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## The Transnational Infrastructures of Luso-Pentecostal Mega-Cities

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# The Transnational Infrastructures of Luso-Pentecostal Mega-Cities

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## Abstract

The paper focuses on how cities and transnational infrastructures transform each other by taking into account the significant role of religion in the creation of social, economic and spatial diversities in and across urban spaces. Examining the Luso-Pentecostal interactions between cities in Southern Africa, Brazil and in Europe, the analysis aims to demonstrate that religious practices occurring simultaneously at different localities play an important role in shaping megacities transnationally. Through travelling pastors, satellite connections and trans-continental cultural translations, Pentecostals create belonging that is located in distinct global landscapes.

**Keywords:** pentecostalism, lusophone, transnationalism, Maputo, Amsterdam

## Introduction

Every time I attended the church services of the Portuguese neo-Pentecostal Maná Church<sup>1</sup> in the city of Maputo or in the city of Amsterdam between 2005 and 2014, the main leader of this international church, Apostle Jorge Tadeu, would address the congregation via satellite transmission through a projection screen set up in the chancel of the church. He would speak either from his headquarters in Lisbon, or from Rio de Janeiro or London; he frequently travelled to these cities on his private jet. Greeting his followers all over the world, he would say: 'hello Europe, hello Africa, hello Brazil;' the church audiences would wave and greet back. The subsequent screenshots showed Tadeu and his followers at work in the cities of São Paulo,

Luanda,<sup>2</sup> Rotterdam, Johannesburg, London and Lisbon, amongst others. Moreover, all subsequent shots and advertisements about the church's activities showed technologies of mobility, such as pastors using iPads and airplanes carrying the leaders to different locations in the world. In Amsterdam, I frequently witnessed how the visitors who originated from Angola, Cape Verde, Brazil and Mozambique would come to the church with a suitcase, having just returned from business trips to Lisbon or Luanda, or from visiting family in Toulouse or London. Others were prepared to travel after the service. The huge speakers in the church, the shots from different cities in the world, and the members

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<sup>1</sup> The Maná Church (*Igreja Maná*), or Maná for short, was founded in Lisbon in 1984 by the engineer Jorge Tadeu, who was born in Mozambique and converted to Pentecostalism while living in South Africa. The Church has branches on all continents with varying degrees of success (see e.g. Smit 2012).

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<sup>2</sup> The Maná Church was very successful in Angola where it started to operate in 1998. In 2008, however, the Angolan government forced a separation between the Angolan Maná Church and the Church in Portugal because of a money scandal and politics of nationalization. For more details see Blanes (2015) and Smit (2012: 61-63).

who entered the church building with their suitcases all communicated mobility, urbanity and connectivity.

Pentecostalism is one of the most successful spirit-centred forms of Christianity. Since its emergence in different places in the world at the turn of the twentieth century (Anderson 2013), it has proliferated around the globe, constantly renewing itself in a myriad of ways (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013; Hefner 2013). Neo-Pentecostal churches, in particular, proliferate all over the world, and they usually view the earth as a spiritual battlefield between demonic and heavenly forces, concentrating on the so-called Prosperity Gospel, which professes that a combative faith brings happiness, health and prosperity in all aspects of life.<sup>3</sup> Pentecostal Christianity serves as the exemplar of cultural globalization in modern times: its doctrines, organizational formats, and services are easily adopted all over the world, seemingly irrespective of local cultural variation (Csordas 2009). Wherever one attends a Pentecostal church, in Lagos, Johannesburg, Seoul, London, Rio de Janeiro or Los Angeles, the services, messages and practices are remarkably similar to each other (Miller and Yamamori 2007; Poewe 1994). What is particularly striking in this respect is that this apparently global Pentecostal homogeneity can produce a sense of disconnection with the surrounding space with respect to flow of ideas, money and practices (Knibbe 2009; Krause and Van Dijk 2016). As Knibbe (2009) described in reference to the Nigerian Redeemed Christian Church of God in the Netherlands, the transnational locations produced by these Pentecostals have more to do with other Pentecostal locations in the country or across the world than with the local context. Pentecostal practices create an alternative geography of transnational landscapes of connections, breaking with local cultural traditions (van de Kamp and Van Dijk 2010), converting buildings into churches or

spaces where the Holy Spirit is made present through people, sound, and all sorts of media (De Witte 2011; Krause 2008), as well as shaping opportunities through transnational business courses (Ukah 2016; Van Dijk 2010). Overall, the building of transnational connections by Pentecostals is focused on “the elaboration of a critical geography, which includes an identification of battlegrounds, all around the globe, where salvation is needed; and an elevation of born-again Christians to the highest points in this landscape, thereby dissolving a diasporic position” (Krause and Van Dijk 2016: 111).

