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PART I
HISTORICIZING TRANSNATIONAL TIES
1

Transnational Ties: Cities, Migrations, and Identities

Michael Peter Smith and John Eade

Cities are key sites of the transnational ties that increasingly connect people, places, and projects across the globe. They are at once contexts of opportunities and constraints within which transnational actors and networks operate and nodes linking wider social formations that traverse national borders. This book brings together a series of richly textured ethnographic case studies that suggest new ways to situate and historicize transnationalism, identify new pathways to transnational urbanism, and map the contours of translocal, interregional, and diasporic connections not previously studied. The transnational ties treated in this book truly span the globe, giving concrete meaning to the phrase “globalization from below.”

How have the contributors to this book conceptualized the wider context informing the conduct of their ethnographically grounded, multi-sited research on the relationship between cities, migration, and transnationalism? Several interrelated contextual dimensions have been singled out as affecting the opportunities and constraints experienced by transnational migrant subjects, mediating their transnational practices, and situating their changing subjectivities and identities in the multiple, interconnected places in which they are orchestrating their lives. Socio-spatially, in several of our studies the political economic context now called neoliberal globalization is shown to be a key driving force creating conditions that necessitate, facilitate, or impede migration, foster trans-local economic ties, and create new inter-regional interdependencies—e.g., new South-South and East-East transnational ties.

In this volume, the changing historical context of both migrating groups and the cities and regions they move across are shown to be central
to the study of the interplay of urban change and migrant transnationalism. Changing local political contexts of reception and exit at different historical periods are crucial dimensions of historical context, as are the changing state policy frameworks that affect the practices of transnational migration and migrant inclusion and/or exclusion in new destinations. As Smith and Buleker (2008: 5; see also Smith 2005a and 2005b) have shown, socio-cultural factors are also key elements in the formation and continuity of international migration trajectories in particular locales. As they point out, “the historical particularities of migrant recruitment, migration histories, migratory narratives, and changing gender and class relations all affect the character and geography of transnational migration..., shaping who migrates, where they come from, and where they go.” These historical particularities have impacted the social structures of community formation within which new modes of existence across borders are being enacted and lived.

**Historicizing Migrant Transnationalism**

Although much attention in the transnationalism literature has been paid to the geographical and spatial dimensions of migrant transnationalism, the historical and temporal implications of cross-national activities have been less thoroughly analyzed. Kathy Burrell’s chapter, “Time Matters,” helps to redress this imbalance by focusing explicitly on the different interactions between time, migration, and transnationalism. Based on ethnographic research undertaken on Polish migration to Britain extending from the Second World War to the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, Burrell offers a nuanced, thoroughly historicized ethography of the changing temporal contexts of Polish transnationalism in Britain. She identifies and investigates three distinct dimensions of historical context: the nostalgic homeland connections of the post-World War II refugees; the temporal dimensions of Cold War Europe as experienced by subsequent migrant cohorts; and the temporal implications of the increased mobility associated with contemporary migration. Paying close attention to the alternative migration histories experienced by different migrating cohorts from the same country over time, as does Burrell, is one important way to historicize migrant transnationalism.

A second way to approach historical context is to focus upon questions of change and continuity in the politics and society of particular cities that are sites facilitating or impeding the formation of transnational networks. Peter Geoghegan’s chapter, “Transnationalism in the Ethno-National City,” provides just such a move. Geoghegan offers a careful analysis of the local context of reception for transnational migration to Belfast, Northern Ireland during the past decade. Since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, Belfast has experienced a growing urban political economy that has become an increasingly attractive site for transnational migration. Accompanying this influx of new migrants, the problem of racism in the city began to receive increased attention. Geoghegan’s case study focuses on competing political discourses produced by grassroots anti-racist groups in Belfast. His analysis of the texts produced by these groups shows how anti-racism rhetoric seeks to position migrants in relation to the dominant Protestant-Catholic sectarian division. Drawing on qualitative interview data, his chapter also shows, however, that the new international migrants to Belfast often reject this interpellation and voluntarily exclude themselves from these partisan anti-racist discourses.

In sum, the persistent Protestant-Catholic political cleavage in Belfast is shown to be a key political context of reception for transnational migrants that they must accommodate to or resist as they orchestrate new cross border living arrangements.

**Translocalities: The Local Pathways to Transnational Urbanism**

A substantial literature has emerged over the past decade on the operation of historically specific translocal networks, spaces, and connections and the ensuing formation of “translocalities” as central elements in grounding the study of transnationalism (for key debates on the meaning and impact of translocality, see Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996, 1998; and Smith 2001, 2005a, 2005b). Smith’s (2001, 2005b) theorization of the relationship between transnationalism and cities, which he terms transnational urbanism, stresses the central role played by cities as key social spaces grounding transnational practices and processes, as arenas for studying the effects of transnational networks on place and vice versa (Smith 2001: 183), and as interconnected sites for the emplacement of the mobile subjects forging transnational ties (Smith 2005b).

Much of the case study literature informed by this perspective has focused on the ties forged and projects pursued by migrants from localities in the global South that closely connect their places of origin to receiving cities in the global North. The chapter of this book by Giulia Sinatti adds another insightful case study to this growing literature on South-North urban translocalities. In her chapter, “The Making of Urban Translocalities,” Sinatti demonstrates the usefulness of the concept of translocality for understanding the role played by cities in emerging forms of contemporary migrations. Using the case of Senegalese migration
Her findings reveal that contemporary Chinese entrepreneurs are new transnational actors capable of merging several localities, not typically thought of as global metropoles, into favorable market relations in the global political economy.

**Diasporic Communities, Identity Politics, and Social Integration**

When we turn back from these new modes of globalization from below and from the middle, which are signs of widening globalisation, to the extensive South-North migration trajectory that has characterized the past two decades, we are able to discern some potentially narrowing trends occasioned by the spread of diaspora communities in the global North because of growing fears of international terrorism. Initially, the migration of workers from South to North since the end of the Second World War had changed national narratives in Europe, as an early period of temporary migration was followed by permanent settlement with the arrival of wives and dependants. While political elites in the United States, in particular, had long interpreted the nation as a country of immigration, their equivalents in Europe had emphasized the social and cultural homogeneity of their nation-states and presented immigration as a minor issue where minorities would be quickly assimilated. However, the rapid influx of migrants from former colonies between the late 1940s and the 1980s into France, The Netherlands, Belgium, and Britain especially, as well as the far more substantial immigration of guest workers into West Germany, raised the likelihood of permanent settlement by people whose racial and ethnic distinctiveness highlighted the growth of cultural pluralism and hybridity, new ethnicities, imagined communities and diasporic ties with the countries of origin (for key debates on these issues see, for example, Bhabha 1990; Hall 1992; Appadurai 1997; Cohen 1997; Vertovec 2000).

