Chapter 10

“And Ye Shall Possess It, and Dwell Therein”

Social Citizenship, Global Christianity, and Nonethnic Immigrant Incorporation

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This chapter argues that the theology, practices, and identities deployed by born-again Christian migrants constitutes a form of social citizenship that challenges established notions of rights to territory and belonging articulated within state-based concepts of citizenship. In so doing, migrants engage in nonethnic incorporation, a form of settlement and identification that dramatically differs from those generally discussed and debated by migration theorists and policy makers. Using our research among born-again Christians in Halle/Saale, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany, and in Manchester, New Hampshire, from 2001 to 2005, we explore the ways migrants use evangelizing Christianity to facilitate claims to social citizenship in their countries of settlement. We examine the ways in which born-again Christianity can bring migrants and natives into local and global political engagement. We also note that migrants’ biblically based claims to territory and belonging articulate and reinforce the neoconservative global agenda. In this way, migrants and natives participate in a globe spanning imperial political project that extends far beyond the electoral politics of their locality and nation-state of settlement, while also becoming incorporated locally.

Conceptualizing Citizenship

The word “citizen” is now generally understood as a person who is fully a member of a modern state and as such has all possible legal rights, including the right to vote, hold political office, and claim public benefits. Citizens of states also have certain responsibilities that vary from country to country.
(Bauböck 1994; Shafir 1998). However, the clear-cut textbook-style definition gets very muddy in practice and in different states people practice and conceive of citizenship somewhat differently. In fact, there is an increasing disjuncture between the rights stemming from formal membership in a state and the substantive rights of people residing in that state.

As scholars of citizenship have noted, not all people who are legal citizens receive the same treatment from the state or are able to claim the same rights. There are often categories of people who are legal citizens according to the laws of a state, yet who face various forms of exclusions and denials of civil rights because they are not considered to be truly part of the nation. These categories include members of lower social classes—both rural and urban—and persons who are racialized or gendered in ways that put them outside the body politic (Hamilton and Hamilton 1997; Haney-Lopez 1998; Lister 1997; Marshall 1964; Yuval-Davis 1997a). These exclusions operate both within systems of law and within civil society. In states such as Morocco, currently, or the United States, for long periods of U.S. history, both men and women have had legal citizenship but this status has accorded women fewer legal rights in domains of family law or property rights (Jones and Jonasdottir 1988; Salih 2003). As was finally acknowledged in the 2005 urban uprising in France, despite the fact that black immigrants from former colonies have been able to become citizens of France, they face barriers in entering either professions or politics; and black children are routed into vocations rather than university tracks (Tagliabue 2002; Craig 2005). These examples draw attention to the fact that the formal status of membership does not guarantee an array of civic and socioeconomic rights to the citizens.

On the other hand, although legal citizens are often denied full civil rights, many states grant a range of rights to those who reside legally in a state but do not have legal citizenship and may even be ineligible to become citizens. As Yasemin Soysal (1994) has emphasized, although they lacked formal membership in the host nation, migrants and their descendants often have been accorded various social, economic, civil, and cultural rights. The access accorded to these migrants has revealed the increasing disjuncture of formal and substantive citizenship rights. Consequently in understanding the social dynamics of participation in societies, scholars of citizenship increasingly have examined the practices and performance of citizenship rights, rather than only the formal status of membership. Moreover, they have expanded the concept of citizenship by decoupling formal and substantive citizenship rights and distinguishing between cultural and social citizenships.

Because citizenship in its actual practice has discrete legal, cultural, and social aspects, separate literatures have developed to address these various dimensions. As defined by Renato Rosaldo and Juan Flores, cultural citizenship
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refers to “the right to be different with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one’s right to belong” (1997: 57). This approach to citizenship was a product of struggles against cultural assimilationist or integrationist projects. Advocates of cultural citizenship called for changes in law and readings of national history, as well as for the legitimation of diverse cultural practices. Their goal was to insure that the multiple cultural heritages contained within a single nation state would be recognized and respected; they wanted the practice of cultural difference to be accompanied by the assurance of equal opportunity (Kymlicka 1998).

The struggles to have the Spanish language accepted within a variety of legal, educational, and social settings in the United States, to wear a headscarf in public schools in France, or to obtain state licenses for Muslim butchers to practice their trade in Germany would be classified as struggles for the right to be different while being accorded equal opportunity. As such they are struggles for cultural citizenship because the state is asked to respect the right of people living within its territory to maintain diverse values, practices, and institutions, whether or not the claimants are legal citizens (Silvestrini 1997: 44). The concept of cultural citizenship can be seen as a demand that modern states acknowledge that they are in effect legally plural, containing within them institutions, norms, and codes of conduct that mandate and shape different and sometimes conflicting sets of behavior.

However, because the concept of cultural citizenship focuses on identities and the diversity of cultural practices, it does not address the way in which persons who are not citizens participate in the common social, economic, and political life of a specific state and claim rights in these multiple domains. In order to address these practices and claims, scholars have begun to speak of social citizenship. These incorporative forms of daily participation in the social life of a locality generate claims and assertions of belonging that move beyond the politics of difference and the cosmology of identity politics. They contribute to institutional practices and experiences of governance that contribute to the daily forms of state formation of nation-states.

Social citizenship differs from legal citizenship because of the lack of mesh between formal citizenship and the allocation of rights, benefits, and privileges. When people without official membership make claims to belong to a state through collectively organizing to protect themselves against discrimination, or when they receive rights and benefits from a state or make contributions to the development of a state and the life of people within it, they are said to be social citizens. Social citizens assert rights to citizenship substantively through social practice rather than law. Increasingly citizenship is coming to be understood not as “a bundle of formal rights, but the entire mode of incorporation of a particular individual or group into
This approach to citizenship alerts us to what Gershon Shafir (1998: 23–24) argues is a “major feature of modern society: a simultaneous and interconnected struggle for membership or identity or both with the intention of accessing rights that are disbursed by the state” on the basis of social presence rather than formal law. This approach to citizenship, which is concerned with the moral and performative dimensions of membership beyond the domain of legal rights, defines the meaning and practices of participation and belonging as it is displayed within the public sphere (Holston and Appadurai 1999). Consequently, although legal citizenship is generally seen as the venue of an individual’s participation into the political and social process of the nation state, migrants who do not have legal standing may influence the political agenda and social life of a state in multiple ways. For example, U.S. legal permanent residents (green card holders) act as social citizens when they organize an Internet campaign to change U.S. immigration laws (see Brettell in this volume).

