundraising department, the service-desk was designed based on similar departments in secular companies that receive clients’ complaints about products and services[113]

This use of marketing techniques and instruments points to the link between monetary donations and the logic of consumption governing capitalist economies. The fact that Christian missionary duty can also be measured by the yardstick of monetary value brings it closer to the economic domain. Thus, considerable effort and investment is necessary to preserve the purity of its religious goals. The ambiguous character of money has to be controlled, its alienability restricted, and its fluidity contained. In this sense, the different practices surrounding the monetary gifts to KiA can be understood as mechanisms of purification, acting to domesticate money’s disrupting agency and to engulf it in a stream of religious meanings. Observing the different ways that money

113 More examples of marketing practices in fundraising can be found in Scholte (2003).
circulates between the churchgoers and KiA, I identified three purifying mechanisms: (1) the symbolic role of liturgical offerings; (2) diverse ways of earmarking donations; and (3) appeal to the concreteness of the act of giving. I will discuss each in turn.

As I mentioned above, liturgical offerings, the first of the three mechanisms, correspond to a relatively small percentage of KiA income, since the most substantial part of its resources is acquired through tax-refundable means. However, ZWO services are the most prestigious activities at the local level and a lot of effort and energy is invested in their elaboration. The casting of liturgical elements – hymns, texts, pictures, images and stories – connected to the projects that the institution supports demands a lot of work from KiA staff members and relationship managers and communication and fundraising professionals refer to it as an important and time-consuming task.

Inside the liturgical order, the Giving of Offerings could be analysed as the moment when personal donation of money is invested with the religious meanings attributed to mission and diaconate. On the one hand, the liturgical elements brought in by KiA staff members and organised in services by the ZWO committee display a concrete dimension of the missionary and diaconal endeavour to the churchgoers. On the other hand, churchgoers refer to the money that they drop in the bag during services as a way of contributing to the church’s mission. In other words, offerings can be seen as a way to fulfil Christian missionary and diaconal duty towards the far-away other, using money as a mediator.

Furthermore, “the money given during the services is symbolic”, said a churchgoer to me in an interview, explaining that it symbolises the larger gifts given through tax-refundable means. This metonymic link connects the liturgical offerings and the money donated through bank transfers. While substantial amounts circulate through the virtual channels of the official economy, with its own rules, taxes, technologies and networks, coins and bills circulate through religious services,
embedded in a liturgy that infuses them with religious meanings. The
metonymy expressed in the idea of “symbolic money” seems to extend
the consecration of the offerings made during the service to the virtual
monies transferred through banking procedures. My suggestion is that,
*mutatis mutandis*, the effect of this metonymy may be similar to what
Sir James Frazer called contagious magic: “things which have once been
in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance af-
fter the physical contact has been severed.” (Frazer, 2006: 15). Through
the liturgical consecration of the offerings, the total amount donated is
encompassed by the religious meanings that have been attributed to the
money offered in the services, thus separating (purifying) the gift from
the rationale governing market transactions and transforming it into
something more meaningful and nobler than mere consumption.

This suggestion may be a way to understand ZWO committee con-
cerns about *afkopen*. Although giving money is a legitimate (and nec-
essary) way of participating in the missionary endeavour, giving only
money can lead to the weakening of the religious meanings of this par-
ticipation. One of the main roles of the committee, thus, is to mobilise
time, commitment and consciousness to exorcise the consumerist spirit
that haunts the monetary transactions connected to mission and diacon-
ate. While the metonym connecting bank transfers and offerings may be
interpreted as an attempt to contain the economic forces that inhere to
money, special campaigns could be seen as acting exactly in the oppo-
site way. Instead of trying to fence this money off from the transactions
regulated by the laws of market and consumption, they act to transform
consumption through missionary action. For instance, eating apple pie
and a Brazilian meal, drinking coffee and buying handicrafts were con-
stantly advertised in the *Brazilië-markt* as ways to help impoverished
farmers in Espírito Santo. While the casting of meanings during services
attempts to draw clear-cut boundaries between the economic and reli-
gious domains that intermingle in the ambiguous character of money,
campaigns profit from the ambiguity to invest daily transactions and attitudes with religious meanings.

Earmarking, the second of the purification mechanisms, is a common way of establishing links between the sources and ends of monetary donations. Zelizer (1997), for instance, analyses earmarking practices in her study of the North American philanthropic associations in the late 19th century (see footnote 112). In the case of the circulation of ZWO money between parishes and KiA, identity and connections between sources and ends is also the main goal of earmarking. Differently from the case studied by Zelizer, however, the focus of earmarking is not the restriction of exchangeability of money that is donated, but the establishment of symbolic connections between money and the purpose to which it has been destined.

The *Interactief* program is the most explicit example of this process. The core of the program, as I described above, is the establishment of relationships linking specific communities in the Netherlands with specific organisations abroad. It gives the parish a concrete theme for their ZWO activities. The transfer of money, however, occurs only through KiA, following regular procedures and contracts that pre-exist the establishment of the relationship. “*Interactief* is not about money. It is about faith”, explained a KiA staff member in a meeting with the ZWO committees of the regional synod of Leeuwarden.

The sort of earmarking promoted by *Interactief* can be analysed as an attempt to attach a tangible and concrete destination to the anonymous mass of abstract money circulating through KiA. In doing so, the program stimulates the establishment of relationships based on means and mediators that run parallel to the cash flows. *Interactief*’s earmarking gives a concrete content to the symbolic links attached to the ZWO activities that emerge around the simple acts of donating money. Through earmarking, the dangerously open character of money mediation is restricted, associated with firmer and more concrete mediators.
The tension between mediation and concreteness leads, finally, to the third mechanism, which is related to the appeal to the tangibility of the act of giving. The cover of a booklet explaining the different ways to make an individual donation to Kerk in Actie is an eloquent image of this process (figure 3114). The image is composed of two pictures separated by the text (in translation): “Giving to Kerkinactie: how you can contribute to Kerkinactie’s work”. The picture on the bottom part of the cover shows white hands putting money in the traditional liturgical collection bag used in the PKN services. The other picture shows black hands holding a plate into which food is poured.

The image builds on the physicality of the act of giving, creating an immediate link between an action performed in a church service in

114 All pictures presented in this chapter were collected in folders and booklets produced by KiA’s communication and fundraising department.
the Netherlands and its alleged result somewhere in the “South”. The meaning attached to the gift inheres to the concrete, quasi-mechanical relation established between the two pictures: money falls into the bag as food falls into a plate.

A similar relationship is established in Figure 4. It is the cover of a folder advertising the tax advantages of notarial transactions. On the left side, a picture shows water being poured on a smiling black boy. On the right side, the folder shows a small reproduction of a picture of the white hands putting money into a collection bag. The text says (in translation): “Notarial gift: giving with tax advantages.”

Both pictures appeal to the tangible qualities of the act of giving, associating it with concrete actions “there”, establishing a connection between the two poles of the network by suggesting the similarities of the physical gestures that both actions entail. In the case of figure 4, the image also evokes the various religious meanings associated with the water. Moreover, some ZWO committee members, when describing the image during “image elicitation” sessions, at the end of my interviews, pointed to an existing pun. The word “schenking” (gift) is a derivative of the verb “schenken”, which can mean both “to give” and “to pour”. The image, thus, plays with the double meaning of the word, associating the act of giving with the water poured on the boy’s head.

