

Storying Identity: Using narrative to understand conversion and transformation
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Many times conversion narratives are used as a fixed, immovable point in one's history, having a predictable cadence of beginning, middle, and end. Often, this is not really a qualitative insight into transformation. How does one's individual identity continue to change in relationship to his or her wider community after conversion?

In the last two decades, the concept of narrative—defined as interconnected relationships in time and space which are given meaning through emplotment—has moved beyond literary theory into other disciplines in what has been described as the “narrative turn” in human sciences. Narrative can be viewed as a ‘relational act’ and new meaning emerges through the dialogical engagement of the storyteller, the listeners’ interpretation, and interaction. This has significant implications for missiology in terms of understanding transforming identities after conversion.

In a Roma village in Croatia, one woman's healing caused an abject interest in God, and people began to weave their own stories around the Christian metanarrative, using Christian language to frame their conversion stories. However, individual, community, and cultural narratives continued to interplay with these static ‘conversion narratives,’ leading to a disconnection between the conversion narrative and the narrative of the everyday. How can the interconnectedness of individual and community narratives help us understand conversion and transformation or lack of transformation? Does this offer any insight into how the gospel is communicated, received, and manifested in a given community? This paper will look at conversion and transformation through the lens of narrative theory by examining a case study of a Roma village, which is in the process of transformation.