Often authors stress that despite persisting transnational identities, new migrants can become active and committed members of their nation-state of residence (see Wong in this volume). Much of the theorization of social citizenship has remained within the container of the nation-state, even though migrants and their descendants may live their lives across borders and claim various types of legal, cultural, or social rights in more than one country. Consequently we need to develop studies and concepts of citizenship that can extend beyond state borders, while remaining cognizant of the continuing ability of state based institutions to control various types of force, and police borders. There has been exploration and debate about the nature and significance of transnational or transborder citizenry in the form of dual citizenship or multiple memberships (Aleinikoff and Klusmeyer 2001; Bauböck 1994; Faist 2000; Caglar 2004; Glick Schiller 2005a; Soysal 1998). However, there is work still to be done in connecting transnational processes to the internal dimensions of citizenship. Studies of migrant practices of citizenship within social fields that extend within and across state borders can contribute to this process of theory building (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001). The study of migrant transnational social fields becomes part of a larger intellectual project of understanding how global networks of information, ideas, and discourses contribute to the development of the concept and practice of citizenship within particular states. In this project, migrants are useful to think with because their transnational networks are highlighted by the processes that label them as foreign.

Many people claim rights in a state and act within its institutional and governmental processes not only without formal citizenship but also while they reside in another state. Underlying their transborder practices
is some type of claim to membership, rights, and voice in more than one state. Most of the research and discussion of multiple membership claims and transborder citizenship has focused on migrants social citizenship practices that connect a new land of settlement and a homeland. In these instances, migrants who become citizens of a new state, continue to influence their homeland, even if they have abandoned their legal citizenship rights (Benda-Beckmann 2001; Kearney 1991; Caglar 2002; Levitt 2001; Pessar 1995; Richman 1992; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc1994; Glick Schiller 1999, 2005b, and 2005c). Migrants who live their lives across borders may claim a voice in the public sphere and legal rights including tax concessions and property ownership in the state from which they migrated but in which they no longer hold full, legal citizenship. Or migrants who retain homeland legal citizenship and continue to be engaged in that homeland also act as social citizens in their new land of settlement. This form of practice becomes a topic of public debate when migrants who are not legal citizens seek to shape the foreign policy of their country of settlement toward their native land.

There is also a form of transborder citizenship in which claimants are less interested in membership within a territorial state than in the recognition of their rights to political voice. The Kurdish experience in Europe might provide an example of this form of social citizenship (Østergaard-Nielsen 2002). Persons embracing Kurdish identity have been able to insert themselves as claimants to political rights and voice within specific European states and the European Union. They have obtained political voice, recognition, and certain rights on the basis of a global human rights regime and a rights discourse instituted by international organizations and international treaties. The rights regime was an arbiter of Kurds’ social citizenship in the countries in which they settled in Europe. Migrants who claimed Kurdish identity were able to obtain specific legal protection and expand the scope of their entitlements in Europe through the human rights regimes, not through claims of formal citizenship rights.

The human rights regime is not the only globe spanning network and ideological basis for social citizenship claims. Some migrants make these claims in the name of religion. In these instances migrants claims rights to residency in a state, social benefits, respect, and moral and political leadership on the basis of their membership in a global religious project and the social field created by its networks of organizations (Levitt 2003; Van Dijk 2004; Vasquez and Marquard 2003). Religious claims and networks can foster social citizenship. On the basis of what they see as their God-given rights, migrants whose religious networks constitute a transborder social field can act upon the institutional, legal, and societal processes of the state
and locality in which they have settled. However, although the various
global religions connect migrants to social networks and organizations
that reach within and across nation states, all religions are not equally po-
sitioned to facilitate the claims making of their adherents to rights within
a particular state. There is a large and growing body of work on the global
reach of Islam and its local manifestations in the lives of migrants and
the states in which they have settled (Amiraux 2001; Allievi and Nielsen
2003; Schiffauer 1999; Foblets 2002). Rather than explore the religious
claims to social citizenship, most of the research on Islam in Europe re-
mains within the confines of a cultural citizenship framework or one that
has underlined the impact of human rights regimes in migrants’ claims-
making processes. However, it is apparent that Muslims have faced con-
siderable barriers in their efforts to use of religious identities and networks
to forge claims of substantive citizenship rights in Europe.3

Christianity offers a more welcoming pathway. We suggest that schol-
ars of social citizenship must address migrants’ use of global Christian
theology and identities. In the remainder of this chapter we explore the
ways born-again Christian migrants facilitate their social citizenship in
the United States and Germany through participation in religious, trans-
national social fields. They claim belonging and rights to their new land
without reference to the politics of difference, human rights regimes, or
legal citizenship. Born-again Christianity as a form of claims making and
claims positions migrants as missionaries in relationship both to their state
of settlement and global Christian projects. Christian migrants regard their
country of settlement as a terrain of evangelization where they have been
sent by God to settle and establish Christian morality. Their narrative of
settlement and claims to rights resonate with the U.S. neoconservative
worldview and its imperial political project. Currently the U.S. neocon-
servative agenda has replaced the discourses of neoliberal economics with
a rhetoric of Christian morality (Harvey 2005). Neoconservatives have
claimed U.S. leadership for a reinvigorated Christian project of evange-
lization (Glick Schiller, Caglar, and Gulbrandsen 2006a; Urban 2006).
When migrants base their claims to citizenship on a universalist Christian
message of the sovereignty of Jesus, they participate in a political domain
that both reaches into and extends far beyond the reaches of the electoral
politics of a particular state.