These debates concerning the contribution of immigrants to cultural diversity in Europe were developed before 9/11. The political reaction to 9/11, subsequent terrorist attacks in Spain and Britain, the murder of Pim Fortuyn and the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands, and the cartoons saga in Denmark are some of the key elements encouraging a backlash by European nation-states against "multiculturalism" and single-issue identity politics. Minorities, including transnational migrants, are now publicly exhorted to focus on what they share with the dominant majority, rather than what makes them culturally and socially distinct. An earlier emphasis on assimilation has revived as the liberal consensus around pluralistic integration weakened in Britain, The Netherlands,
and Denmark, and anti-immigrant political sentiment increased in the United States. Muslims were often the targets of assimilationist rhetoric where “faith communities” were encouraged to contribute to “social cohesion” through the generation of “moderate” leaders and adaptation to the nation’s “core values.”

**Transnational Religious Networks**

These developments acted as both an encouragement and a constraint to the transnational religious networks, which linked these new ethnic minorities in the West to their religious heartlands. As pilgrimage studies have revealed, European space has been transformed through global migration where diasporic communities have brought their pilgrimage cults with them and established new transnational networks with their countries of origin—a process which has generated vigorous debates within those communities about the changing relationship between these diasporas and their religious and territorial centers (see Coleman and Eade 2004, Badone and Roseman 2004). They have also begun to sacralize local places within Britain itself through the revitalization of established shrines, the founding of new shrines and the sanctification of rivers. This process involves an ideological reinterpretation of the relationship between center and periphery (Eade and Garbin 2007).

The sociological and anthropological analysis of these developments has been heavily circumscribed by nation-state boundaries. This preoccupation reflected a methodological nationalism (see Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003), which informed the sociological tradition and a focus on debates concerning secularization and the supposed decline of religion drawing on the shapers of that tradition (Durkheim, Weber, and Marx). The secularization debate in Britain, for example, focused on empirical data concerning religious beliefs and practices within mainstream British society such as attendance at Church of England services, the numbers being married, baptized and buried, on differences between people’s beliefs and sense of belonging, the development of new age cults and the growth of Christian sects (see Bruce 1995; Davie 1994). Only recently has Davie attempted to broaden the debate by exploring issues of collective memory across Europe but still within the nation-state framework (Davie 1994, 2000).

Research across Europe on ethnic minorities has compensated for the limitations of these debates about mainstream Christian beliefs and practices. They have also alerted us to the global political context outlined above where the rapid growth of Muslim residents, in particular, has been the object of much public concern and suspicion (see Modood and Wernher 1997; Cesari 2004). However, the issues of transnational migration and globalization have been explored through studies of Pentecostal and other charismatic Christian communities (see Coleman 2000), even if developments among Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists have attracted less attention outside Britain (see Vertovec 2000; Nye 2001; Singh and Singh 2006).

The four chapters in sections III and IV of this book reflect this balance within the academic division of labor since two chapters focus on Muslim groups (Bangladeshis in London and Bulgarian Turks in Germany), while the other two discuss African Christians in London and Vietnamese entrepreneurs in Berlin who draw on Buddhist spirit beliefs and practices. Taken together they raise the following issues relevant to the volume—(a) the relationship between different spatial levels (local, regional, national and global) in globalizing urban conditions; (b) the ways in which the spiritual world is related to local places; (c) the impact of political and economic structures in the context of global economic “liberalization”; (d) the contestation of religious and secular identities, beliefs and practices through networks linking diasporic groups to their countries of origin, other nations and imagined global communities; and, (e) the extent to which social actors use ethnicity as a resource or look beyond ethnic boundaries.

In Section III the focus turns towards transnational religious networks in London and Berlin. Krause examines the performative process of local place-making by socially marginalized African migrants in an industrial area of north-east London. Unlike two other key local social actors—gentrifiers and those engaged in urban renewal—these migrants look beyond the locality to their countries of origin and to an imagined global Pentecostal community. The emptiness, functionality and size of the local space—a disused warehouse—enable these marginalized worshippers to develop an aesthetics and ritual through which they can express their spiritual life with the intensity they desire.

Krause argues that as London becomes increasingly “super-diverse” through the global flows of people, we need to look beyond territorial and ethnic ties to people’s involvement with other affiliations, such as religious organizations. She agrees with Glick Schiller’s (2005) argument that the transnational character of these kinds of Christian churches shows the importance of looking beyond ethnicity as an analytical framework. However, a shared African background remains important for these worshippers and is strategically deployed according to situations where
outsiders may have negative stereotypes about African migrants. The ethnicity card can also be played to build alliances with other non-white people and to take advantage of state support for “ethnic minorities.”

In Huiwemeier’s chapter Vietnamese former contract workers from the old East Germany and undocumented migrants have filled their Berlin shops and enterprises with religious meaning through venerating Ong the dio—the “spirit of the place” after the collapse of the “Berlin wall.” This process of emplacement breaks down boundaries between local and global, as social relations that have been disembodied through transnational migration are re-embedded in Germany’s capital. However, the transformation of places as material and imaginative constructions is not just a spiritual process since religious activities are intimately entwined with economic enterprise and it is this mutual engagement, which helps to bring stability to life outside the country of origin. The spirits of the place both protect the territory and the people from physical misfortune and ensure material success.

This engagement is also shaped by political and economic changes taking place in both Vietnam and Germany, which are bound up with the collapse of communism and the relentless march of “liberalization.” The state in both Vietnam and Germany has cut back on economic and social support for its citizens so these migrants are even more marginalized than their African counterparts in London. As a result, the support of the spirit world has become even more important in both Berlin and Hanoi and the changes in both cities are communicated through transnational networks and global flows of people, goods, information, and images.

Transnational Diasporas

In the final section of the book the focus remains on Britain and Germany, but the emphasis shifts towards the complex relationships created by diasporic groups with their countries of origin, with other groups within Britain and Germany, with other nations, and with global imagined communities. Garbin investigates how Bangladeshi Muslims create a diasporic sense of place in London through a process of spatialization that operates through the dialectic between local and global. Drawing on Bourdieu’s discussion of “fields” as developed by Glick Schiller (2005), Garbin detects several social fields where diasporic Bangladeshi compete for symbolic capital and status through identity politics. This competition is pursued through translocal and transnational networks and the political construction of imagined (national and religious) communities.

As we have already seen an appreciation of the historical dimension of transnational processes is vital. Garbin underscores this obvious but frequently ignored point by linking his analytical framework to an historical survey of political competition in the east London borough of Tower Hamlets which contains the heartland of the Bangladeshi Muslim community in Britain. During the 1960s and 1970s the first generation of Bangladeshi leaders competed for status and symbolic capital primarily in relation to the country of origin through kinship ties mediated through translocal networks. The second generation drew on the struggle for an independent Bangladesh in 1970-71 to engage with local political struggles in Tower Hamlets and Britain, more generally, while this “secularist” tendency has been recently challenged by Islamist organizations that draw inspiration from visions of a global imagined Islamic community (umma). Although these ideological struggles present a powerful image of differences and boundaries between groups and individuals supported by notions of purity and authenticity, they are not so monolithic in reality. Furthermore, their dominance is contested by the hybridized politics of everyday life practiced by young British Bangladeshis.