The transnational landscapes of neo-Pentecostal connections are clearly linked to urban expansion,<sup>4</sup> attracting urban classes that look for and invest in upward mobility, empowerment and self-realization on socio-economic and cultural terms (Frahm-Arp 2009; Lima 2007; Van Dijk 2010). A particular, cosmopolitan and glamorous urban way of life is conveyed during church services and courses are offered that focus on prosperity in all domains of life. In the African context in particular, Pentecostals often idealize city life by demonizing the rural and propagating the idea that rural traditions are backward (Meyer 1998; Ukah 2016). A growing Christian, urban class of relatively highly-educated young people explores the Pentecostal cultural forms of romantic love, gospel music and self-responsibility (Ingalls and Yong 2015; van de Kamp 2016; van Dijk 2010, 2015). These Pentecostals are part of a series of social changes taking place in their cities today that also affect religious change. The entrepreneurial focus in Pentecostalism intersects with international urban neo-liberal developments, evolving into specific urban-religious configurations (Lanz 2014). Pentecostalism can be considered a ‘constitutive force of urban modernity’ and a medium for urban world-making, as it creates alternative urban worlds through its transnational connections (Lanz and Oosterbaan 2016; see also Roy and Ong 2011).

<sup>3</sup> The Pentecostal churches discussed in this piece all have neo-Pentecostal features. I use as a shorthand the term Pentecostalism while being aware of the variety of *Pentecostalisms*.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion on rural-urban distinctions in Pentecostalism, see Englund 2006 and Jones 2005.

In my contribution to this special issue on African megacities, I examine how transnational Pentecostal infrastructures intersect with urban spaces. Taking into account the significant role of religion in the creation of social, economic and spatial diversities in and across urban spaces (Becci et al. 2012), I focus on the Luso-Pentecostal<sup>5</sup> interactions between cities in Southern Africa, South America and Europe. I aim to demonstrate that religious practices occurring simultaneously at different localities play an important role in shaping megacities transnationally. Through travelling pastors, satellite connections, and trans-continental cultural translations, Pentecostals re-shape social relations, cultural identities and economic exchanges in and between cities by investing in transnational connections and by trying to 'overcome' or disconnect from and change local geographies and infrastructures.

In other words, I suggest that the intersection of spaces, religion and transnational connections shape megacities. Following the concept of 'worlding cities' (Roy and Ong 2011), I approach the city not only as a fixed locality, but also as a milieu shaped by national, global, and transnational forces in which religion is not a mere idiom, but an important force in creating the urban (Meyer 2014). Different infrastructures – economic, cultural, transportation, religious – come together and reinforce each other, shaping megacities in a transnational urban sense. Pentecostalism creates different transnational urban spaces (Krätke et al. 2012) through the networks that stretch across the borders of nation-states, through which ideas, practices, and resources circulate (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), shaping the life of the cities. Going beyond any single urban place, the city becomes a site of Pentecostal practices that create belonging to connections and trajectories (Coleman and Maier 2013; Krause and van Dijk 2016). More than a 'translocal' phenomenon

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<sup>5</sup> Lusophone or Luso refers to linkages with Portuguese cultures and languages. See further below.

(Smith 2005), Pentecostals extend the borders of their own cities by making themselves part of developments and practices elsewhere, which is facilitated by the borderless power of the Holy Spirit. One is transposed from a particular place into a much larger space that consists of flow, mobility and opportunities.<sup>6</sup>

The transnational urban networks Pentecostals create consist of various global religious flows; much more than that, however, they are about building and sustaining particular transnational infrastructures, histories and memories.<sup>7</sup> The cases I will discuss below are all part of a Lusophone milieu heavily influenced by and also shaping the variety of Portuguese Christian languages and cultures (Naro et al. 2007; Sarró and Blanes 2009). Based on my long-term ethnographic research – beginning in 2005 – on transnational Pentecostal movements in Maputo and Amsterdam,<sup>8</sup> I aim to show that even though, strictly speaking, both cities do not qualify as megacities – they do not have more than 10 mil-

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<sup>6</sup> Importantly, this perspective takes us beyond migration as the principal form of transnationalism, and looks into interactions between individuals who do not necessarily travel themselves in order to maintain relations across borders through various forms of communication and mobility (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1009). For example, many Pentecostals in Maputo have never travelled abroad, but have actively established and maintained relations with Pentecostals elsewhere, contributing to the transnationality of their cities (van de Kamp 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Although transnationalism and globalization are related, the two processes should be distinguished in regard to Pentecostalism (Krause and Van Dijk 2016). Globalization involves all kinds of global flows, whereas transnationalism refers to particular flows and connections across specific borders (Glick Schiller 2005), such as the Lusophone ones.