Examining the Social Citizenship of Born-Again
Christians in Two Small-Scale Cities

To provide examples of migrants’ use of a Christian social citizenship,
we will draw on ethnographic research we conducted from 2001 to 2005
among born-again Christian migrants in two small-scale cities, Manchester, New Hampshire, and Halle/Saale, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany. In Halle we worked with two born-again congregations, one predominantly Congolese and the other predominantly Nigerian. But it is significant that the members of both congregations did not see themselves in ethnic terms—at least in the context of building their congregation. They were not building an ethnic church identified by the cultural or national identity of its members. Rather both churches in Halle situated themselves within a global Christian mission and in organizations that linked them not to homeland churches but to a Pentecostal movement now being organized throughout and Europe and globally (Glick Schiller, Caglar, and Guldbrandsen 2006b; Karagiannis and Glick Schiller 2006). This is central to these migrants understanding of their right to be in Germany. While most have entered as asylum seekers and a few as students, these migrants do not use their personal histories or legal statuses to explain their presence or make claims on the state. They do not, for example, refer to either the right of asylum within the German Constitution or to the international human rights regime in explaining why they believe they have the right to be in Germany. Instead, they justify their presence and subsequent actions in terms of claiming Halle and Germany for Jesus.

For example, Pastor Mpenza, the Congolese pastor of the L'espirt de Signeu Church, explained his presence in Germany, as well as his insistence that his church be understood as Christian, and not Congolese, by saying, “No, no. It isn’t a Congolese church. This is not the origin of the Word of God. I have told you about my origin. I have come from Congo where I met my Lord, where I worked for the Lord. And now I am here, in Germany, where I had the feeling that the inhabitants were in need of the same message. So I’ve clearly said that this church is not a Congolese church. I’ve clearly said it is a church of Jesus.”

Both Pastor Mpenza and his congregants insisted that their right to live in Germany came from the Lord and was contained within scripture. The message of the Bible was clear: “Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours” (Deuteronomy 11: 24). They were stakeholders in Germany because of God’s promise to believers. “For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein” (Deuteronomy 11: 31). Pastor Joshua of the Miracle Healing Church and his congregants held the same beliefs based on their reading of scripture. Their place was in Germany because they had been sent by God. We were often told “It was not by accident that I came to this place.”

The two congregations differed in their size, the networks of their pastors, the particular talents of their leaders, and the legal status of their
members. Most of the members of L’esprit de Signeur remained asylum seekers with only temporary rights to stay, although the pastor and his wife had been granted refugee status with permanent residency. The congregation of only about thirty members was not totally African; there were a few German women. However, almost all the members were quite poor. Only a few of the African members spoke passable German. In contrast, the Miracle Church had approximately 150 members. A growing number of the migrant members had obtained permanent legal status through marrying Germans and could speak some German. The German partners, especially if they were women, became active members of the church. The congregation increasingly was able to recruit other Germans as members. By 2005 about 20 percent of the congregation was German.

Given their differences, the congregations differed in their methods of evangelization but they shared a commitment to this mission. Members of the L’esprit de Signeur decided that they could use music to bring the people of Halle, both migrants and nonmigrants, to God. They found that on various occasions they were welcome to sing choral music in various activities organized and funded by various public institutions and political foundations. To the pastor and his congregation, these concerts “took place within the frame of evangelization. There is evangelization by means of language and there is evangelization by means of music.”

It is important to note that the local representatives of the institutions in Halle and the state of Sachsen-Anhalt, who sponsored or funded these musical performances, and the pastor and performers from the L’esprit de Signeur held very different views of the purpose and accomplishments of the concerts. Occasionally the sponsors and funders approached the migrants as asylum seekers who had rights to live in Halle because of universal principals of human rights. For example, when the leaders of the congregation decided to stage their own public performance in 2003, they were advised to hold the concert on the International Day of Human Rights. Under this guise, a foundation linked to the German Green Party assisted the church in renting instruments and publicizing the concert.

More often, German organizations approached the migrants as Africans who could give the city a facade of multiculturalism during particular public occasions and celebrations. Consequently gospel choirs in which church members were prominent were invited to perform during the Week of Foreigners, a yearly event held in many German cities, during “African Week,” an annual event in Halle, and during summer folk festivals. Sometimes performers received small stipends for their participation. The church was also provided with space for Sunday prayer services in a meeting center for “Germans and Foreigners.” During the Week of
Foreigners, city dignitaries and multicultural brokers attended the Sunday service of L’espirit de Signeur in this meeting center and joined in the singing.

Compared to Pastor Mpenza, Pastor Joshua, the leader of Miracle Healing Church of Halle, developed few ties to local nonreligious institutions and, although the church had a choir, its members did not participate in multicultural events. Instead the Miracle Healing Church evangelized by organizing healing services, promising that all those who accepted Jesus into their lives would be cured of diseases such as “cancer, blindness, and menstrual problems.” These diseases, believers claimed, were brought on by demonic forces. Those healed were encouraged to testify so as to provide evidence that “Jesus is alive” that the “Holy Spirit moves in Halle.”

The Miracle Church posted on the home page of its Web site two photos, one of the church building and one of Pastor Joshua praying with a blond, white young woman. The caption proclaimed that the church was “the place of miracles, signs, and wonders. There is Power in God’s Word!! Here . . . the sick get healed, the blind see, and many are delivered from bondage of sin.” By 2005 Pastor Joshua had begun to hold healing services for German congregations in neighboring cities. The church produced video tapes of these services and sold them through their Web site and at church services. In 2005, the congregation held a five-day public healing conference in a sports arena in Halle. Two to three hundred people were in attendance on any evening, two-thirds of whom were German. Pastor Joshua and the spiritual warriors of the Miracle Church promised that as worshipers came forward and engaged in prayer, the demons of illness and failure would be forced from their body by the Holy Spirit and “the door of power” would be opened (Field Notes, Healing Conference 2005). When Pastor Joshua called on participants to come forward to be healed both migrants and natives came forward, prayed, and sometimes fell into a trance.