History plays an important part in this volume’s final chapter where Mancheva describes the migration by Bulgarian Turks to Germany, their relations with Turks and Germans in this country, and their continuing links with family and friends “back home.” Traditionally this Bulgarian minority either engaged in seasonal internal migration or migration to Turkey, but after the collapse of the “Iron Curtain,” they contributed to the movement from other former Communist countries into the European Union, particularly Germany. Here they worked in the less protected areas of the German economy that were dominated by other longer established immigrant groups. In consequence, they kept a low profile and relied heavily on Turks who were already settled in the country. Despite the social and cultural differences between Bulgarian and German Turks, their shared interests and needs lock them into a hierarchical relationship, which Bulgarian Turks seek to subvert through their identity constructions as “modern” Bulgarians and Europeans. This continuing tension and hierarchical dependency is reinforced by German political and institutional hostility towards irregular migration and irregularity in general. Unless they return to Bulgaria or escape into the regular, mainstream economy, Bulgarian Turks need the German Turks.

Interestingly, given the emphasis accorded to religion in the other chapters of sections III and IV, Islam plays a less prominent role in Mancheva’s analysis. She describes them as professing a “moderate” form of Islam typical of the Balkans region, which contributes to the tensions with German Turks, who see them as not “proper” Muslims.
Bulgarian Turks, in turn, regard their co-religionists as “backward” and “conservative.” As in Garbin’s chapter, the language of purity and authenticity shapes the interaction between groups and individuals and reflects the contemporary debates about Islam, which link local, national, and transnational identities.

Implications

The studies comprising Transnational Ties offer several implications for urban social theory, particularly pertaining to the role of agency in the making and remaking of urban social space. The city is both a medium and an outcome of human agency, including the agency of transnational migrants, their networks, and their projects. As a medium, it is a context of socio-economic and cultural opportunities and constraints unique to its developmental history. It offers a set of structured opportunities and constraints within which those who enter its terrain must operate. At the same time, migrants bring with them historically specific economic, political, cultural, and religious practices and identities. It is the interplay of urban social structure, migrant agency, and identity politics that determines the specific confluence of transnational ties connecting people, places, projects and identities throughout the world.

References


Spiritual Spaces in Post-Industrial Places: Transnational Churches in North East London

Kristine Krause

In the Lea Valley Industrial Park of northeast London there are more than ten transnational churches founded by African migrants. This area is one of the most economically deprived within the capital and consists of large tracts of derelict industrial land, much of which is fragmented and divided by waterways, roads, and railway lines. In recent years more and more churches have rented old storehouses, garages and industrial depots throughout London, due to the difficulty of finding other places, which are financially affordable and tolerant of noisy worship. The churches in this industrial area are difficult to find. Hidden behind scrap metal and next to dealers’ garages and repair shops, they share buildings with other migrant entrepreneurs, most of them from Eastern Europe. The East Europeans view these churches suspiciously, but mainly ignore them. The church members themselves use these places as operational bases from which they organize their local and translocal networks. Although migrants from West Africa founded most of the churches, they see themselves mainly not as African but as international churches with a global outreach, not based on ethnicity or country of origin. This is also noticeable in the way in which they emplace themselves. In contrast to other nearby neighborhoods, which are characterized by vibrant markets, where African languages are spoken and signboards and shop names clearly address customers with a specific African background, the churches remain at a first glance strangely disconnected from the neighborhood of the industrial area. They seldom interact with the local entrepreneurs, but even more strikingly, they have little contact with each
other. This social disconnectedness has many reasons, some of which will be explored in this chapter by looking at one of these churches.

The chapter seeks to contribute to the discussion about how to ground the description of transnational networks and transnational urbanism within specific places and localities by avoiding both free-floating delocalization and the romanticization of localism (Smith 2001: 102ff., 2005b; Massey 1991, 1993b). To understand the processes of place making I will draw on Massey’s understanding of localities, who argues that a locale is not a bounded entity but evolves as a network of social relations and practices. (Massey 1993a: 148ff.). Localities, in her view, are always in the making and contested. They should be understood as “articulated moments” (Massey 1993b: 66), as “constructions out of the intersections and interactions of concrete social relations and social processes in a situation of co-presence” (Massey 1991: 277).

Following this understanding of space, which departs from conceptualizing places as bounded entities, I will consider the processes of place-making from three different angles: First, I will look at the ways in which place-making involves finding one’s place within a specific spatial-political situation. In the case of the churches this entails meeting certain juridical, political and financial requirements in order to inaugurate a church and struggling to find a place to worship. This aspect will be highlighted by looking at the “spatial history” of one of the churches.

Second, processes of “doing space” will be approached by focusing on the engagement with the place as a social space. Unlike other social actors, such as urban pioneers who have appropriated industrial areas in London for quite some time through gentrification and urban renewal, the churches follow an ideology similar to that of service industries, which has led to the spatial alienation of post-industrial cities and regions such as Greater London. This is apparent in their blatant non-engagement with the industrial area as a social space. The most important social practices, which constitute the church space, are directed towards transnational networks and global Pentecostal media images rather than towards the local industrial area.

Third, I will analyze the performative aspects of place making by focusing on how space is appropriated through aesthetic and ritual practices and how spatial meaning is created within the church. I will argue that it is precisely the size, functionality and “emptiness” of the space, from a spiritual point of view, which helps the church achieve the intensity needed to evoke the presence of the Holy Spirit. In closing, I will reflect on questions raised in recent publications about whether the churches are better understood by avoiding an “ethnic lens” (Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Glick Schiller 2005). This issue is dealt with by looking at when and how churches refer to a shared African background or embeddedness within global Pentecostal Christendom, and how these representational politics are related to the place-making practices and spatial positioning of the church.

Spatial History of “The Destiny Changing Church”

I came across Pastor Solomon and his church during my first stay in London in 2004 on a main street in North East London where I lived just off the main road. The small shop, next to a busy halal butcher, used to be a training center run by an NGO founded by Solomon years ago. Its objectives were to empower people from black ethnic minorities, to bring them back into jobs, and to train them with skills such as computing, especially those who had been hospitalized as mental patients. Now it functions as the church room and office. During the hot summer of 2004 the small room was regularly packed with people for prayer and fasting programs. The Destiny Changing Church is a neo- Pentecostal church, mainly attended by black Africans from Ghana and Nigeria as well as a few from Swaziland, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Apart from one white man, born in Botswana and married to a black woman, I was the only other white person among the black congregation, which attended the church on a regular basis throughout 2004-2006.

Solomon, who is originally from Ghana and trained in Britain as a medical professional, was at that time still working with the National Health Service. He had first founded the NGO at the end of the 1990s and it operated not only in London, but also maintained a satellite mission in Ghana, where it ran Christian clubs at Ghanian universities and colleges. Through these clubs many young born-again Christians were brought together and at one point in time some of them were invited to come to London by the NGO. Many were able to gain admission to colleges or universities in London and to this day they form the backbone of the church, which was formerly registered as a charity in 2002.