This appeal to the physical qualities of the action of giving demonstrates the importance of the objectivity of money. The immediate association between money and the sensory properties of things (the sticky porridge in figure 3 and the clean and fresh water in figure 4) depends on the objectivity of coins and bills that circulate as concrete objects in the religious services, with their own sensational qualities and liturgical functions. Money’s abstract function as exchange value, deriving from the social and economical relations that go far beyond
its physical qualities, is subsumed in its liturgical function as a concrete object. The fact that it is not openly shown during service, its presence is hidden by the dark velvet of the collecting bags, could be viewed as a subconscious indicator of its dangerous and polluting character.

4. Experiencing mission and diaconate – sensational forms and the transcendence of otherness

The body of the church in action

The emphasis on the performance of the act of giving analysed above relates to a point that I had scarcely touched upon in previous sections
of this dissertation, thus requiring further exploration: the role of the body and the senses in missionary and diaconal enterprise. Another picture will help to develop this point. It is the cover of a folder publicising the program “Togetthere”, which provides support for young Dutch people working as volunteers for KiA (and ICCO) projects abroad (figure 5). The picture portrays a Dutch blond girl literally being touched by “black Africa”, surrounded by people wearing colourful clothes, with her hands sensuously covered with a muddy African paste. She is “there”, encountering the faraway “other”.

What this picture and those analysed in the previous section have in common is not only their colourful depiction of the body of the “other”, but the fact that they also show a Dutch Protestant body in action. The immediate character of the white girl’s experience can be
contrasted with the mediation inherent in monetary gifts, which the images shown in the previous section seem to suppress. The connections and links promoted in ZWO activities are visible in all these images, in flesh and blood.

In this sort of advertisement images, colours, textures and insinuated tastes, smells and sounds from “there” are much more important than actual information and intellectual knowledge, the latter conveyed in the texts of folders and booklets. Nonetheless, the appeal to the senses is not restricted to colourful publicity; it is an important part of ZWO activities developed within the parishes.

Academic (and non-academic) observers seldom associate mainstream Protestant churches in Western Europe with the issue of corporeality. On the rare occasions that the Protestant body is mentioned, it normally carries negative connotations, as disciplined and absent from religious rituals, a passive and sober container of the soul, seen as the exclusive locus of an intellectual and highly rationalised faith. My point here is that the absence of ritual dances, possessions, trances, or other kinds of exuberant bodily performances in the Protestant liturgical practices I observed in the Netherlands does not mean that the issue of corporeality is not important within this specific religious tradition. Analysis focusing on body and corporeality can reveal interesting aspects of European mainstream churches, such as the PKN.

My suggestion is that, through different means and mediators, the liturgical performances associated with ZWO activities turn KiA missionary and diaconal action into something tangible and apprehensible through senses and emotions. This way of addressing the issue, therefore, differs slightly from the customary approach within the growing literature on the relationship between religion and corporeality, which often emphasises clearly circumscribed practices aimed at determined body responses, echoing older concepts such as Marcel Mauss’s *techniques du corps* (1950b), and Pierre Bourdieu’s *habitus* (1972). Thus,
I am not attempting to describe here something that could be clearly framed as a specific “technique of the Protestant body”, but rather explore how the physical evocation of the missionary and diaconal field addresses the senses and bodies of PKN members.

Metaphors play an important role in this process, as I was able to observe on many occasions throughout my fieldwork. Frequent metaphorical reference to the body shed light on different aspects of missionary endeavour. Constitutive parts of the performance of mission and diaconate in the churches in the Netherlands include: sermons emphasizing the unity of the church as the body of Christ; songs poetically referring to feet, hands, senses and hearts; people, images and languages that, in their liturgical presence, embody cultural diversity. I will describe one more ZWO service as an example of this.

The service I refer to here was a so-called uitzendingsdienst (“sending off service”), the consecration of new missionaries (and often their families) for their new ministry abroad, one of the most important ritual moments of this kind of endeavour. Nobody can become an official missionary of the PKN without participating in one of these events. It celebrates a ritual commitment established between missionaries and the local community where the service will be carried out. However, they are officially sent by the PKN as a whole, with financial resources coming from KiA and the practical details and decisions handled in the PLD in Utrecht. The relationship between missionaries and local parishes established during the sending-off service do not only have a religious and ritual character, but take their place within the Interactief program.

The sending-off service I attended took place in Oss, province of North Brabant, Southern Netherlands, in January 2006. It was the sending-off of a couple and their children who were heading to Mozambique, where they would teach at a Protestant seminar. The choice of Oss as the sending-off church was linked to the special missionary relationships that exists between specific regions in the Netherlands and
the different continents. North Brabant, together with some other provinces, is specially related to Africa. These two missionaries themselves had no special relationship with any church member in Oss, but with the church’s pastor, who had been a missionary himself and knew the couple quite well.

The liturgy, as in almost all ZWO services, followed the traditional Reformed formula, with its three main parts – Call to Worship, Service of the Word, and Giving of Offerings. Its culminating point was the ceremony of missionary vows, at the end of the service. This liturgical moment was constructed around a rich variety of metaphorical images of the body and its different members, depicting the missionary endeavour in an embodied form. The sermon depicted the church as “the body of Christ” and highlighted the physical presence of the missionaries. The minister invited the missionaries and their children to stand up in front of the congregation for the ceremony, which consisted of (1) a text read by the minister; (2) a song performed by the church choir; (3) missionaries and community vows; (4) the same song again, but now sung by the entire community; (5) giving of gifts to the missionaries and their children; (6) prayers; and (7) a hymn sung by all those who were present.

The opening text, read by the minister, mentioned that the missionaries should travel “with open ears and eyes and, above all, with an open heart”. The reference to ears and eyes was later connected to the specific task of observing and learning. The text invites the missionaries to tell the congregation eventually, in return, what they have learned: “The way our brothers and sisters understand their existence and the way they are Christians over there can be a challenge to our reflection about ourselves, our way of believing, and our church and society.” The open heart is related to the openness “to work as much as you can for the benefit of people there, and to learn as much as you can for the benefit of us here.” And furthermore: “Never forget that everything you do is part of the solidarity of people, churches, peoples and cultures.
Remain modest about what you do, but at the same time, realise that the few things you do are part of something bigger: the history of God and the people of the world.”

The song performed by the choir was about human hands, presented as the only tools for the construction of the kingdom of God on Earth. “Sent by the Lord, our hands are ready to build his kingdom in this place, because it is not through the power of angels that this earthly vale will become a new world where peace prevails.” In the vows themselves, the missionaries made three promises: to keep their hearts open to respect people in Mozambique and learn from them; to contribute to the good relations between people “here” and “there”; and to keep their faith in the inspiration and the power of the Holy Spirit, so as to perform their task for God’s glory. The congregation, in turn, promised to reflect on what they heard from the experiences they were to have in Mozambique and to learn from it, as well as to remember the missionaries in their prayers.

The song about the hands was sung one more time by the whole congregation, and the representative of the church council made a short speech and brought some gifts: candles to be lit in difficult moments; and drawings done by the children of the community for the missionaries’ children. After that, she announced that after the service everybody was invited for a cup of coffee or tea in a room near the church building, where people would have the opportunity to say farewell to the family.

A song performed at the beginning of the service is also worth citing. During the Call to Worship, right after the Confession of sins, the congregation, with the help of the choir, sang a song in Portuguese and Dutch from “Hoop van alle volken” (Hope of all peoples). The song, written by the Brazilian theologian Jacy Maraschin, is called “Lavapés”. The main image in the lyrics refers to the feet and the religious path taken by Christians, beginning with Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. “Jesus gathered all his friends, washed their feet and sent them
to the dangerous world”, says one verse, and “Come, Jesus, and wash the dust of the endless roads of this world from our feet”, says another one. The last strophe prays: “Wash our feet in your clear fountains and let them take the path of your peace.”