In staging the conference, the Miracle Church received significant assistance from two missionary organizations that were newly established in Halle, one a Mennonite group from the United States and a second led by an Egyptian-German man and his German wife. The two missionary organizations served as cosponsors of the conference, providing staff, speakers, security, prayer counselors, prayer warriors, and organizational experience. However, it was the migrants of the Miracle Healing Church and their religiosity that were central to the event. All participants acknowledged the migrants’ religious and moral leadership and sensibilities, which set the spiritual tone and parameters of the event.

Most of the natives who attended and sought healing were already part of local Pentecostal churches; many had deep ties in local village life. There
were teachers, counselors, and the unemployed. Almost all had more economic resources than the migrants. Ranging in age from teenagers to pensioners, they were brought to the healing conference and various healing services by their search for spiritual passion and community. Many found what they sought from the healing activities that the migrants organized and orchestrated.

In staking their claims to Halle the born-again Christian migrants used not only biblical authority but also their enmeshment in transnational born-again networks. In calling the healing conference in Halle, members of the Miracle Healing Church were responding to and implementing the message of a pan-European Pentecostal conference held in a Berlin stadium in June 2003. The Berlin conference, attended by several members of the Miracle Healing Church, called for a European-wide organization of Pentecostal Churches to bring religious revival to Germany. Those who heeded the preaching of the Miracle Church felt empowered by the strength of the network ties as well as the belief system they were offered. They were also modeling their activities after similar healing services that are being held throughout the world, often led by African migrants and attended by thousands of believers.

The transnational network within which each congregation was situated became visible to congregants through the presence of visiting pastors. Pastor Mpenza had ties to other churches in Belgium, France, Congo, and Chad. Pastor Joshua, the Nigerian pastor, operated on a grander scale and consequently the migrants who participated in the network of the Miracle Healing Church found themselves part of more extensive networks that was linked to other German cities and to the United States, South Korea, and India. An Indian pastor, based in western Germany, had visited more than once and convinced the church to support his missionary work in India by sending funds on a regular basis. The Miracle Healing Church also participated in the Morris Cerullo World Evangelism Organization and sent funds to Cerullo’s efforts to convert Jews in Israel to born-again Christianity.

Through their pastors and their transnational ties, the congregants were exposed to and experienced themselves as part of overlapping Christian globe-spanning networks in ways that validated their faith and their presence in Halle. These ties also served as a form of social capital that could on occasion be shrewdly manipulated. A previous pastor of the Miracle Church used ties to Belgium to obtain asylum. The Miracle Church was also able to spawn a new congregation in near-by Magdeburg, led by a Nigerian man married to a German woman from that city. Becoming a pastor took no formal training but only the recognition by others that you had a calling from God.
Evidence of their connections to the Miracle Healing Church and through it to a global Christian social field directly assisted the asylum seekers in this congregation who were attempting to settle in Germany by marrying a German. Young German couples in the east often do not get married. In this setting, church membership evolved as a form of courting. The migrants who were church members often were able to convince German partners of their good character, as well as the necessity of marriage, by involving the partner in church services. During these services, the potential spouses could see that while they might find the religious behavior of their partner strange, the congregation was part of a broader and powerful movement that had legitimacy in other parts of Germany and globally and one that had an increasing German as well as African leadership. They also learned that marriage was necessary to be a member of this church movement. The desire of their African partner to marry was presented not as a utilitarian effort to obtain a passport but as an act that promised both partners health, prosperity, and fulfillment with the assurance of divine assistance. In these marriages, migrants not only preached and practiced a Christian morality as the basis of their own local and global social citizenship but also shaped the citizenship practices and beliefs of native Germans.

Once married, migrants found that their spouse’s family networks were sometimes welcoming. Although the German families were often poor, they could provide various types of direct assistance such as childcare and local knowledge about accessing governmental offices and benefits. This local knowledge enhanced the ability of migrants to claim rights as social citizens.

Any assessment of the impact of migrants’ social citizenship must include the role played by migrants in expanding the social citizenship of natives. The engagement of Germans as congregants and spouses within the born-again religious networks introduced by African migrants in Halle makes that point clear. Scholars who debate the distinction between formal and substantive citizenship by focusing solely on the vertical relationships between the individual and the state miss a highly significant yet little noted aspect of social citizenship. They ignore the horizontal relationships forged by many migrants, which entail substantive ties to “fellow” citizens (Offe 1994). Christianity as a set of practices, networks and ideology provided the bases and discourses for such horizontal networks among the members of a born-again social field whose participants did not distinguish between a migrant and a native. By joining with migrants, natives who were active in the born-again churches obtained new possibilities of forging ties locally and transnationally. These natives, who came from socially and economically diverse backgrounds, contributed to the efforts to form a new Christian public morality and spirituality.
The significance of our findings in Halle Germany about migrants’ use of born-again local, national, and transnational networks to become social citizens in their locality of settlement are strengthened by our similar findings in Manchester, New Hampshire. In Manchester, we worked with the Resurrection Crusade, a coalition of more than eighteen local born-again congregations. The Resurrection Crusade was organized by Heaven’s Gift, a Nigerian refugee, who had been living in Manchester for five years. He was able to obtain refugee status, at least in part, because of his membership in a global Christian network as he came to Manchester with these networks. The member churches of the Resurrection Crusade include migrants but most of the congregations were composed primarily of white natives of New Hampshire.

The conditions in Manchester and the United States made it possible for Heaven’s Gift and the Crusade to extend their Christian network building into political and economic domains. Political and business leaders were receptive to public representations of immigrants as part of the life of the city, to public displays of religious fervor, and to the incorporation of migrants as cheap, unskilled labor. In this setting the Crusade built a social field that linked their network and the migrants in it to local and state-level Republican and Democratic politicians. The New Hampshire governor in 2004, who was a conservative Republican and strong Bush supporter, personally attended a prayer breakfast of the Resurrection Crusade. The Democratic mayor of Manchester attended the breakfasts from 2003–5 and developed an ongoing relationship to the Crusade. He welcomed members to city hall each year for the “National Day of Prayer,” allowed the Crusade to pray in the Aldermanic Chambers in 2005, and made it possible for the Crusade to hold yearly prayer programs in a city park for which the city provided a band shell and speaker system.