<sup>8</sup> Fieldwork in Maputo took place during 26 months of ethnographic fieldwork between 2005 and 2011. Maputo was chosen as the fieldwork site because of the growing Brazilian Pentecostal presence, evidencing the increasing role of 'Southern Christianity' (Jenkins 2002) in worldwide Pentecostalism. Fieldwork in Amsterdam took place during various months in 2012, 2013 and 2016. Amsterdam was chosen because it is not an official Lusophone location, but is one of the important destinations for Angolans and Brazilians in Europe, contributing to the variety of Lusophone networks and cultures.

lion inhabitants –, they are part of a Luso-Pentecostal transnational urban landscape created by connected, urban Pentecostal citizens. Pentecostals shape their megacity through mobility, imaginations and media. They live and act in global, transnational and local spaces simultaneously.

At the same time, the meaning and appropriation of the Luso-Pentecostal transnational connections differ in the two cities. In Maputo, transnational Pentecostal connections are crucial for urban Christians to spur innovation through new entrepreneurial initiatives and through alternative family forms by disconnecting from the local, ‘rural’ context. In Amsterdam, participation in transnational Pentecostal performances adds to the integration of Dutch-Angolan and Brazilian Pentecostals into the city by emphasizing their position as cosmopolitan, connected world citizens, transposing them from the marginalized status accorded them as (undocumented) migrants to the centre of the world. Yet in both cities, the transnational connectivity and identity re-negotiation among Pentecostals can be deeply painful and discordant. In this sense, the art of being a Pentecostal world citizen also discloses unresolved tensions of living and acting in divergent global, transnational, and local spaces.

### **Luso-Pentecostal Urban Connections**

Pentecostalism is presented and presents itself as a non-territorial religion: one can be in touch with the Holy Spirit anywhere. However, in practice, routes, trajectories, languages and environments are essential in producing the divine presence (De Witte 2011; Oosterbaan 2017). In the cases presented below, the Portuguese language plays an important role in connecting Portuguese-speaking Pentecostal adherents across urban places all over the world. In particular, these adherents often share similar ideas and practices of spiritual presence and cultural styles. These similarities are all part of and shaped by the cultures of the so-called Lusophone Atlantic (Naro et al. 2007) and, more specifically, a religious Lusophone Atlantic (Sarró and Blanes 2009). This Atlantic space has been formed by

the histories and cultural logics molded by centuries of political, cultural, economic and religious exchange connected to the former Portuguese colonial empire, which included, amongst others, Portugal, Brazil, Angola and Mozambique.<sup>9</sup> In any given urban Pentecostal milieu, such as in Maputo and Amsterdam, there are different combinations between presented imaginaries of the Lusophone cultures – religions, connections and movements – and actual connections as displayed by the travels and routes of people and things. In the case of the Maná Church, for example, the initial central role of Portugal in the Lusophone world still seems to persist, while in other cases, Brazilian religious forms are at the centre or are easily transposed to different contexts (Rocha and Vásquez 2013). As a result, Lusophone Pentecostal networks include different connections, such as Luso-Brazilian, Luso-African, Luso-European and Afro-Brazilian ones, amongst others. These connections come together in a variety of ways and link urban spaces in different continents with each other, creating, for example, Luso-Afro-European networks or Luso-Afro-Brazilian networks.

Various large neo-Pentecostal churches with Brazilian roots, such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, The World Church of the Power of God, and the God is Love Church, are present in almost every large city in the US, South-America, Europe, Africa, Oceania and Asia, continuously adapting their practices and discourses to changing socio-economic, political and cultural realities (Corten et al. 2003; Freston 2001; Oro et al. 2009). These churches have developed and exported spiritual-cultural concepts that have become popular among specific groups of people in a variety of cities. These concepts are almost all distinctive translations of spiritual powers and originate from the symbolic universe of Afro-Brazilian religions. In Brazil, the neo-

<sup>9</sup> The term Lusophone is not about a fixed identity or culture, but encompasses a diversity of transnational networks of peoples, religions and cultures in different historical and contemporary periods (e.g. colonial and post-colonial).