Metaphors and images of the body, thus, not only serve to create a sense of unity and cohesion, as in the classical image of the church as the body of Christ, but their folkloric references to the “other” also seem to render the abstract missionary (and diaconal) endeavour concrete and tangible through rituals. Paraphrasing Geertz (1973: 93), it is important to highlight, that these metaphors are not only metaphors of the body, but also metaphors for the body. In other words, they are not only verbal and discursive expressions of the unity of the church as one metaphorical body (metaphor of). They are also a liturgical display of people, objects, songs, languages, images, and words aimed at the body of the church members, insofar as they address, evoke and model senses and feelings (metaphor for). They are organised in order to make the missionary and diaconal tasks of the church accessible through body and senses, attuning emotions and provoking specific feelings.

My suggestion here is that these liturgical performances of mission and diaconate could be interestingly analysed as sensational forms, adopting the concept coined by Meyer (2006: 8):

“Sensational forms, in my understanding, are relatively fixed, authorized modes of invoking, and organizing access to the transcendental, thereby creating and sustaining links between religious practitioners in the context of particular religious organizations. Sensational forms are transmitted and shared, they involve religious practitioners in particular practices of worship and play a central role in forming religious subjects.”

An important characteristic of these sensational forms is that they are not rational theological statements about the transcendental, but are aimed at the senses, as means to the embodied experience of religion.
Objects and songs, languages and accents, pictures and people are there to be seen, heard, smelled and touched. They are not only important for understanding mission and diaconate, but also in order to capture the feeling of the whole endeavour. It is important to remember that the absolute majority of the members of the Dutch Protestant church do not “go there”, which means they do not acquire a personal experience of the missionary field. For most of them, the only relationship they have with mission and diaconate is through monetary donation. As I have suggested in the previous section, offerings made during the services consecrate members’ gifts as missionary action and considerable energy is invested in rendering the endeavour tangible to the senses.

Many aspects of the church services described in this chapter can be analysed as sensational forms. During sending-off service in Oss, through the rich and elaborate images of body parts, the specific and tangible feet, eyes, ears and hands of those specific and tangible missionaries became, the embodied, physical expression of church mission. The entire ritual, conceived as a celebration of the ties between the missionaries and that specific parish, on the one hand, turned the church into a concrete church to the missionaries – an “embodied” community to which they are now connected. On the other hand, for this specific community, the abstract idea of its missionary task became embodied in the family they were sending abroad. They could talk to them, listen to them, touch them, and give them presents. It is important to stress, moreover, that although these particular missionaries had almost no previous relationship with that specific parish, the atmosphere created during the “farewell coffee hour” that followed the service was very emotional, with timid hugs and kisses and even some sober and discreet tears. This observation shows how effective these sensational forms were in creating concrete ties and attuned feelings.

Similarly, at the Coevorden service that was described at the beginning of this chapter, songs and prayers were a way of displaying
Brazil and ADL for their sensory perception, turning church mission into not only an intellectual theological issue and a rational and practical Christian responsibility, but also a sensory enterprise that could be experienced and felt through the bodily senses. Thus, beyond financial contributions, symbolically represented in the collecting of offerings, many other liturgical elements worked, as mediators promoting an emotional link between the churchgoers in the Netherlands and the projects abroad.

Sensational forms – otherness and transcendence

One final description of another ZWO service will introduce the final point of this chapter. In November 2006 a small group from Nicaragua, most of them NGO workers and church leaders, was invited by KiA to come to the Netherlands and visit different groups and churches that supported their missionary and social work. They had a busy schedule of meetings, services and celebrations in which they presented themselves and, among other things, told people about their activities, present official reports, sang Nicaraguan songs and said prayers in Spanish. Two members of this delegation worked for a project called CEPAD, a council of Protestant churches in Nicaragua that develops projects aiming at poverty reduction.

One of these projects, providing food for poor children in schools had an Interactief connection with the Protestant Community in Beilen, in the province of Drenthe. Two Cepad staff-members – a social-worker and a Presbyterian pastor – were invited to participate in the Sunday-morning service in Beilen in November 2006. I volunteered to escort the Nicaraguan guests during the two-hour trip from their accommodation in Utrecht to the church. We arrived at the church about fifteen minutes before the service started, at ten o’clock in the morning. The guests
were welcomed by members of the local ZWO committee, the elders responsible for the service and the pastor of the church. The parish had managed to find a volunteer translator, a woman from the region, who had lived in South America for a couple of years.

The service in Beilen was a very typical ZWO service. The presence of the Nicaraguan guests was accommodated within the liturgy: the Nicaraguan pastor was to read a text from the Bible and say a prayer in Spanish, right before the sermon, while the social worker would say a few words about the CEPAD project, before collecting offerings. They were told about their roles in the ceremony right after they arrived in Beilen, a few minutes before the service started. The social worker had no speech prepared and she became very concerned about what she should say. She was quickly calmed down with the explanation that it did not really matter what she said, since the most important thing for the people in the church was to see her and to listen to her voice and language; thus, a few words of gratitude would fit perfectly.

In addition to the participation of the guests, Nicaragua was represented in three Latin American songs translated into Dutch, sung at different moments throughout the liturgy, and in the special decoration of the liturgical table that the ZWO committee had prepared, consisting of many big pans, wooden spoons, and pictures of children receiving food, as well as a map of Nicaragua. The spoons were distributed to the congregation after the service.

In this service, as in the others already analysed, the presence, within in the liturgy, of objects, songs and people that represent Nicaragua and its poverty worked as sensational forms connecting the church community to the sacredness of its missionary duty. But the explicit reference to the lack of importance attributed to the contents of guests’ talks adds one more dimension to our analysis. For ritual purposes, foreign guests are themselves sensational forms, special liturgical mediators who with their distinct and exotic languages, accents and bodies can serve as a
sensory display of missionary enterprise to Protestant subjects. In the service in Coevorden, the interest that my accent aroused when speaking Dutch points in the same direction. Within the liturgies, foreign visitors embody the metaphor of the body of Christ as a multicultural and colourful body propitiated by the missionary and diaconal effort. The encounter, in these cases, is not dialogue, but the encompassing of the “other” by a pre-determined liturgical order.

After the service in Beilen, coffee was served and people could then interact with the Nicaraguans, asking questions and hearing more about the project they were carrying out. Outside the service liturgy, there was more room for the exchange of ideas. As is common for ZWO activities, only a few people, most of them ZWO committee members, joined them for coffee.

The use of people as sensational forms within the liturgy echoes the identification of God and the far-away “other” that I analysed in chapter III. In the case of the services, the embodied presence of the “earthly other” becomes a means of access to God, the transcendent other. This identification can be understood as a way of spiritualising the body of the other, which then becomes a sensational means to the transcendence. What they have to say is not interesting in itself; rather, they are important in their corporeality, taken as a visible expression of their cultural otherness. Through its display within the services, the “othered” body is encompassed by religious meanings, becoming a visible liturgical sign of Christian values and beliefs. In one of the foundational biblical texts of mission and diaconate – Matthew 25 – establishing the so-called Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, Jesus says: “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me”.

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5. Conclusion

This chapter analysed how mission, diaconate and development cooperation relate to the ritual and financial life of the PKN parishes in the Northern provinces of the Netherlands. ZWO activities at the local level are a fundamental part of the endeavour, not only because of their fundraising role, which makes their work financially feasible, but also because the religious character of the whole enterprise depends on its ritual connection with the local communities and churchgoers.

The main actors responsible for mission and world-diaconate at the local level are the ZWO committees, extensively described in the first section of the chapter. In addition to portraying their most common features and ways of operating, I also described the main activities they promote, namely, fundraising campaigns and ZWO services.