In his 2004 messages to the Crusade’s prayer breakfast and annual conference, the mayor used a diversity narrative, one that reflected the view of migrants that predominated among Manchester’s political and economic leadership. Speaking at the breakfast, the mayor emphasized the contributions of immigrants and refugees to the city through their hard work and diverse cultures. He praised the newcomers who, through their factory work, contributed to the strength of the city’s economy. The mayor’s letter to the prayer conference noted that by the beginning of the twenty-first century Manchester welcomed “new immigrants from Central America, South America, Asia, Africa, and Central Europe.” He went on: “Manchester experienced an infusion of energy and vitality that has contributed to a sense of rebirth, where people from all ethnicities and religious backgrounds come together to form a new and exciting community. We celebrate the
diversity of Manchester and embrace the fact that people from all over the world come to our wonderful city to find the freedom to practice the religion of their heritage.”

It is important to note that the mayor eventually realized that he was preaching to the wrong choir. By 2005 he was tearfully reporting to the Crusade’s prayer breakfast that his granddaughter had been miraculously healed after members of the group had prayed for her. His new narrative reflected his realization that the type of citizenship that Heaven’s Gift and the migrants in his network were marshalling was Christian and not cultural. Rather than emphasizing their foreignness and diverse religious heritage, the migrants who participated in the prayer breakfasts and prayer conferences portrayed the city of Manchester as divided between those who sided with Jesus and those who stood with the devil. As did the African migrant pastors in Halle, Heaven’s Gift stressed the need to rid the city of all demons and evil spirits and build a Christian community. He said that god had sent migrants as missionaries to bring true Christian morality to the city and declare that Jesus was in charge. All political leaders, whatever their party, were bound to make biblical scripture the law of the land. Clearly, without assertions of cultural difference, references to human rights regimes or invocations of formal citizenship in a nation-state, born-again Christianity provided the migrants, and well as the native who joined them, with a form of membership. It gave them the means of claiming, participating in, and contributing morally and politically to the public sphere in Halle and Manchester.

Migrants and natives told us that they came to the events because of their concerns for religious unity, stronger families, and churches and the need to insure Manchester was a Christian city. The white natives of New Hampshire who came to events sponsored by the Crusade had class backgrounds that ranged from manual labor to successful business people. Many had developed personal networks with migrants through such shared activities as prayer “intercessors” or other Christian projects in the city. For core activists, migrants and natives alike, the network of believers became their primary social field, if assessed by the density of their network ties. At the same time, migrant core activists built weak but significant bridging ties into other spheres of life including the political domain.

The ties were weak in Mark Granovetter’s (1973) sense that the migrants’ networks to political actors were not based on multiple mutual or dense connections. But the ties provided the migrants, who participated in the Crusade’s social field, with social capital. They became connected to people who could and did provide resources: shop foreman who helped with hiring; middle-class housewives who furnished apartments for new comers or provided clothing and furniture for newborns; and public officials who
provided network members with prestige, social acceptance, and access to public resources. The Crusade’s social field enabled the establishment and the expansion of horizontal networks of trust that encompassed both migrants and natives. Migrants who are not activists in the Crusade but who attended churches, breakfasts, prayer conferences, and days of prayer linked to the Crusade had an entry way to this social field and its social capital.

The Crusade was more than an organizational nexus. It had its own individual activists who drew their family, friends, and coworkers into an expanding field of Christian activity and connection. From 2002 to 2005, migrants from all over the world increasingly joined this social field that was constructed and expanded by Heaven’s Gift and his core activists. The number of migrants in the core also increased. About 20 percent of those who attended conferences, prayer breakfasts, and prayer events sponsored by the Crusade were migrants of African, Caribbean, Latin American, and Asian origin. Most of the congregations that joined the Crusade resembled Heaven’s Gift’s home church; they were composed primarily of white New Hampshire natives. Although there was a Spanish-speaking and an African American congregation within the Crusade network, these congregations stressed that their primary identity was not as ethnic churches but as true born-again Christians.

Among the public resources made available to Heaven’s Gift through political networks was a weekly television show on local public access television in which Heaven’s Gift was the featured preacher. This outlet gave him a broader public, which reinforced the ability of members of the Crusade to obtain access to political leaders and politicians. At the same time, the nonethnic base built by immigrants in the Crusade could open the door for their direct participation in electoral politics. In the course of our study, Manchester elected Dominican, Haitian, and Puerto Rican state representatives. The Haitian representative also had a religious cable television program and his connection to public access television provided him with an array of other influential city-wide networks. Although the Puerto Rican candidate received support from his Hispanic constituency, all three men could only be elected by having a strong base among immigrants of all nationalities, as well as voters who were native to New Hampshire. Their election provided an indication to migrants in the Crusade of the possibilities that may flow from exactly the kind of the political networks Heaven’s Gift has developed for himself and members of the organization.

As did the Miracle Healing Church in Halle, the Resurrection Crusade belonged to a born-again Christian social field that extended around the world. It included a pastor of Nigerian background who lived in England and a husband and wife evangelical team from Texas who made yearly visits to Manchester.
in a circuit that took them around the world. They brought with them and infused into the prayers of the Manchester churches a militant language calling for “spiritual warfare” by “prayer warriors.” The Texas couple headed the U.S. Prayer Center that produced books, videos, and DVDs and distributed them into dozens of countries. They were experts in “spiritual housecleaning,” a process of prayer that claimed to remove demonic forces from a home. As did the pastors and members of the two churches in Halle and Heaven’s Gift and members of the Crusade in Manchester, these Texas preachers portrayed world events and human sickness in terms of an ever present battle between God and Satan. The Crusade trained “prayer intercessors” in “strategic or city level spiritual warfare” against the devil who assigns his “territorial spirits. . . to rule geographical territories and social networks (Smith 1999: 23). In 2005 the Crusade established the Manchester Prayer Center in an office building in the business district of Manchester where Christians could come to pray or could call to speak to a spiritual counselor. All these activities legitimated the claims of the Resurrection Crusade, including its migrants, to not only being a part of the city but of providing it with spiritual leadership.