As was obvious during the prayer meetings, the front shop room was too small to host a big congregation. So for its Sunday services the church rented a bigger hall at the local YMCA. Although the hall was comfortable for the number of people who attended the Sunday services and was in easy reach of public transport, it required a lot of work to arrange and clear the place for every service: e.g., arranging chairs, plastic flowers and carpets, installing musical instruments, technical equipment, and the
data projector for showing the song texts on a screen. Moreover, there was disagreement with the management of the YMCA about noise and length of worship. By 2005 the church had continued to grow and was able to rent a bigger office space but once more they encountered the same difficulties with neighbors. However, the landlord was sympathetic to the church's needs and offered to let three stories of an old warehouse in an industrial park in East London. The church moved there in 2006, by which time Pastor Solomon had resigned from his well-paid position with the National Health Service. He now dedicates all his time to the church and his mission projects in Botswana, South Africa, Ghana, and the United States. Because the church is unable to provide a full salary, he relies on fundraising among his local and international contacts. He also functions as a guest preacher at other churches and his church frequently receives guest preachers and prophets from befriended churches.

The case of the Destiny Changing Church presents a typical and partly successful “spatial history” for black ethnic minority churches in Britain, which usually observes the following trajectory: first a few people meet in someone’s living room or office, then they rent space on an hourly basis from community centers or other churches. The next step is to find a place, which the church can rent on its own until finally they buy or build their own church (Adogame 2004a). Some of the mega-churches in London, such as Kingsway International or Trinity Baptist Church, own the warehouses they worship in and have invested a lot of money in purchasing the premises. Others, which have a different outreach strategy (Ukah 2005a), such as RCCOG (Redeemed Christian Church of God), can be found all over the city as small shop front churches. Older Caribbean and African branches of Baptist churches, established in the fifties and sixties, have been able to acquire abandoned English churches. However, quite a number of them are engaged in strategies similar to those of The Destiny Changing Church, and rent abandoned industrial buildings (Adogame 2004a: 500).

**Social and Political Processes of Place Making**

The Destiny Changing Church rents an old warehouse in the “Lea Valley Industrial Village”—a rather derelict industrial place. The landscape is scattered with many under-used industrial and commercial facilities and traces of declining light industry. The nearby rail station has been closed and the tracks are overgrown. What attracts attention, however, is the recently redeveloped access route, which has been funded by the European Union, and the presence of several service businesses, such as laundry services, wholesale warehouses, and workshop units for furniture and cars. A closer look reveals how many different actors use, inhabit, appropriate, transform, and redevelop the area. The spot adjoins to the open green fields of Hackney, Leyton, and Walthamstow Marshes, containing the huge water reservoir and water works of the Thames Water Authority. The British Ramblers Association recommends it for its footpaths, the National Cycling Association provides maps with shortcuts and cycling paths through the industrial park and the marshes, while the Inner East Area Partnership and the London Development Agency have published several documents and initiated community participation projects to improve the area. In particular, the London Development Agency has unveiled a Lower Lea Valley “regeneration strategy” to kick off preparations for the Olympic Games in 2012. Ironically, the neighborhood borders on one of the main sites of the yet to be built Olympic Village. Thus, after having been on the fringes of the global hub of the City of London, the industrial village will move into the global arena. However, for the moment, church members still need to be collected by the church’s van at meeting points across London and from the nearest bus station, because the place is out of the reach of any tube station. Up to now, it is unclear what will happen to the buildings rented by the churches as a result of the regeneration plan, but it is very likely that the rent will increase, which will be a problem for most of the churches.

Roughly speaking, three groups of actors can be said to be shaping the Lea Bridge area. First, there are people who would classically be involved in gentrification activities, such as the ramblers association and the cyclists. They all agree upon the value of the green marshland and the gritty and “authentic” atmosphere of cycling paths through the industrial village. Second, the small-scale businesses and workshops, which are interested in keeping the area functioning as it is today, also play a role. Third, the London Development Agency, together with its combined forces of civic groups which all aim at urban renewal in the course of the upcoming Olympic Games, wields influence in the area.

Apart from The Destiny Changing Church, there are more than ten other churches in this area founded by African migrants. These include Aladura and neo-Pentecostal churches. Due to ideological differences, these churches hardly interact and regard each other as not pursuing the right Christian practice. Most of them are very difficult to find because there is hardly any proper signposting and entrances are hidden. In some cases there are only sheets of paper attached to fences, bearing the names of the churches. Banners, provisional posters, and signboards for the
churches are frequently removed by the other inhabitants of the village, since strictly speaking the churches are not permitted to use fences and entrances for their advertisements. Although all the churches seek to reach out and to win new souls, this aim is underminded by their lack of visibility.

Pastor Solomon’s church is located at the rear of a warehouse building, which is surrounded by gray containers and hosts several small furniture workshops in the front. The church inhabits three stories and rents the ground floor to a befriended church. At the moment, another church founded by a Ghanaian pastor is negotiating to rent some of the other available rooms. The middle floor has recently undergone major renovation work, initiated by the church and the plan is to have several offices and to offer capacity-building services to church members. Among other things, the church aims to run computer courses and legal advice on immigration matters.

As already noted, the local space is also used by other migrant entrepreneurs and those operating small workshops, many of them from Eastern Europe. We find wholesalers for Russian food, Bulgarian cabinetmakers, and Polish distributors of East European beverages. From time to time disputes arise over parking space, gates left open by church members, and blocked drains after celebrations. Churches complain that the workers litter passages and do not clean up their bulky waste. None of these disputes have yet evolved into serious conflicts. When I walked around the area on a few occasions, I came across some of the workers and manufacturers in the little café where they meet and relax. It was then that I heard about their suspicions of the churches. They saw me as somebody “from the council” who came “to control” things, possibly because I am white and female and was usually quite formally dressed in order to respect the dress code of the church. Some of the workers, who work on night shifts in the laundry, expressed negative feelings about church services, which lasted all night, and about cooking activities.

Specifically, one white English worker expressed his concern that “our black folks have become so religious overnight” and complained about their cooking on open fires and releasing the fat into the drains, which resulted in blocked pipes. He complained that the problem of cleaning the drains was left to him instead of being dealt with by the churches. A black Caribbean car mechanic told me that one of the churches would sprinkle corn around the parking lot and he strongly suspects that they were involved in voodoo practices and warned me not to talk to them. White Eastern European workers complained about open gates and workship lasting until early in the morning. One of the workers asked me: “What kind of church is that? Singing and drumming until three o’clock, is that normal?”

Strikingly, the white English owner of the building, which is rented to Eastern European workshops and to the Destiny Changing Church, did not regard it as a church but insisted on talking about it as an educational center. On one occasion when I accompanied the pastor, he asked neighbors if they could remove their bulky waste and staff from the shared area because the church was going to celebrate its anniversary. The interaction was very polite and the pastor invited them to the festivity, but, not surprisingly, the men did not show up. On another occasion one of the men approached me curiously and asked if I was “overseeing” the churches and if there were any other white people involved in it. Although hardly any of the churches would define itself as an exclusively “black” church, “white” members are very rare. Yet, the extent to which they are perceived from the outside as black churches becomes noticeable by the very question about white membership. Furthermore, the fact that the workers implicitly assumed that, as a white woman, I was “from the council” or in any other way in a position to control the churches, shows how this racial demarcation becomes charged with other negative attributions.