For PKN members, participating in ZWO committees or simply attending the activities they promote are considered the ideal way of fulfilling their Christian missionary and diaconal duties towards the “far-away other”. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of them restrict their participation to donating money to support KiA work projects. Money is, therefore, an important mediator in the KiA network, and analysing its role is indispensable for our understanding of how missionary and diaconal enterprise is connected to its supporters “at home”. The second section of this chapter addressed this issue, focusing on the tension between money and personal commitment. The section demonstrated that, in general, ZWO-committee members demonstrate some discontent as well as considerable concern about the regular churchgoers’ lack of personal involvement in their activities and campaigns, although they generally seem to be satisfied with the amounts that committees manage to raise. My analysis of this tension suggested that money, as a “radical leveller” and an open mediator, has an am-
biguous character, conjuring meanings and ideas that go beyond the strictly religious character of the enterprise. Therefore, in its circulation through the KiA network, it must be associated with other mediators in order to be encompassed by religious meanings. The performance of monetary donations within religious rituals and concerns about personal commitment may be interpreted as efforts to mobilise meanings and invest money with a religious character.

The analysis of the tangibility of the act of giving and of the objectivity of money in the rituals paved the way for my introduction of corporal and sensory aspects of the missionary enterprise, the subject of the third section of the chapter. Through analysis of pictures and ZWO services, I suggested that metaphors of and for the body render mission and diaconate tangible and apprehensible through the senses. The liturgical display of images, objects, songs, languages, accents and people were analysed as sensational forms aimed at the re-enactment of missionary encounters in their sensory and emotional aspects. The liturgical use of people as sensational forms inaugurated the final topic of the chapter. The body of the “far-away other” is spiritualised through its physical presence in ZWO liturgies, thus becoming the embodiment of the church’s missionary and diaconal efforts and a means for gaining access to the transcendental other.
CHAPTER VI

Localising differences: missionary landscapes and the Dutch Protestant World
1. Introduction
mapping the Dutch Protestant world

In this chapter I analyse geographical images of the world associated with the international missionary and diaconal activities of the PKN. The frequent and widespread references to the spatial dimensions of the endeavour constitute an important component of the process of negotiating otherness in the KiA network that I have researched in this dissertation. The notion that there is a division separating “us” and “them”, a cornerstone of the missionary encounter, is almost always accompanied by the divide between “here” and “there”. This suggests that the spatial dimension represents a key component of the cognitive process of ordering the world at issue here.

Geography is a fundamental organising principle in PKN missionary and diaconal work. The distinctive characteristic of the ZWO triad – mission, world-diaconate and development cooperation – is precisely its geographical scope, reaching across the world to the far-away “other”. Through ZWO work, people show concern for issues that take them way beyond the confines of their own villages, regions and country. Keeping in mind that mission and diaconate are often defined as obligations the church has to society, the very idea of world-diaconate expresses the global reach of church action. Thus, the main question that guides this chapter focuses on how geographical and spatial repertoires associated with the KiA network produce specific religious maps and how these maps situate Dutch Protestant subjects in the global world.

In order to analyse the religious maps sustained by the KiA network and the spatial practices connected to them, I will make use of two main theoretical tools. First, Tim Ingold’s (2000: 219-242) concepts which differentiate the processes of mapping and mapmaking.
will provide support for my description and analysis of the maps cir-
culating throughout the network and the geographical images of the
missionary world that they convey. Second, Arjun Appadurai’s concept
of production of locality will help to analyse how the spatial practices
related to ZWO activities in parishes not only depict the globalised
world in geographical terms, but also situate churchgoers within what
I call the Dutch Protestant world.

Ingold’s ideas, which rely on the phenomenological notion of
dwelling, propose a comprehension of the relationship between beings
and environment that takes temporality, experience and situated per-
spectives into account. Among the various expressions of this relation-
ship within this author’s work, maps occupy an important place. He
elaborates a distinction between mapping and mapmaking which can
help elucidate the geographical components of the missionary cosmol-
ogy of the Dutch Protestant world.

Taking different definitions elaborated by anthropologists, psy-
chologists and geographers as a starting point, Ingold presents his con-
cepts, flowing from a constant awareness of the distinction between
depictions of the world that are produced from an external (vertical)
perspective (often referred to as “the bird’s-eye view”), and the images
that are elaborated from an internal (lateral) perspective, that of “an
inhabitant journeying from place to place along a way of life” (2000:
227). Ingold argues that “the designs to which mapping gives rise
(...) are not so much representations of space as condensed histories”
(2000: 220). Mapping, thus, is the re-enactment, in inscriptive ges-
tures, of the movements of people as they come and go between places
(way-finding). Mapmaking, in contrast, is the project of modern cart-
goigraphy, engaged in the processes of making maps “from a point of
view above and beyond” (bird’s-eye view), bracketing out these move-
ments, creating maps as end-products of projects of spatial representa-
tion (2000: 234). That is what Ingold calls “the cartographic illusion”:
“the appearance that the structure of the map springs directly from the structure of the world, as though the mapmaker served merely to mediate a transcription from one to the other. (...) One aspect of this illusion lies in the assumption that the structure of the world, and so also that of the map which purports to represent it, is fixed without regard to the movement of its inhabitants. Like a theatrical stage from which all the actors have mysteriously disappeared, the world – as it is represented in the map – appears deserted, devoid of life” (2000: 234).

The awareness of Ingold’s distinction between the lateral process of mapping, based on experience and on relationship with the environment, and the vertical process of mapmaking, which creates the illusion of a point-of-view “above and beyond”, is important for understanding the spatial practices of the Dutch Protestant ZWO. My argument is that these practices, although based on vertical scientific maps, re-enact “at home” the experiences associated with the missionary world, (re)creating the lateral perspective, and promoting a specific relationship with the global environment.

This latter idea of a “relationship with the global environment” points to a phenomenological understanding of globalisation and demands some further exploration. In order to develop this point, I will present some of Arjun Appadurai’s elaborations on the topic, especially his definitions of locality and neighbourhood. Locality, for the author, is a “complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity and the relativity of contexts” (1995: 204). The author sees locality as “an inherently fragile social achievement”, something “maintained carefully against various kinds of odds” (1995: 205). Locality, therefore, is socially produced and the analyst should be aware of the social processes that create and maintain it, instead of taking them for granted.

Appadurai’s concept of production of locality and Ingold’s idea of mapping share the same phenomenological basis, as both are concerned
with the relationship between lateral experiences and space. The difference between them seems to be related to the position of these two terms in their explanatory equations. Ingold is concerned with the production of spatial practices and discourses as the result of perceptions generated in the lateral experience of “journeying from place to place”, to use his own words. Appadurai, on the contrary, looks at how the idea of space influences social interactions and experiences. My suggestion, in this chapter, is that the spatial conceptions underlying missionary and diaconal performances in PKN parishes can be analysed in both ways. They are not only the product of lateral experiences (mapping), but they also produce locality, insofar they promote specific experiences of the world.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, I describe the main characteristics of PKN’s missionary geography, as it is depicted through the spatial images and vocabularies I came across during fieldwork. The section highlights three main points: (1) the use of (vertical) scientific cartography; (2) the emphasis on cultural differences in contrast with images of empty spaces; and (3) the ritual (lateral) re-enactment of missionary journeys, embedded in biblical and traditional missionary geographies. Some ethnographic data will be included to support my main arguments.