Social Citizenship and Born-Again Incorporation in Small Scale Cities

In a city such as Manchester forming a Nigerian congregation would have been difficult considering there were only a handful of Nigerians in the city and they included both Catholics and Muslims. However, Heaven’s Gift might have had success in using a panethnic African identity to form a church. There were several hundred African Protestants in Manchester and an African identity is becoming part of public discourse and these migrants’ self-ascription. Instead Heaven’s Gift joined a home church that was mostly white and working class but included in its ranks migrants from Ghana, Iraq, and Sudan. And he invested most of his energies in building a religious network that linked believers together on the basis of a born-again Christian rather than ethnic, national, or racial identity. In Halle, there were enough migrants to organize Nigerian and Congolese churches based on their national identity and to link those congregations to homeland churches. Yet this form of settlement and ethnic religious identification was not taken.

The significance of the incorporative pathway of born-again Christianity as a means of exercising social citizenship in both Manchester and Halle, although followed by relatively few migrants, must be evaluated within the context of the minimal possibilities for either ethnic incorporation or social mobility on the basis of education that the two cities provided. In Manchester, as in Halle, cultural or social citizenship claims based on ethnic community formation were difficult to develop because the cities lacked
the resources that encouraged ethnic organizing in gateway or global cities: a critical mass of migrants of a single nationality, an ethnic niche economy or market, and social and philanthropic support for ethnic organizations. In Manchester, unlike larger-scale cities such as New York or even Boston, very few public or private agencies provided migrants with opportunities to develop careers as culture brokers who represent the needs or interests of particular ethnicities. Those few migrants who obtained positions in social service agencies generally have not occupied managerial positions and there has been little social mobility for migrants or the possibility for them to become incorporated into city life as representatives of ethnic groups. In settings in which there seem to be fewer bases for ethnic based incorporation, nonethnic religion allowed some migrants in both cities to exercise a form of social citizenship that linked them to both their new city of residence and globally (Glick Schiller, Caglar, and Guldbrandsen 2006a and 2006b).

While, on the one hand, ethnic community formation as a form of social or cultural citizenship may be less feasible in small-scale cities, incorporation through Christian congregations that preach global Christianity may be more possible and more salient in these locations. In these cities, a religion such as Christianity, especially in its born-again or Pentecostal varieties, offered connections to people ranging from international preachers to political leaders who are important in local, national, and global arenas. Such forms of connection and the social capital that its weak ties provided were certainly visible in both cities.

Both Manchester and Halle were not only small in size but also in scale—that is to say they not hubs of finance, commerce, culture, or media that would provide a cosmopolitan context for migrant settlement. In both cities, migrants were cast simultaneously as dangerous or exotic others and as useful colorful bodies that represent a necessary component for marketing the city as a global actor. Migrants, especially African migrants, were highly visible, despite their small numbers. Yet migrants tended bring a more cosmopolitan aura to these cities and to the extent that city officials and business leaders sought to market their cities as localities of multicultural difference, they looked to the migrants. The migrants who joined the nonethnic churches sought a place of worship that did not highlight their public differentiation and brought them together with the natives on terms other than cultural difference. They welcomed the Christian born-again churches, such as those in the Resurrection Crusade network or the Pentecostal churches of Halle, because they divided the world between the saved and unsaved. This categorization allowed migrants to be among the saved, allocating them legitimacy and including them among the saviors of the city.
It is interesting to note that both the U.S. Prayer Center and the Bund freikirchlicher Pfingstgemeinden (Organization of Free Churches) specifically encouraged identification with the local city. The global evangelizing networks to which the congregations we studied belonged all made reference in their literature and their Web sites to the need to wage spiritual warfare in order to root out the evil within each locality. By choosing to emphasize a Christian universalism rather than an ethnic particularism, the migrants who joined this religious movement sought ways to become incorporated as local and global actors on their own terms. They obtained political voice, as well as access to various kinds of social and economic resources not on the basis of legal citizenship, cultural difference, or human rights but on biblical scripture.

**Christian Social Citizenship as an Imperial Project**

The Christian social citizenship claims of the migrants in our study reflected and resonated with the current political project of the leadership of the United States and its efforts to influence political outcomes not only in the United States, but worldwide. The connections between current U.S. foreign policy and fundamentalist Christians we observed were both ideological and organizational. Rather than repudiating states or political activism, these fundamentalist Christians supported special roles for certain states in the battle against evil. The United States was seen as a redeemer nation and the modern state of Israel was taken as evidence of God’s plan coming to fruition. Support for the United States in both Afghanistan and Iraq could be heard from both the Nigerian pastor and core migrant members of the Miracle Church in Halle and from the Nigerian head of the Resurrection Crusade in Manchester and his members.

Among fundamentalist Christians, the role of the United States in the world is linked to biblical prophecy. Multilateralism including the United Nations is understood as part of a current conjunction of evil, a war of Armageddon, disease, immorality, and natural disaster that the Bible foretells (Oldfield 2004). If multilateralism is the work of the devil, than U.S. unilaterialism can be justified as the work of God. It is important to note that there is no single born-again movement but a series of overlapping organizations, each of which has their own priorities but all of which have been loosely united in support of U.S. actions around the world.