All in all, the churches exist in a kind of parallel world and are hardly engaged with the immediately surrounding place and people. This emplacement in parallel, transient worlds is underlined by the ways in which church members are escorted to the place by the church vans and how they then move in and out of the building, dressed in their best clothes, passing workshops and heaps of scrap, before immersing themselves in, or emerging from, the ritual space of the church rooms. Everything significant in regard to place making seems to happen exclusively inside and the movement in and out seems to be channelled to reduce contact to the immediate surroundings.

The church’s refusal to get involved in public space-making and the perception by its neighbors that the church was an exclusively black congregation, which pursued suspicious practices, stands in contrast to the prevalent celebration of London’s religious and cultural diversity within the public space. One of the last examples of this public discourse has been the bid to host the Olympic Games in 2012 with its key phrase “The world in one city.” Yet to achieve visibility within the public sphere and to participate in the orchestrated diversity of the global city is not a matter of course for everybody, especially not for born-again Christians.
who do not easily fit into the multicultural scenario because of their radical views concerning homosexuality and Islam.

However, having reached a certain level of financial power, even black Pentecostal churches have a chance of receiving a share of the huge sums, which are being spent on the Olympic project to buy land for the Olympic Village and stadiums. If a church owns the warehouse it uses for religious services, it may stand to make a sizeable amount of money these days. For example, the Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), a mega-church founded by the Nigerian-born Matthew Ashimolowo and also located in an industrial depot, has been in the press not only because of misappropriation of money and tax fraud, but also because the London Development Agency has to pay a considerable amount of compensation to the church to have it moved from its premises in Hackney. The site is located in a similarly deprived area as the Lea Valley Industrial Park and directly within the Olympic park development area. The KICC is to receive an alternative plot of land elsewhere and will use this opportunity to build an arena which will host up to 8,000 people. Interestingly, the new site will be again located within a business park. The Destiny Changing Church plays in a lower league than the KICC and does not even own the warehouse it uses for worship. The example of KICC moving from one business park to a similar area, however, shows that location in neglected and rundown places is not only a matter of money, but that such places offer other factors desired by these churches.

One approach, which can help us to understand the appropriation of space by the churches, is to look at aesthetics and representational practices. Coleman has emphasized that although global charismatic Christianity privileges the word, its culture is diffused in a “coherent system of visual, material and embodied aesthetics” (Coleman 2000: 144, 152ff.). Some elements of this system will be explored in the next section when we shall enter the church room to look at the representational and ritual practices of space making.

Doing Space

The church room of The Destiny Changing Church is on the top floor of a three-storey building. If you entered during service time you would see a beautifully dressed congregation gathered together, in stark contrast to the waste bins and iron fences outside the building, which they have passed in order to enter the church. You would further notice that the church is not indifferent to aesthetic matters.

Aesthetics, Media, and Spiritual Renewal

Not only are people’s clothes splendid and stylish, but also the decoration and furniture. You would see red and white curtains, blue and red chairs, a red plush carpet which covers the stage, a decorated pulpit, and plastic flowers. The next thing to catch one’s eye would be a big screen onto which Bible quotations, song texts, and PowerPoint presentations of the sermon are projected.

Much effort and money has been invested in decoration and technical equipment. We find several microphones and a high tech sound system which enables the place to be filled with “holy noise” when the worshippers speak in tongues or engage in prayer battles. The sound system further serves to record sermons and programs digitally. The technical team is able to duplicate CDs on fast track, so that people can buy the sermon they have just listened to immediately after the service.

Several scholars have noted the central role of media equipment for neo-Pentecostalism and its identification with a global Christian community (Schulze 1991; De Witte 2003; Coleman 2000: 177). Coleman highlights in his work on the World of Life church in Sweden, as does De Witte in her research on the International Central Gospel Church in Ghana, how different types of media have become a constitutive element of ritual practice and performance, and are integrated into the everyday function of churches (De Witte 2003; Coleman 2000: 167ff.). In The Destiny Changing Church media equipment, such as a sound system, a projection screen, and video camera equipment, are prominently displayed. No overseas broadcasts are made of the services at the moment but from time to time the pastor does preach on one of the Ghanaian pirate radio stations. It seems that being on air or on TV to congregations elsewhere is imagined to be more meaningful for place-making practices than location in the industrial area.

Media equipment, therefore, functions beyond its practical use as a symbol for intensified global interconnections. Even though the church has not yet reached the point where it hosts its own TV or radio show, we can note an intricate interplay between global neo-Pentecostal mediascapes (Appadurai 1990: 296ff.) and place-making practices. This becomes more apparent when taking another look at the furniture and decoration in the church, which resemble Pentecostal media representations, especially Christian TV shows that are transmitted via satellite into almost every member’s living room. During my research in London I lived in a shared flat with church members on a council estate where
we used to watch the regular satellite programs which included, among sports, the Nigerian BEN (Bright Entertainment Network) and Ghanaian OBE (Original Black Entertainment) diasporic channels and numerous religious programs. This gave me a chance to regularly watch some of the prominent preachers on Inspiration Network International and Trinity Broadcast Network. The similarity between decoration, furniture and style of the churches and studios is striking.

Apart from simulating a media reality, which the church still aims to achieve, the presence of cameras, speakers, and microphones results in a reinforcement of the charismata (De Witte 2003), the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The microphones help to preserve the words which have been spoken, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and at the same time create the audibility of its presence in the here and now of the service by amplifying speaking in tongues and words of prayer. The screen functions as a mirror in which the congregation can watch pictures of itself or follow Bible scriptures and key phrases from the preaching.

The highlighting of headlines, mottos and slogans relates to another feature, which fits well into the picture of the churches as globally connected and transnationally organized enterprises (Ukah 2005b). The annual convention in 2005, for example, shows how the church envisions itself as being like a communication-oriented company in business counseling. Under the motto “MOVE 2005—Moments of Opportunity, Vision and Enlargement,” the church organized a two-week program with international guests from Canada, South Africa, Botswana, and Ghana, focusing on the motto “Moving into your season of preparation, placing, performance and productivity.” At first glance this slogan seems to be in contrast with the spatial marginalization of the church, but if one takes the self-representation of the church seriously it becomes clear that the church sees itself as being at the very center of London’s spiritual renewal. This “spiritual renewal” will go hand in hand with economic success and new business opportunities, according to the church’s beliefs. To achieve this, the church offers “spiritual services” to their clients, such as teaching, counseling, prayers, and deliverance of evil spirits. At a second glance, then, the location of the church in a post-industrial location seems fitting. Places like the Lea Bridge area have been affected by the increasing shift towards tertiary industries such as service industries. Being based in communication, consulting, and investment, the tertiary industry generates rather ephemeral “products” in contrast to the manufactures produced by secondary industry. The church is also engaged in capacity building, training competences, and empowerment activities and not in traditional social welfare or political activities. The favorite phrase of the pastor “we are a destiny changing church” aims at the individual in his or her life course and does not envision any collective political mobilization.