The second section analyses spatial practices at issue in KiA activities, based on the notion of production of locality. The text suggests that specific geographical images and vocabularies not only depict the missionary world, but also locate Protestant subjects within it. The lived experience of the world promoted by ZWO activities are, thus, analysed as a way of locally (re)producing the global character of the endeavour.
2. Missionary geographies of the Dutch Protestant world

Scientific cartography and shadows of North and South

Geographical repertoires seem to play an important role in the characterisation of the KiA network and the depiction of its panoramas. Describing the PLD, in chapter II, I pointed out that maps hang everywhere in the building, thus constituting one of the most visible elements in its decor. On the KiA website, the search engine for locating projects and partners is itself a world-map (figure 6)\textsuperscript{[115]}. One can click on countries and regions to access the list of projects developed in those parts of the world.

\textsuperscript{[115]} See http://www.kerkinactie.nl/projects.aspx?title=Projecten&rIntNavMotherNavId=4553&blnMenu=false
At local and regional ZWO committees meetings, I noticed the use of maps as illustration during presentations on *Interactief* partners and to complement the liturgical decoration in ZWO services (see for instance, the service occurred in Beilen, described in chapter V).

Most of the maps I mention here were not produced by KiA or the PKN; rather, they are scientific cartographic depictions of countries and regions, published by official and authorised sources. Even in the case of maps manufactured by the organisation, as those on the website and in the folders and posters published by the organisation, maps tend to be fairly accurate replicas that do not attempt to contest or subvert the authorised knowledge contained in the conventional products of vertical scientific mapmaking.

One of the fundamental principles of KiA’s missionary geography is, thus, modern scientific cartography. The geographical knowledge condensed in these well-accepted maps is a key principle for organising external views of the world and internal institutional boundaries. Until the ICCO Alliance was formed, there were three regional departments, related along general lines to Asia, Africa and Latin America and based precisely on these official maps, aligning regions and themes and connecting them to specific teams and staff members. Moreover, the correspondences between these three regional teams and specific regions of the Dutch territory (see chapter V) take this organisational principle far beyond the walls of the PLD. The KiA central office, in this model, becomes a node connecting images of “here” and “there”. All the relationship managers I interviewed, with no exception, highlighted the creation and maintenance of these connections between “here” and “there” as the most important role they performed within the organisation. Some of them used the words “node” or “bridge” to emphasise the importance of their function. As I pointed out in chapter II, even the distribution of space in the PLD building mirrored this overlap between internal organisational borders and external images of the world based on scientific cartography.
These official maps, however, are not the only sources of missionary geography. They are interpreted and combined with other repertoires in the creation of the spatial panoramas of the network. The distinctive point, thus, in the maps used in the missionary network at issue here, is not how regions and places are depicted, but how official cartography is mobilised, interpreted and combined with other repertoires in the creation of panoramas of the global landscape that cognitively organise the world and, at the same time, produce organisational structures that mirror these global landscapes.

One of the most common principles associated with geography that is invoked in documents and interviews is the difference between “North” and “South”. Although it is phrased using map-like categories, the geography behind this divide is not translatable in any kind of map, based as it is on sources as varied as (e.g.) rather tangible categories like GDP per capita, national infrastructure and position within global markets, and non-verifiable entities such as “race”, “culture” or “religion”. North and South, thus, are not “mappable” places, despite the presence of some geographical ingredient in the concepts’ recipes. In KiA and ICCO Alliance documents, as discussed in chapter III, the North/South divide is associated with “here” and “there” and its shadows seem to be projected over all network maps, even when people explicitly try to dissipate them. Eloquent examples are ICCO Alliance Operational Plan, and the Policy Paper for Mission of 2004, in which a pronouncement that claims that differences between North (here) and South (there) have been overcome is followed by detailed descriptions of organisational principles rooted in this very division.

In the following subsections, I will analyse two other important principles and repertoires that combine with cartography to compose the PKN missionary geography: invocation of cultural differences and the maps and re-enactment of journeys associated with missionary and biblical tradition.
Journeying through the cultural mosaic

In chapter II, I described the abundant “ethnic” objects decorating corridors and rooms at the PLD. Combined with maps and pictures of the far-away “other”, they contribute to create the cosmopolitan atmosphere that is an important characteristic of the building. The same combination of elements can be seen on the KiA website, as illustrated in figure 6. Besides the maps, pictures of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds decorate almost every one of the organisation’s web pages. Similarly, in campaigns and services within local communities, folkloric and picturesque elements appeal to typical and stereotypical images of the countries and cultures where projects are carried out. For instance, all events described in chapter V highlighted, in different degrees and through different means, cultural and ethnical aspects surrounding the projects in Brazil, Nicaragua or Mozambique, whether explicitly classifying as cultural the differences between these places and the Netherlands or simply displaying folkloric and picturesque objects, images and narratives of events and foreign habits.

Furthermore, I perceived that cultural differences were an important principle organising the visits of foreign delegations that represented partner organisations to the parishes with which they have Interactief connections. On the one hand, a folkloric view of culture guided the interests of Dutch hosts, who kept their eyes wide open to whatever attitude or gesture on the part of foreign guests that could be interpreted as having a “cultured content”. Every new situation and object they came across during visits, from mealtime to church services, from toilets to public transport, motivated questions like “how do you do this in your culture?” or “what is this like in your country?” Cultural differences were also the favourite explanation for any attitudes and behaviours that differed from local habits. Any manifestation of “native behaviour” on the part of the guests triggered picture-taking.
On the other hand, culture and folklore were also at the centre of the frequent interest in displaying Dutch culture to the guests. According to my observations and the narratives I heard, visits of foreign delegations often included a varied number of activities aiming at providing the guests with a glimpse of “Dutch culture”. Things like visiting dairy farms that are set up to receive tourists, eating erwtensoep or stamppot (the typical dishes of Dutch peasant gastronomy) or playing sjoelen (an old traditional Dutch parlour game) are always part of the more recreational and relaxed part of visits. Pictures of foreign guests doing things that can be interpreted as typically Dutch are also abundant and highly appreciated.

Besides these literally decorative references to culture, some of the programs that KiA promoted for the church public give cultural differences a deeper and more serious treatment. The most eloquent example is the so-called Intercultureel Bijbellezen – IB (Intercultural Bible-reading), promoted jointly by KiA and the Faculty of Theology of VU University, among others. Using KiA network, it stimulates groups in the Netherlands and abroad to simultaneously read the same biblical texts, interpret them, and exchange written reports to compare impressions and interpretations.

During the Brazilië-maand, in Coevorden, which I described extensively in chapter V, the ZWO committee attempted to start an IB group connecting parishes in the city and ADL in Brazil. The KiA regional advisor’s visit to introduce the program was one of the activities scheduled for that month. In the first part of the event, she presented an introductory video, produced by the IB board of director, alternating flashes of the daily routines of three women in Ghana, El Salvador and the Netherlands, respectively. They are all Christians, and they all participate in bible-reading groups. The video shows them discussing the same text – John 4 – which narrates the episode of Jesus resting at Jacob’s well, asking a Samaritan woman for water.

After the video, the KiA’s advisor chaired a short discussion on the biblical text, exemplifying how IB meetings should be organised. She
then explained the practical guidelines of the program, based mainly on the exchange of a limited number of meeting reports in which biblical texts were discussed. The advisor stressed that people living under different conditions and with other cultural values probably read the same text in rather different ways, maintaining the experiential importance of comparing world-views and learning from other cultures. After a minimum of three and a maximum of five meetings, partnerships are supposed to come to an end. The advisor recommended that Dutch parishioners send something nice and typical from their region (she suggested a postcard of “Bartje”, a folkloric character that is symbol of the province of Drenthe). Then either the group is discontinued or its members seek a new partner to continue the IB. The meeting in Coevorden finished with the advisor passing around some images in which Jesus is depicted as African, Asian and Latin-American, saying that it does not matter how Jesus really looked like. What is important is that people from different ethnical and cultural backgrounds can identify with him and feel him as part of their own reality.