Key makers of U.S. foreign policy and the president of the United States are members of this transnational social field. President George W. Bush is himself a fervent born-again Christian and belongs to religious networks that hold these beliefs. However, it is not just Bush’s personal beliefs that have connected U.S. foreign policy to a fundamentalist form of Christianity. Grassroots networks of fundamentalist Christians have become directly
engaged in political solicitation for candidates and policies of the Republican Party and in support of U.S. imperialist projects in the Middle East and elsewhere. The Christian Coalition, founded in 1989 by preacher Pat Robinson with the goal of “defending America’s Godly heritage by getting Christians involved in their government again,” was at first seen as a stronghold of the far right (Christian Coalition 2005). By 2004 the Coalition had become a mainstream player in the Republican Party and in the White House. Its ability to turn out the vote was made clear by the results of the Republican congressional victories in 1994 and directly contributed to Bush’s ability to take the White House in 2000 and 2004. This activity and influence became widely acknowledged by both scholars and the press, especially after the religious vote proved to be significant in the 2004 presidential elections. 

The efforts of neoconservative theorists to actually recruit a religious migrant constituency have been less widely remarked upon. Paralleling the recruitment of anti-Communist Hungarian, Cuban, Czech, Polish, and Vietnamese refugees during the Cold War, the neoconservatives have been using U.S. refugee policy to select born-again Christians who are encouraged to espouse and propagate their religious fundamentalism throughout the United States. Often these refugees come from areas of interest to U.S. foreign policy. Of central interest seems to be refugees from an array of countries linked to the U.S. goal of dominating the world’s oil supplies. The United States has accepted Christian asylum seekers and supported political leaders and movements from such countries as Sudan, Indonesia, and Nigeria. Many of these countries are characterized by tensions between Christians and Muslims.

The U.S. Prayer Center, the fundamentalist Christian network to which Heaven’s Gift and his Resurrection Crusade organization belong, has distributed President Bush’s biography in return for a financial pledge to their organization. The center, recruiting worldwide under the slogan of “Disciplining the Nations,” boasted that its members include 4,000 pastors. These disciples were encouraged to identify with the United States, which was portrayed on the Web site, during the year before the 2004 elections, as “God’s right hand under President Bush,” who speaks directly with the Lord. Readers were informed that the United States was founded in order to institute a Christian mission and were encouraged to use their vote to make sure that the nation once again embraced this cause.

Through such messages, people within fundamentalist Christian networks such as the one organized by Heaven’s Gift were encouraged to identify with the United States, even as they espoused a Christian identity. Heaven’s Gift insisted that divisions over doctrine were the work of the devil
and the goal of Christian organizing was unity. Part of that unity must be
expressed by praying for President Bush because Bush had declared he was
intent on obeying God’s commands. Here it is important to note that identi-
fication with the United States was not a simple identification with a nation-
state. This allegiance was given on the basis of a form of born-again ideology
that portrayed the United States under Bush as leading the struggle against
satanic forces and for the establishment of the kingdom of the Lord.

For these Christians, the U.S. flag did not symbolize Americanization,
the assimilation of immigrants into a U.S. identity that precludes identifica-
tion with the rest of the world. Instead the U.S. flag, which decorated the
U.S. Prayer Center’s Web site, was waved for the United States in its role of
defending Christians globally and combating evil around the world. Distinc-
tions between immigrants and foreigners lost importance vis-à-vis the more
significant born-again Christian identity. What mattered was the acceptance
of Jesus. Only those who believed would be saved.

Similar beliefs and perspectives were present in the migrant churches in
Halle. As we have noted, Joshua, the Nigerian pastor of the Miracle Heal-
ing Church, maintained ongoing ties to and collects money for the Morris
Cerullo World Evangelical Ministry, which was based in the United States
and espoused the politics of U.S. fundamentalist Christians. Cerullo circled
the world holding evangelical gatherings of tens of thousands of people and
met with third world leaders (2005). It is important to note that Heaven’s
Gift was also a great fan of Cerullo, had attended one of his conferences, and
had filled the Crusade’s bookshelves with his books. Through the Cerullo
ministry, the Miracle Healing Church in Halle supported evangelical work
in Israel.

Ruby, a Nigerian woman who served as treasurer of the Miracle Heal-
ing Church, summarized her understanding of the God-Israel–Iraq-U.S.
nexus as follows: To be “on the side of Israel is to be on the side of God.
The U.S. is on the side of Israel.” She also declared that the “United States
must be doing the work of God in Iraq because it is a country with so
many strong Christians and because it is a friend of Israel’s.” Through a
network of networks the Miracle Church and the Resurrection Crusade
were linked in their common support for Israel and its protector and major
foreign donor, the United States.

It is widely acknowledged that in the past, missionaries served as ideo-
logical agents of imperial rule, legitimating the right of colonial states to
transform the belief systems of the colonized and impose the values, stan-
dards, laws, and interests of the colonizers (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991).
Christian missions also had a profound impact on the shaping of notions
of race, gender, nation, and citizen in the colonizing countries, although
this aspect of the global expansion of Christianity is less studied. Today the evangelizing organizations and networks of fundamentalist Christians follow a similar process globally by legitimating the exercise of imperial power. They provide the missionary zeal and the call for spiritual and moral revival. In their quest to claim membership in their new land, migrants to Europe and the United States from these regions become organizationally and ideologically linked to Christian fundamentalism, claiming the entire world as a U.S. domain. Their support for global evangelization is an aspect of their local role in their place of settlement. Their missionary activity often includes sending money and missionaries abroad as well as asserting spiritual leadership in their new home.

In their incorporation into municipalities, states, and into the United States as a whole, born-again Christian migrants find themselves quite at home. Their deeply held beliefs resonate with the dominant U.S. political project. The critique they make of the culture around them is reinforced and celebrated by those in power. The networks that may have brought them to the United States, or those they join, connect them not only to a welcoming rhetoric but also to powerful local and national political actors. Even without legal citizenship they find themselves welcomed into the processes of building political and cultural constituencies that affirm the dominant political project. They are esteemed as part of this project. The centrality of New Hampshire as a focus of presidential politics gives Christian migrants there a particularly high profile role.