In concluding this section we can note that the imaginary embeddedness within Pentecostal mediascapes through aesthetics in decoration and language usage is more than a simulation, because it is part of an ideological empowerment program which has effects on a practical level: church members envision themselves as part of a global community of Christians who will not only be successful on the Last Day but also in the here and now. Within the church they find psychological, legal and economic support and a platform for gaining experiences in professional performances, thus creating a link between religion and economic activities in the host country. So far we have seen how the inner decoration and media play a role to emplace the church within the imaginary social field of global neo-Pentecostalism. Keeping in mind these spiritual and practical functions of aesthetics, I now want to take a second look at the warehouse itself and its practical and symbolic meaning for the church.

Warehouse Aesthetics and Ritual Performances

Considering the historical division of urban space in Europe, churches located in industrial areas and warehouses seem to be odd. In Europe, locales’ for religious practices traditionally have very distinct features, which have been shaped by close interconnections between sovereignty and Christianity. Churches are usually located at the center of the spatial arrangement of a community, recognizable as a shelter and place of refuge. However, they also function as markers of power and authority, dominating a marketplace or indicating the center of a town, which had evolved around a former monastery (Sennett 1994: Ch. 5). In most big European cities, church buildings, recognizable through their distinct features (e.g., a steeple, a bell tower, a churchyard, an impressive entrance), now function as tourist sites and urban retreats, and generally aid in reading the settlement history of the buildings and spaces which form today’s metropolis. In contrast, the locale of industrial areas is clearly secular and seems to contradict the purposes of religious interactions, since they were zoned for economic purposes. They are usually located outside the main residential area of a city and provided with adequate transportation access for heavy trucks and railroad.

Usually church buildings are also architectural highlights, serving as markers for a specific period in art history, but warehouses are purely
functional. Interestingly, as Coleman reports, several Pentecostal mega-churches in Sweden and the United States today, which can afford to construct their own big buildings, have opted for architectural designs which reference “warehouse style” (Coleman 2000: 155, 153). Other examples include churches that actually bought industrial buildings and renovated them for their needs instead of purchasing a different type of building, such as the KICC. Thus there seems to be more of a connection between functional industrial architecture and Pentecostalism than is apparent at first glance.

First, we can note the practical advantages in retaining warehouse elements within mega-church construction. Buildings in “warehouse style” reach “maximum efficiency” in terms of providing seating for a large crowd, employing media equipment, and displaying the power of the word on a huge stage (Coleman 2000: 155). Thus even within the architecture of transnational Pentecostal churches, the reaching out in the world is embodied by being grand and ready to expand (Coleman 2000: 144). For The Destiny Changing Church one of the most important practicalities of the industrial area is that nobody cares about the “holy noise,” which is part of the ritual practice of the church: praying, preaching, and music happens always at full blast and through the complete utilization of the sound system.

Apart from the importance of functional space in enabling the embodiment of the Holy Spirit, space matters also spiritually. In Pentecostal ideology every territory has its own spirit, which is in charge of the place. Thus every other spirit wanting to operate in one area needs to ask permission from the territorial spirit or needs to conquer it. Many churches have special prayer groups who deal with territorial matters, such as delivering buildings, parks, and monuments from evil spirits. Especially historic sites or old church buildings are loaded with the spiritual presence of demons. On several occasions I have been told that old church buildings host demons, which have become attached to the structures, because these structures were built in line with occult knowledge. Thus the usage of an old church would require intense spatial deliverance work from the pastors before it became functional for new religious services. As we can see, Pentecostal congregations perceive there to be spiritual advantages in the appropriation of space that has not previously been used as a church.

Time also plays a major role in the religious rituals of these congregations, as shown by scholars who have worked on the ritual practices among West African Pentecostals and have extensively explored the moral meaning of time within Pentecostal ideology. It could be argued that much of the ritual energy is invested in dealing with matters of time rather than space, for example by delivering people from their sinful past and leading them into a new life (see Meyer 1998; van Dijk 2002, 2004). However, evil spirits are still assumed to reside somewhere and to inhabit space in places and bodies. Furthermore, the presence of the Holy Spirit needs space to become embodied. The aim of every ritual activity in the church is to achieve the experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Although the spirit moves in whimsical ways and seems to be the paradigm for dislocatedness and deterritorialization (Kristeva 2006), the very purpose of coming together in a church place is to experience the spirit spatially, in the “here and now.” The importance of space is underlined by the intensity of the bodily techniques, which are part of Pentecostal worship, particularly walking, kneeling, waving, jumping, utterance, sermonizing, singing, and various other ways of being filled with the spirit. Space as lived experience is crucial for Pentecostalism and can only happen through ritual performances. In this sense, Pentecostal space is doing and “does not pre-exist its doing” (Rose 1999: 248). Pentecostal ritual practices rely on the free-floating power of the Holy Spirit. De Witte argues that whilst on the one hand, the Holy Spirit is imagined as “supergalactic power” reaching far beyond any physical boundaries, on the other hand it can only be embodied through fixed patterns of learned behavior, timed practices, and routinized body techniques (De Witte 2003: 175).

In light of the above we can see how an empty space, such as a new building with functional architecture or a vacated space such as an old warehouse, which reflects the performance but does not carry too much own meaning, serves as an ideal church space. However, the difference between our church in the Lea Valley and those mega-churches, which can afford to build their own spaces in a warehouse style, is simply that The Destiny Changing Church has been displaced into the industrial park rather than actively choosing to be there. Yet the continuing tendency to rent space in industrial areas and warehouses among many neo-Pentecostal churches in European cities points to the fact that there are no constraints concerning location in a mundane, purely functional environment. Warehouse aesthetics seem to have become part of the architectonic repertoire within transnational Pentecostalism.

Yet in terms of the hierarchy of urban space, the physical location at the fringes of the city can be seen as indicating the marginalized social status of these churches, not only with regard to their fundamentalist
Theology, which makes it difficult for them to be incorporated within mainstream Christian institutions, especially as black churches with black pastors. Thus, the practical and spiritual usefulness of a warehouse coincides with the de facto marginalization of African churches. At the same time the church sees itself as part of a global community and uses the warehouse as the base for organizing transnational connections and linkages. Keeping this tension in mind, in the remainder of this chapter I want to come back to a question which I have mentioned so far only in passing: whether or not these churches can be called African and/or transnational churches.

“African” and/or Transnational Pentecostal Churches?