These examples point to the importance of culture and ethnicity for the PKN missionary endeavour, sometimes as accessory means to interpret encounters and relationships and others, the core of programs and initiatives, as in the case of IB. In both cases, culture seems to be one of the main elements mobilised to explain and organise difference in the network. The exchanges at issue – of ideas, worldviews, hermeneutics and objects – occur between cultured partners. This emphasis on culture adds content to missionary geography, attributing determined cultural characteristics to regions and countries depicted on missionary maps. The borders crossed by the endeavour are not only physical or political, they are also cultural.

This element was already more or less implicit in the idea of “two-way traffic” depicted in some of the documents analysed in chapter III. Contrasting with the traditional images of mission aimed at evangelis-
ing and converting, which tend to emphasise the spiritual ignorance and emptiness of the *terrae incognitae* where the gospel is to be spread and new Christian churches planted, the missionary map drawn from this perspective is a colourful mosaic of cultures.

Although invoking a multicultural repertoire, stressing diversity and plurality, the divide between “here” and “there” as more or less fixed places persists. Thinking about maps as “condensed histories” (Ingold, 2000: 220) can help to understand this phenomenon. The act of crossing borders and journeying back and forth through the KiA network has (and has always had) the Netherlands as its centre. Despite all the investments in the image of the patchwork of cultures, the Dutch Protestant missionary map is the crystallisation of the long history of relationships and exchanges over cultural borders between the Protestant organs and communities “here” and partners placed “there”. I will develop this idea in the last section of this chapter, discussing the process of production of locality.

Re-enacting journeys and reversing the cartographic illusion

The missionary geography of the PKN, as I have described it up to this point, is based on scientific maps and associated with the images of the world as a patchwork of cultures. These two characteristics, which can be understood as influenced by the vertical perspective and the cartographic illusion, are combined with the persistence of the divide separating “here” (North) and “there” (South). This dichotomous division of the world is not only linked with vertical geographical principles, but is also the result of lateral experiences and historical relationships. In this subsection, I will introduce another aspect of missionary geography, related to the ritual re-enactment of journeys and its connection to biblical and traditional geographical depictions of missionary journeys.
and landscapes. The description of services in chapter V bears many examples of spatial references associated with biblical and missionary geographies. I will summarise some of these descriptions and analyse them in relation to the lateral aspects of space and geography.

The *uitzendingsdienst* in Oss, which I partially described in the last section of chapter V focusing on its body metaphors, was also rich in spatial images. The Service of the Word, the central part of the Reformed liturgy, was made up of two Bible texts, Psalm 87 and Acts 16: 6-10, each of them followed by one verse of a song. Both texts are highly cartographic. Psalm 87 places Zion among other regions – Rahab (Egypt), Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia – as the beloved city of God, the foundation of God’s reign. The text from the New Testament lists different places – Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Bythinia, Troas, and finally, Macedonia, where Paul finally decides to go, after having a vision about a Macedonian man asking for help. The verse performed after the Psalm says: “In Christ there is no West, no East/ In Him no North, no South/ The human kind is one in His comfort/ The world in one in His word.” The last verse, sung after the reading from Acts, asks: “Let South and North now rejoice/ West and East praise Him/ The whole world belongs to Christ/ its comfort is in Him.” The sermon that followed these texts stressed the link between the unity of Christians all over the world (the body of Christ) and the importance of the missionary journeys bridging gaps between places and cultures.

References to the connection that was being created between the community in Oss and the missionaries in Mozambique abounded during the service. The act of travelling and physical distance were constant images invoked in the liturgy. The distance separating Oss and Mozambique, “here” and “there”, is about to be crossed by these missionaries, whose bodily presence is liturgically celebrated. “Lavapés”, the song building on the metaphor of the feet mentioned in the previous chapter, is full of images of walking and travelling. “Come, Jesus, and wash
away from our feet the dust of the endless roads of this world”, says one verse. The last verse requests: “Wash our feet in your clear fountains and let them go through the path of your peace.”

The closing of the Brazilië-maand, in Coevorden, is also worth citing. In the opening part of the service, the sequence of texts and songs in the Call to Worship brought four images together: the sun shining on the earth (Hymn 289); the afflictions of the world (the prayer during the Confession of Sins); poverty in Brazil, especially in rural areas (the song sung in Portuguese and the prayer); and the earth as the dwelling of God (Psalm 24). The liturgy relates the afflictions of that specific group of Christians to global poverty and inequality. The links promoted by the Interactief connection between Coevorden and the Lutheran school in Espírito Santo are liturgically celebrated and combined with biblical description of landscapes. Through this liturgical performance, Coevorden in the Netherlands and impoverished farmers in Brazil are (re)situated within specific and previously determined positions on the same religious globe.

The geographical images in the sending-off service in Oss were quite eloquent. Texts and songs during the Service of the Word were basically lists of places depicting the cartographies of Old and New Testament, combined with verses of a song that take the cardinal points as their central image. These references attempt to highlight the continuity between biblical journeys and current missionary travels. Together with the reference to the feet of missionaries treading from “here” to “there” over the dusty pathways of this world they seem to embed the mission of the community of Oss, embodied in those missionaries, within a broader biblical geography. The spatial images in the liturgy of the service depict a map of the world where the missionary call of the church is fulfilled.

What is interesting about these images developed in liturgical performances is their ability to bring missionary geography into the realm of experiences and senses. In services and celebrations, PKN mission
maps are more than intellectual depictions of the world; they become part of a certain experience of the world promoted by the church. They re-enact and display missionary travels through sensational forms, bringing religious maps into the domain of experience. The geography at issue in mission and diaconate is not simply objectively depicted by KiA and intellectually apprehended by churchgoers, but is performed and experienced as the landscape of the church in action.

In this sense, the sort of process at stake in missionary performances seems to be precisely the opposite of the process of mapmaking in scientific cartography, as described by Ingold. While the latter attempts to bracket out the experience of travelling around the world in order to produce an external perspective, the bird’s eye view, the former relies on sensational forms related to missionary travels and encounters in order to reproduce the lateral experience of world associated to the missionary map “at home”.

3. The production of “globality” – localising global subjects

In this section, I address churchgoers’ engagement in the missionary world described above, arguing that the re-enactment of religious geography is a process of orientation, influencing perceptions of cultural difference and the negotiation of otherness. The activities developed around mission and diaconate can be analysed as related to the production of locality, emplacing Dutch Protestant subjects within what they often call ‘the broader world’.

As I argued throughout this chapter, the locality produced in the spatial practices at issue in ZWO activities in PKN parishes does not contradict vertical views of the globe. Thus, although I propose to analyse these practices using Appadurai’s concept of production of locality,
I avoid reification of the local/global dichotomy, looking precisely at how the global character of the endeavour is locally produced and reproduced. In order to clarify this apparent paradox, I will present one more aspect of Appadurai’s argument, criticising one of his categories, namely that of neighbourhood, pointing to the limitations of his phenomenological approach to globalisation.

Appadurai presents the notion of “neighbourhoods” as the actual accomplishment of locality in existing social forms (1995: 211). He explains that neighbourhoods are not necessarily spatially continuous. In some cases, groups sharing an identity (in his words, groups that share a sense of social immediacy) can, of course, live all together, and in this case their “technologies of interactivity” would be the most trivial ones, resulting from their spatial contiguity. In other cases, however, people who are transnationally distributed over the globe can still share a sense of social immediacy and use modern travel and communication technology to interact and reproduce their existence as a neighbourhood.