Although the situation of born-again Christian migrants in Germany seems to be of a different nature, the evangelizing and expanding Christian networks and their capacity to access power situate and legitimate their presence in Germany on similar grounds. While the majority of the population of the former West Germany holds official membership in a recognized church and pays taxes collected by the state to support church activities, born-again churches are seen by most of the population as sects rather than legitimate congregations. Furthermore, in the states of the former East Germany, most people do not belong to any church. Ironically, however, as in many other places in Europe, fundamentalist Christianity is growing rapidly in Germany. In this context, migrants who asset a belonging to the city by bringing Christian morality to the place find a kind of legitimacy that would not be accorded to other religious groups and leaders. Moreover, for the local Germans in eastern cities such as Halle who are faced with massive unemployment, the fact that African migrants can mediate connections to institutions of power through their globe spanning Christian networks can legitimate their local settlement. At the same time, the born-again migrants—connected as they are though Christian networks to the U.S. imperial
project—feel that both heavenly and earthly powers grant them to right to speak and to belong wherever they have settled.

Conclusion

If we examined the two born-again congregations formed by migrants in Halle from the point of view of legal citizenship, we could easily conclude, as do many of the scholars in Germany, that such migrants are not part of German society. The recent changes in German citizenship laws that will now allow a handful of members of the two congregations to obtain citizenship are not changing the view of these scholars, who deploy an ethnic lens when they look at congregations such as the ones we studied. Prepared to see segregation and cultural difference, that is what they find. Yet the migrant members of these congregations developed pathways of incorporation. They began to speak and act in the name of the city despite their varying legal status. The born-again activities included: asserting rights to be in Halle and in Germany as God’s missionaries, insisting on maintaining a presence in Germany, and obtaining state benefits and services despite the persistent efforts of the German state to force them to leave; participating in public activities that promote and celebrate the city; providing Germans access to transnational born-again networks; and providing public activities that promise healing to the general population. Thus, despite the nonreligious nature of the former GDR (German Democratic Republic), born-again migrant activities located the migrants (though ambiguously) into the city’s social and political landscape.

The New Hampshire case is even more striking. Migrants, some of whom were not legal citizens and did not have the right to vote, were courted by city and state politicians because they organized a religious network that contained persons who were not only eligible to vote but consistently voted. Furthermore born-again Christian migrants in New Hampshire facilitate the incorporation of the natives into the city, nationally, and transnationally through their influential Christian networks and through the “healing” they provide.

In short, migrants, who hold a range of legal statuses including permanent resident, refugee, asylum seeker, and the undocumented, may make claims on the state in which they are living (despite their missing legal citizenship). Furthermore they may become social actors within that state influencing its policies, procedures, discourses, and foreign relations. However, it is important to note that the particular access to social citizenship through born-again Christian networks takes on much of its force from the particular historical conjuncture in which the United States holds the dominant position in the world and uses the neoconservative Christian project as
a crucial part of its claim to legitimacy. Catholicism, Islam, and Buddhism also provide transnational networks and universalist claims that can offer its practitioners a claim to rights within a locality. The intermediate role claimed by Muslim organizations brought to France from Pakistan to missionize to North African migrants and then utilized by the French state in the midst of the fall 2005 urban uprisings is an instance of one form Islamic social citizenship. However, the various religious networks and narratives lead migrants to different sets of positioning and claims on states.

As we have shown in this chapter, discussions of citizenship cannot be grounded only in the legal system and cannot be confined to membership in a single nation-state. Migrants’ access to overlapping networks that provide status, resources, and legitimation offer venues for their participation as social citizens within a nation-state of settlement and also can give them influence in other nation-states into which these networks extend. The transnational networks of born-again Christian migrants with their global claims to universal moral values can have an impact on the positioning of migrants within a particular locality and nation-state. The experiences of the born-again Christians in Manchester and Halle remind us that discussions of citizenship can not be reduced to legal citizenship, enfranchisement, and participation in the electoral system of a state. On the other hand, the types of social citizenship that migrants may assert can have an impact on the political process including the electoral system. Finally, as they assert their social citizenship locally, migrants may contribute to the wielding and legitimation of power, including imperial power, globally.

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Notes

1. The research team in Manchester consisted of Nina Glick Schiller, Thaddeus Gulbrandsen, and Peter Buchannan and in Halle, Nina Glick Schiller, Evangelis Karagiannis, Martin Seiber, Markus Rao, and Julia Wenzel and student assistants from the Department of Ethnology of Martin Luther University, Halle.

2. Building on concepts developed by Manchester school of anthropologists (Epstein 1967; Mitchell 1969) and by Bourdieu, we define social field as a network of networks.

3. See, for example, research on Alevi and other Islamic networks in Europe in which migrants shape their religious claims within the citizenship discourses and identity politics. Their claim making processes develop in interplay with the opportunity structures provided by various states, EU, and human rights regimes.

4. Our broader study explores multiple pathways of local and transnational incorporation. Our ethnography included interviews with city leaders and more than sixty interviews with migrants in each city. In addition, we participated in events and activities of migrant religious organizations and interviewed core activists in both cities.

5. There are ethnic congregations in Manchester but if we configure our research by focusing only on ethnonationalist churches or transnational communities that build such churches we miss important transborder processes.

6. The National Day of Prayer was taken over by born-again Christians and used in their spiritual warfare campaigns.

7. Manchester did have some Protestant churches that were Spanish in language but Christian in identity and several Korean Protestant congregations seem to have promoted their ethnic distinctiveness.

8. For a discussion of the concept of scale see Brenner (1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2004) and Caglar and Glick Schiller 2006; for a plea to consider the context of the city see Brettell (2003)

9. This may be true for other religions as well.

10. The differences between the cities are addressed in another paper. See Glick Schiller, Caglar, Gulbrandsen (2006b).

11. This occurred more in Manchester than in Halle, which has tried to emphasize its history rather than its diversity in recent marketing campaigns.

12. Although by 2006 there was some disarray in the coalition, the grassroots believers did not doubt the righteousness of the project and continued to see war in the Middle East as evidence of the “end times.”

13. Eliot Abrahms, who became a member of the National Security Council under George W. Bush, previously wrote about religious freedom and then served as chair of the commission established by the U.S. International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.