The churches in the industrial park are part of a phenomenon that has recently received increased scholarly attention: the growing number of churches founded by migrants from Africa in Europe. Since the 1960s, branches of so-called African Independent Churches,11 such as the Celestial Church of Christ, and Aladura Worldwide from Nigeria (Adogame 2004), have been founded by previous generations of migrants. Over the years they incorporated people from varying ethnic and socio-cultural backgrounds and now have an international, pan-African membership (Adogame 2004: 498). However, since the 1990s the transnational networking of charismatic and neo-Pentecostal churches has increased worldwide.12 In London (Adogame 2004; Hunt 2002; Harris 2006; Daswani 2006; Krause 2006a), as in other European cities such as Amsterdam, The Hague (van Dijk 2002, 2004; Ter Haar 1998), Hamburg (Jach 2005), Berlin (Nieswand 2005a; Krause 2006b), and Copenhagen (Lauterbach 2005), many churches were founded in the late 1990s by migrants from Nigeria and Ghana as offshoots of the charismatic movement, which was sweeping through Ghana and Nigeria at that time (see van Dijk 2002, 2004; Gifford 2004).

The increasing number of new Pentecostal churches can be regarded as a side effect of “new African diasporas” (Koser 2003), which emerged during the 1980s and 1990s, when many Africans moved to new destinations.13 In the case of the United Kingdom, more and more migrants from African countries without colonial ties to Britain have moved into London such as Congolese and Ivorians (Koser 2003; Vertovec 2006). They patronize the long-established infrastructures of shops, businesses, restaurants and churches of Anglophone West Africans such as Nigerians and Ghanaains. Some of the newcomers might have lived in other European destinations before settling in London, others have come directly from their home countries. Black Africans now outnumber black Caribbeans in the UK and the migrant population in London, in general, has undergone an increasing diversification with regard to countries of origin, ethnicities, languages, religions, migration experiences, work and living conditions, legal statuses, periods of stay, individual mobility, and transnational connections.

Consequently, it is more necessary than ever to look at other forms of organization and identification than country of origin or ethnicity to understand this “superdiverse” urbanity (Vertovec 2006). Religious organizations are often used as an example for a research field that fosters a different perspective. For instance, Glick Schiller et al. (2006) use the example of a church founded by a pastor of Nigerian origin in Manchester, New Hampshire, who was able to establish a Prayer Network which assembled twenty different congregations, all aiming at winning the city for God. They explained the divide within Manchester society as being not so much between ethnically diverse congregations but rather between believers and non-believers (Glick Schiller et al. 2006: 620). The authors acknowledge that this form of incorporation might be typical for a small-scale city, but they criticize the “prevailing assumption” within studies on migration and religion “that immigrants live and worship within distinct ethnic communities” (2006: 612). In their view this “ethic lens”14 obscures “the diversity of migrant’s relationships to their place of settlement and to other localities around the world” (2006: 613). They further argue that many authors see church membership as a measure of whether a church is international or not and do not pay sufficient attention to the self-definition of the churches.

However, I would argue that, in order to reveal the diversity of relationships formed by and through churches, we need to take into account their situational positioning within a specific historical and geographical context, and their engagement in different forms of identification, boundary drawing, and representational practices. Thus, in some situations a church might describe itself as an African church and might act within specific ethnic networks. However, in other situations it might address an international audience and organize its activities within a transnational religious field, which is not grounded in shared country of origin but in a shared belief and a sense of belonging to a global Christendom.

The pastors from our case study, however, would certainly agree with the criticism of Glick Schiller and her associates because they do not like to be pigeonholed as Africans. The Destiny Changing Church is decisively not part of the Council of African and African Caribbean Churches, UK
but the Evangelical Alliance, UK. The former is a consortium which actively promotes an African or Caribbean Christian tradition, while the latter brings together a wide scope of evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal churches in the UK and is part of a worldwide network.

The Destiny Changing Church prefers the Evangelical Alliance because it provides access to an international field of contacts and although most of the effective networking with other churches happens with pastors who have a Ghanaian background as well, the church insists on representing itself as international rather than as a Ghanaian or African church. This boundary maintenance towards churches, which identify as African or African Caribbean, is mainly based on their use of certain ritual practices, which they see as belonging to “African traditions” while other churches regard them as demonic. In keeping with this perceived difference, churches, which identify as African, are easily pigeonholed as backward and non-international, and thus as “more traditional” by neo-Pentecostal churches such as The Destiny Changing Church.

Looking at when and how the church leaders and the membership define the church as Ghanaian, black African, black ethnic minority, or as an international church, we see, not surprisingly, that the self-representation varies depending on the context. If asked by a researcher, such as myself or by a journalist, the question is answered by referring to the information available on the church’s webpage and other public relations material. Here The Destiny Changing Church is portrayed as an international church with transnational connections, envisioned as part of a Christendom with global outreach. In certain contexts, however, it becomes important to identify as a black ethnic minority church. As mentioned earlier, within the neighborhood of the industrial area, the church is considered to be a black African church: the congregation consists of mainly black members, and the style of worship is perceived as African by the congregation and the neighbors with regard to noise and length.

To call itself an ethnic minority church might be a defiant reaction towards the negative attributes attached to “African” in British society today. This label certainly draws on the British discourse about cultural and religious diversity and also includes Asians and other people classified as non-whites. With this identification the church inhabits a specific social position eligible for protection and funding from public sources within British society, and takes part in a discourse of solidarity among non-white groups. Ethic minority status works further in the church’s favor in its relationship with the English owner of the warehouse, who regards the church as an educational center for black ethnic minorities and is therefore willing to lease the property to the church.

When analyzing the motivation of the members for joining The Changing Destinies Church, it becomes apparent that the Ghanaian origin of all the pastors plays an important role in encouraging migrants to join the church and allowing them to accept the pastors as their spiritual fathers. Furthermore, this shared national background is strengthened by Ghanaian elements that are often noticeable in the service. Phrases and words in Twi—one of the several languages of Ghana—sneak into the preaching and are often jokingly referred to as “pure Hebrew.” However, shared ties to Ghana are not the only common denominator among the congregation. Members, who are not Ghanaian, often come to know about the church through personal networks, which rely not only on a shared country of origin but on a black African background. Thus the reference to the shared experience of being from different African countries could be also identified as a major tie binding the congregation together.

Looking at the transnational connections of the church, we find international interconnections of the leadership, which range from kin relations to friendships formed at international Pentecostal conferences, which include pastors with various backgrounds. Additionally the church in London is frequently visited by pastors and traveling prophets from Africa who get into contact with the church through personal networks.

In another paper solely authored by Glick Schiller (2005), she draws on the same case study as above to argue that churches such as The Destiny Changing Church must also be viewed in light of the way in which their Christian fundamentalism feeds into American imperialism. I agree with her that until now the tendency has been to view the transnational engagement of migrants through more accommodating questions rather than focusing on how the migrants participate in a social field of Christian fundamentalism. The ultra-conservative attitudes and body politics of many of the neo-Pentecostal churches are hardly ever mentioned compared with the large amount of work done on the ritual and social elements of these churches. However, limiting oneself to acknowledging the incorporation of these churches within an American-style fundamentalism would ignore the distinct history of African Christian churches.