The production of locality and its actualisation in neighbourhood are, according to Appadurai, processes occurring “from, against, in spite of, and in relation to” larger contexts (1995: 209). For the author, these contexts are not only given “out there”, but they are also phenomenological results of the production of locality. In producing locality, characterised by social immediacy and interactivity, people also produce this locality’s context, which embeds and circumscribes their spatially continuous or discontinuous neighbourhood. The production of context, thus, is inherent to the process of producing locality. Appadurai suggests that most of the power struggles and conflicts in the production of locality occur not only in relation to the different neighbourhoods that result from people’s space practices, but also (and perhaps primarily) in relation to the contexts that are produced by different social groups.

The phenomenological flexibility of the pair neighbourhood/context offers interesting insights on how to avoid the reification of a false dis-
tinction between “local” and “global”. Nonetheless, in analysis of empirical examples, the author presents the power play inherent to the process of production of locality as the interplay between neighbourhoods (and especially their contexts) and what he calls “larger-scale social formations (nation-states, kingdoms, missionary empires and trading cartels)” (1995: 211). Although he explicitly states his intention to avoid oppositional tropes in producing an ethnography of the modern (small and large, cold and hot, then and now, etc), his way of analysing different local examples of the pair neighbourhoods/contexts as opposed to global modernity (in its larger-scale social formations) ends up producing a sophisticated version of the very oppositional tropes he is trying to avoid. Thus, his phenomenology of localisation has had apparently nothing to say about how some of these very “larger-scale social formations” localise themselves as global phenomenon, as if “missionary empires or trading cartels” were global by nature, rather than subject to the same processes of producing locality (and the pair neighbourhood/context) that Appadurai so sharply analyses when focusing on neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, although the author raises the important issue of the interaction between body and locality, he does not actually take this idea very far. He mentions that some ceremonies (rites of passage, specifically) could be analysed as “complex social techniques for the inscription of locality onto bodies. Looked at slightly differently, they are ways to embody locality as well as to locate bodies in socially and spatially defined communities” (1995: 205). The main problem here is that his idea of inscription can relegate the body to a passive position, a sort of blank sheet onto which a disembodied society inscribes its spatial orientation. As I have argued in previous chapters, physical presence and embodied interactions are inseparable from conceptions, views and panoramas, and there is no precedence of ideas over the body.

I follow Appadurai’s plea for a phenomenological approach to globalisation and I believe his definition of the process of localisation is
very useful in shedding light on the missionary and diaconal initiatives at issue here. Yet, in my analysis of how the global action of a mainline Western church – the PKN – is locally produced, reproduced and experienced I am trying to avoid the taken-for-granted “globality” of modern Western phenomena. I am not saying that the ritual performance of mission and diaconate inscribes a specific locality onto the bodies of PKN members, but I am saying that the way the world is bodily experienced by Dutch Protestant subjects is informed by a specific religious geography that localises them as active global subjects.

These experiences of the “broader world” and the possibility of acting globally were considered by most of the people I interviewed in Friesland and Drenthe as the greatest advantage of being active in the ZWO work of the church. For instance, a ZWO committee member, giving me an example of how enriching the possibility of being in touch with a broader world can be, told me: “I was so surprised when I heard that São Paulo is almost as big as the Netherlands, because before that, I could only imagine that an enormous city would be as big as Friesland and then, suddenly I heard about a city as big as the whole of the Netherlands! I found this so unimaginable! When we look at all those maps, this is so unimaginable; it is so different from our tiny little country.”

A woman in Heerenveen told me how important and enriching it was for her to have contact with foreign countries. She had lived abroad for a couple of years, and she told me that, because of this experience, she felt the responsibility of encouraging community involvement with overseas projects, through the ZWO committee.

Another ZWO committee member mentioned that, when watching world news on TV, he feels very sad and impotent in the face of the overwhelming problems and famines afflicting the “South”. Although he recognises that the contribution of the church is infinitely small, he is glad that he can at least do something about it.
I am not arguing that the members of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands are ignorant about world geography and that ZWO activities provide them with information and education on the subject. Of course the majority of them have basic (and sometimes more than basic) knowledge of different countries and continents, not to mention information about ‘overseas’ received from different sources – TV shows and news, newspapers, books and tourism, among others. In other words, most churchgoers I have talked to in the parishes have a reasonably high level of information about the world, and a reasonable command of the maps produced through official scientific cartography. What they get from ZWO activities in the church is the possibility of feeling committed to the world, of developing into a closer relationship to these regions that otherwise are blanket areas in abstract maps. In all the interviews I have done, three words were constantly repeated: ontmoeting, betrokkenheid, and nabijheid – encounter, commitment, and proximity. They are all words related to an experience of the world that is the result of a specific interaction between body and landscape produced by the missionary and diaconal action.
One last image eloquently summarises this idea. Figure 07 is the reproduction of a flier publicising Kia's National Mission Day of 2009. The text says: "Believing across borders".

4. Conclusion

This chapter analysed the maps produced around the missionary and diaconal enterprise of the PKN, exploring processes related to space and geography that are a fundamental component of the negotiation of otherness. The chapter developed one of the aspects of the threefold expression “Dutch Protestant world” in the title of the book, demonstrating how a specific panorama of the world is produced in the missionary endeavour. The chapter focused on two main processes: the mapping of the world characterised in the first section, and the production of locality, which emplaces the Protestant subjects as Western citizens with global responsibilities and agendas of improvement.

The first section was built on Tim Ingold’s definitions of mapping and mapmaking, as presented in the introduction to the chapter, in order to present the main characteristics of the maps circulating within the KiA network. The first point I analysed refers to the fact that KiA maps are based on scientific cartography, which combines with other principles in the mapping of the missionary world. One of the most common among these principles is the “North” and “South” opposition, which can be interpreted as the current version of the divide ecumene /terra incognita, one of the cognitive foundations of Christian mission (see Chapter I).

Two other characteristics of KiA geographies were introduced in the section. The first, based on ethnographic data obtained in the par-
ishes of PKN, refers to the cultural meanings attributed to maps and places. The boundaries of the Dutch Protestant world as depicted in PKN’s mission and diaconate are not only geographical, but also cultural. The difference and distinctiveness of “there”, the places to be reached by the missionary effort, are explained through the idea of culture. Instead of abstract maps, the geography of mission and diaconate is populated with cultured others.

The second characteristic relates to the liturgical re-enactment of the missionary journeys, rendering geography accessible to the senses and bringing it into the domain of experience. I argued that this process could be analysed as the reverse of what Ingold calls the “cartographic illusion”, which is the bracketing out of experiences of travel in the production of scientific depictions of the world. The geographical references in the ZWO services described in the section were interpreted as sensational forms promoting an experience of the world.

The analysis presented in the second section of the chapter was built on Arjun Appadurai’s concept of production of locality and on the critique of his phenomenological approach to globalisation. The main idea of the section is that the production of the experience of the world that is at issue in the ZWO activities localises Dutch Protestant subjects within a given missionary geography. These activities promote the idea that in belonging to their local Protestant communities, they have responsibilities towards the whole world. In this section, I interpret these activities as spatial practices that, in Appadurai’s terms, produce locality, situating Dutch Protestants in a specific position in relation to the globe. The distinctiveness of locality as it is produced in the international missionary enterprise of the PKN is that it does not fit the commonsense local/global opposition, as if these spatial practices were local reactions to disembodied and abstract globalised forces. On the contrary, I analyse the Dutch Protestant mis-
ision, world-diaconate and development cooperation as an example of the Western ability to produce globality.
CONCLUSION
In the introduction to this book, I explained that the expression “Dutch Protestant world” employed in its title has three different meanings: (1) the transnational network that is gathered around KiA missionary and diaconal initiatives; (2) the Protestant organs and parishes in the Netherlands; and (3) the panorama of the world that is produced within the missionary endeavour. The network that is the main topic of this exploratory study is simultaneously producer and product of the complex articulations between these three dimensions, which mobilise people, symbolic repertoires, money and objects, configuring the mission, world-diaconate and development cooperation of the PKN.

This way of assembling the research subject – instead of framing it within rigid boundaries separating it from “context” – has resulted in an approach that prioritizes fluxes and processes. Following the so-called ANT, organisations, religious denominations, networks and projects were approached as temporary outcomes of the constant work of mobilising all sorts of resources to assemble and re-assemble social configurations. The open and exploratory character of the main question orienting the study and the five ancillary questions guiding each of the chapters are an outcome of this theoretical (and methodological) choice.

The first ancillary question, tackled in the second chapter, made the complex relationships between the three dimensions of the “Dutch Protestant world” explicit, through the analysis of the central nodes of the network and the processes that have recently unfolded therein. Using the analysis of spatial distribution within the PLD building, in Utrecht, as the narrative axis of the chapter, the text addressed the kaleidoscopic moves that characterised the Dutch Protestant missionary and diaconal enterprise over the last few decades. The process that resulted in the emergence of the PKN was introduced as part of the Dutch religioscape, whose most visible feature is the de-churching process. The forging of the ICCO Alliance was explained within the broader context
of the recent changes in the Dutch governmental policies for development cooperation.

The tracing of these institutional borders and the production of relationships and connections between organisations and actors “at home” were looked upon from the perspective of the negotiation of otherness inherent to mission and diaconate. This way of approaching these processes was aimed at making the interconnection of the different dimensions of the endeavour explicit, stressing the temporary character of organisational configurations.

The second sub-question, which oriented the third chapter, addressed the symbolic repertoires that frame and organise relationships with the far-away other. Detecting ruptures and continuities in time, especially in relation to the oscillation between secular and religious repertoires, the chapter analysed how the “other” and the missionary world are cognitively organised according to official points of view crystallised in documents. The “far-away other” was defined as spiritually ignorant, socially oppressed or as a potential entrepreneur, according to dominant theologies, policies and principles orienting the organisations, which were themselves the result of specific power balances and institutional configurations (approached in chapter IV). Similarly, these symbolic repertoires also orient the choice of possible partners in the “South”, fundamental for the implementation of actions and projects. The establishment of partnerships that mediate between sameness and radical otherness depends upon the existence of elective affinities with the principles orienting organisations’ policies. Furthermore, partnerships also depend on the partner’s ability to fulfil complex technical requirements for development enterprises.

The detection of continuities in the format of the process of negotiating otherness, despite radical changes in the contents of the principles and policies contained in the documents, was facilitated by the comparison with the missionary efforts of the Dutch migrant church established
in Southern Brazil. The relative rigidity of the divide between “us” and “them” that underlies all documents analysed in the chapter became clearer when contrasted with the dilemmas faced by migrants, who engage in different sorts of relationships with their Brazilian “others”. For them, negotiating the Dutchness or Brazilianness of their families and communities becomes a matter of complex symbolic investments in which their Protestant denomination plays a fundamental role.

The fourth chapter, whose corresponding question addressed daily practices and encounters within the network, directly tackled the problem of power. The text described meetings and encounters occurring at different points along the network, emphasising their performative character and their ability to produce effects and objectify institutional power. It addressed these encounters as chaotic experiences that are organised through the mobilisation of different symbolic repertoires, translated into worldviews, principles and policies that govern network fluxes.

Describing three different events which occurred in different places in Brazil and in the Netherlands, the chapter addressed processes whose developments are similar, although involving different actors. Firstly, the actual engagement of whole persons with each other in encounters and interactions is a determinant of negotiations and their results in the meetings. Beyond the official panoramas drawn by authorised actors, which situate people in official positions in relation to each other and to the whole network, daily interactions and the mobilisation of prosaic details related to the everyday nature of the encounters can have important effects over the configurations that are constantly constructed in the network.

Second, images of sameness and otherness are constantly conjured to justify and authorise positions and decisions. Identification and difference are negotiated in loco, within daily interactions, and actors often switch between these two images. Thus, encounters can be some-
times enacted as meetings between colleagues, and on other occasions as encounters between intrinsically different parts.

The third process addressed in the chapter relates directly to power. The fluxes and configurations of the network depend upon a fundamental opposition between, on the one hand, the institutional power emanating from the direction of the financial fluxes and organisational structures and politics; and on the other hand, the legitimacy of the knowledge and proximity with “real” others and their needs and expectations.

The fourth and fifth ancillary questions are directly related to the Netherlands and the way the international missionary endeavour fits the parochial lives of the Dutch Protestants. In this sense, both try to show how the global character of transnational networks and contacts can be actually encompassed by apparently smaller local realities.

Chapter V described the so-called ZWO-commissies, the committees that organise the local level missionary and diaconal activities in the parishes of the PKN. A few examples of campaigns and services, the main activities these committees develop, were introduced and analysed. Two main points were stressed in the connections linking the international missionary enterprise and the churchgoers: monetary donations, which is how the overwhelming majority of the members of the PKN relate to its international action, and the use of sensational forms to render the missionary endeavour accessible to the senses.

Finally, chapter VI addressed the spatial constructs that PKN ZWO activities produced, developing an analysis of the “Dutch Protestant world” as a panorama produced by the international missionary and diaconal work of the church. Describing the main features of the maps circulating in the KiA network, the text analysed ZWO activities as spatial practices that situate Protestant subjects in the global world.

In summary, this study has explored the negotiation of otherness within the network of mission, world-diaconate and development co-
operation designed and implemented by KiA (and the ICCO Alliance) in Brazil. Looking at the religious and secular repertoires at issue in the endeavour and the daily practices and encounters occurring along various points of the network, this study has shown that ideas about and relationships with the “far-away” other influence the Dutch Protestants in three different dimensions. I have used the expression “Dutch Protestant world” to refer to their simultaneous and inseparable character. First, the establishment of contacts and links with partners abroad that make up the KiA transnational network depend on how otherness is negotiated. Characterisations of both the “other” and of the circle of partners that facilitate access to the targets of the actions depend upon symbolic repertoires, encounters and practices in which otherness is constantly negotiated. Second, the organisation of the relationships between PKN organs and parishes is also affected by their ways of formulating common definitions of their action abroad. The existence of a common “other” is an important ingredient in the permanent work of drawing and maintaining institutional borders. Finally, the ZWO activities promoted at the local level in the Netherlands propitiate experiences of the missionary world that are apprehended through the body and the senses. Considerable energy is invested in order to turn churchgoers’ participation in the endeavour, usually restricted to simple monetary donation, into something tangible and concrete. Encounter, proximity and commitment are important local values in the Dutch Protestant world.
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### List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANT</td>
<td>Actor-Network Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSS</td>
<td>Between Secularisation and Sacralisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Corrente Viva (Living “Chain”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GKN</td>
<td>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HKI</td>
<td>Hendrik Kraemer Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>Intercultureel Bijbellezen (Intercultural Bible-reading)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICCO</td>
<td>Interkerkelijke Coördinatie Commissie Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Interchurch Coordination Committee of Development Cooperation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IER</td>
<td>Igreja Evangélica Reformada (Evangelical Reformed Church)</td>
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<tr>
<td>KiA</td>
<td>Kerk in Actie (Church in Action)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHK</td>
<td>Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (Netherlands Reformed Church)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PKN</td>
<td>Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Protestants Landelijk Dienstencentrum (Protestant National Service Centre)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SoW</td>
<td>Samen of Weg (Together on the Way)</td>
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<td>WCC</td>
<td>World Church Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZWO</td>
<td>Zending, Werelddiaconaat en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Mission, Diaconate and Development Cooperation)</td>
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