Many churches founded by Londoners of African background are part of Christian fundamentalist networks but they do have to be understood as coming from a very distinctive historical background. To begin with, they are bound up in the history of African Christianity, which has contributed a great deal to the growing social field of global Pentecostalism.
(Gifford 2004; Jenkins 2004). Second, one must consider the history of black people in Europe, which has mainly been a history of rejection and exclusion from mainstream church life and has resulted in the founding of many of the churches present today (Kalilombe 1997; Adogame 2004: 497). Third, within Africa Pentecostal and Aladura churches bear a history, which grew out of the appropriation of mission churches and evolved through conflict with colonialism, new nation-building projects after independence, a transnationalization and reconfiguration of public space, through new media technology and increased emigration of the West African populations (Meyer 2004). It is rather the concurrence of taking part in a transnational social field of fundamentalism, while simultaneously being engaged in ethnic, business, and local social networks which makes many of the migrant-founded neo-Pentecostal churches in Europe and the United States so difficult to grasp conceptually.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the reason why churches founded by West African migrants in London are often located in industrial areas is greatly influenced by the congregations' difficulties in finding affordable rooms, which are at the same time tolerant of noisy worship. Here they cohabit with other migrant entrepreneurs, but hardly engage with the place as social space. Instead, as shown in the example of the Destiny Changing Church, the spatial practices are more often directed towards an imaginary transnational space in the form of spiritual services, which the church offers to its membership and the city. Based on an understanding of space as a net of social relations and contested negotiations, I have examined the meaningful social interactions in these spaces from the point of view of the church. I have shown that the functionality of the available room in regard to size and spiritual neutrality is relevant for allowing the conducting of ritual performances and for experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit. Most significant for the appropriation of the industrial places as religious spaces is the reconstitution of Pentecostal mediascapes within them. The imaginary transnational field of neo-Pentecostalism becomes articulated within the warehouse as appropriated place.

As to the question of whether churches such as The Changing Destinies Church are better understood as African churches in Europe or as transnational churches, the answer is that they need to be seen in their shifting positioning depending on the context. The invisibility of the churches in the cityscape, as noted at the beginning, can be understood as an expression of these different positions, reflecting the marginal status as black minority church within British society and the importance of an imagined transnational space for the meaningful actions of the church that take place inside the building.

The church leaders and members can be seen as urban pioneers, who, despite the amount of discrimination their congregations experience, contribute to society by adding a spiritual component to the post-industrial service industry landscape. This spiritual component can be summarized as follows: our service is to transform your life into a better future.

Notes

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2. The names of the church and its pastor have been changed in order to protect their anonymity.

3. Kingsway International, http://www.kicc.org.uk/. According to the homepage “The church is now seeing over 12,000 members with a vision to double this number by 2010.” For special events, the church space is expanded by using a tent seating approximately several thousands. I thank Ann Davies for generously sharing field notes with me on her visit of Kingsway’s “International Gathering of Champions” conference in August 2006.


7. Aladura churches (in Yoruba: the praying people) were founded in Nigeria during the 1920s and have spread from there throughout West Africa and abroad (Peel 1968: 205; Adogame 2004: 494; Meyer 2004). Pentecostal churches have at the core of their ritual practices the gifts of the Holy Spirit, namely, speaking in tongues and healing, but it makes sense to differentiate different genres of churches. The classical Pentecostal churches were founded between the 1930s and 1950s. Neo-Pentecostal churches are those which were founded in the 1980s and 1990s (Gifford 2004; Meyer 2004). Neo-Pentecostal churches regard Aladura churches as being engaged in malpractice, in particular they accuse them of being too close to so-called African traditional practices (Meyer 1998; van Dijk 2002).


9. Globalization and transnationalism are often conflated terms (see Smith 2005a; Glick Schiller 2005). To differentiate ‘global’ from ‘transnational’ I refer to globalization in regard to the imagined community of Born Again Christians who span the planet, and refer to transnational when I speak about actual ties, networks, or networks of networks (“transnational social fields,” see Glick Schiller et al. 2006:614).
10. Following Anthony Giddens, locales are characteristic physical settings associated with different types of social interactions, which form specific collectives (Giddens 1979; 2007; 1984: 188ff.).

11. “African Independent” or “Indigenous” churches have already over a century of history in Africa. They were founded in reaction to the missionary churches and became popular because of their practical approach towards everyday life problems and the inclusion of healing and spiritual protection in their practices (Peel 1969; Meyer 2004).

12. There has been a boom in literature on Pentecostalism, especially in Africa and Latin America, within the last few years. For an in-depth overview on African Christianity see Meyer (2004), on globalization and Pentecostalism see Coleman (2002) and Robbins (2004).


14. The term “ethnic” is rather confusing when applied to migrants from Sub-Saharan countries, because within one country of origin one can easily find up to 40 or more ethnic groups. In some cases, however, it would make sense to use the term “ethnicity.” There are churches which are mainly patronized by one ethnic group because of language usage in the service such as Yoruba, Ibo, or Lingala. Glick Schiller et al. (2006) point to the tendency to reproduce the categories of immigration statistics which list country of birth or ethnicity, in line with “methodological nationalism,” and to conceptualize only one single possible pathway of incorporation, thereby neglecting other forms of engagement.


16. http://www.eank.org/about/. Within the Evangelical Alliance there is an association for African and Caribbean churches which calls itself “Voice of Black Majority Churches, UK,” but the Destiny Changing Church is not a member of this sub-group.


18. This is despite the fact that many Aladura churches are transnationally organized (Adogame 2004).

19. Recently, the church established a service referred to as “Twic Service.” Ironically, it is held by a pastor who speaks Twi only as his second language because he is an Ewe, and thus his preaching is mostly in English. Most of the songs performed are however in Twi. With the establishment of this service, the church seems to follow a trend among other bigger churches which have “second” and “third” services on a Sunday, and which often cater for a specific group within the church.

20. One of the aims of the Councils of Christian Communities of an African Approach in Europe (CCCAAE) is to gain recognition among the “white” mainstream churches in Europe (Adogame 2004b).

References


Spirits in the Marketplace: Transnational Networks of Vietnamese Migrants in Berlin

Gertrud Hüwelmeier

In the current era of globalization, the flow of migrants from Asia and Africa to Europe has created highly dynamic regions of migration that are globally interconnected. In contrast to the former “guest workers,” who moved from Mediterranean countries to northern Europe to work in the industrial and manufacturing sector, mainly through bilateral agreements between governments and employers, the new migrants have found different niches in the European labor market through changes in national immigration legislation. However, due to different policies in various European countries, the legal status of the newcomers is often unclear, with many of them living and working as undocumented migrants.

Religion seems to be one marker of incorporation into the host society, allowing migrants simultaneously to maintain connections with the country of origin and forge new ties with migrant communities in other countries. People, moving to Europe for various economic and political reasons, bring their religious beliefs with them and gathering for religious purposes is one way of setting up a new life in unfamiliar surroundings (Warner 1998: 3). In many cases the organizations, institutions, meetings and gatherings, as well as the religious places and activities of migrants, transform the religious landscape of the host society. At the same time, the architecture of the migrants’ places of worship, the names of the spirits they venerate, and the prophets they follow differ from the religious practices in their country of origin.

Many scholars increasingly recognize that religion thrives precisely because globalization provides useful tools for religious actors and