Pentecostal churches are well-known for their belligerent language against the ‘evil’, ‘devilish’ spirits of the Afro-Brazilian religions Umbanda and Candomblé. Every Friday, the day that the followers of Umbanda and Candomblé perform their rituals, the Pentecostal churches organize sessions of liberation. Anyone who is suffering from symptoms such as headaches, nervousness, fear, or depression that are considered to be the result of the diabolic practices of Candomblé and Umbanda is invited to participate. During rituals of exorcism, ‘evil’ is expelled from their bodies. In this respect, Almeida (2009) has argued that the Universal Church, in particular, defined itself and expanded by denying and, at the same time, assimilating the symbolic universe from Afro-Brazilian religions with the image of the Devil (see also Meyer 1999).

Brazilian Pentecostal missionaries have taken this image of the Devil to African countries such as Mozambique, where they combat the origins of Afro-Brazilian evil spirits – from their perspective, the spirits travelled long ago with the slaves to Brazil, and now they have returned to fight them, contributing to a new chapter in a long Lusophone Atlantic history of exchange (van de Kamp 2013a). As in Brazil, African cities such as Luanda, Maputo and Johannesburg also host liberation sessions organized by Brazilian Pentecostal pastors on Fridays to fight the demonic powers of traditional healers and ancestor spirits (Mafra et al. 2013; Van Wyk 2014). What is particularly interesting here is that some Afro-Brazilian spirits seem to travel more easily in and between urban spaces than others, e.g. spirits that personify the ambiguities of femininity and female sexuality in contemporary urban societies where women increasingly participate in neo-liberal capitalist labour and consumer culture and might opt not to marry. Their engagement with these ‘evil’ spirits cause relational problems, infertility, and indulgence in luxuries that are transformed by the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal urban women appear to respond to the challenges of contemporary city life and to shape new relational forms (van de Kamp 2016).

In the Dutch Randstad (Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam), as well as in Paris (Almeida and Gutierrez 2015), the Universal Church attracts a substantial number of Dutch and French Afro-Caribbeans alongside Brazilian immigrants and other Portuguese-speaking followers. These groups connect with the particular translation of African-derived religions by Brazilian Pentecostals, particularly when it comes to gaining prosperity in all domains of urban life – housing, employment, and relationships. The Brazilian pastors speak of *macumba* in every place where they see ‘evil’ powers at work, referring to witchcraft or *feitiçaria*. *Macumba*<sup>10</sup> is a pejorative term in Brazilian Pentecostal jargon used to insinuate that Afro-Brazilian religions and the healing work performed by traditional African or African-derived healers constitute witchcraft or *feitiçaria* (van de Kamp 2013a). The term “fetish” derives from the Portuguese word *feitiço* that was used to refer to amulets and all kinds of devotional objects. In their accounts of the discoveries in West Africa, the Portuguese seafarers called the amulets Africans were using *feitiços* (Sansi-Roca 2007). The Portuguese *feitiço* became synonymous with African religion, which the Protestant travelers framed as devilish and evil in the colonial encounter (Pietz 1985). Today, Brazilian Pentecostal pastors combat *feitiçaria* in Maputo, Paris, the Dutch Randstad and other cities, by liberating people with an African background in particular from the ‘pacts with the Devil.’ Traditional healers would have arranged these pacts in order for them to become successful, but here they need to be broken by the Holy Spirit to be able to lead a prosperous city life.

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<sup>10</sup> There is no agreement in the literature on the linguistic origins of the term *macumba* and what it exactly denotes. Hayes (2007: 287) explained that: “Some scholars linked ‘macumba’ to a Bantu language and a certain type of percussive musical instrument. Given the centrality of percussion in African and African-derived religions, this may account for the use of the term in reference to the ritual practices of Bantu-speaking slaves and their descendants, who were especially prominent in Rio [de Janeiro] from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century”.

Mozambican Pentecostals often speak about the combat against *macumba* in their lives (van de Kamp 2013a) as do Afro-Caribbeans in the Dutch Randstad and in Paris (Almeida, personal communication, April 2013). As I have examined elsewhere (Van de Kamp 2013a), concepts like *macumba* allow the Brazilian missionaries to make a particular connection with African spiritual realities while at the same time, by using this foreign terminology, they offer a form through which Afro-Pentecostals in Maputo, Amsterdam and Paris can distance from these realities. It is the combination of comparable spiritual experiences and the foreign distance of Brazilian pastors that would appear to make Brazilian Pentecostalism particularly suitable to transgressing local attachments and perceived limitations.

Additional elements in this specific Luso-Brazilian Pentecostal translational infrastructure of the Devil in urban life include the role of various media. For example, Mozambican Pentecostal women often made a connection between the popular Brazilian *telenovelas* (television soaps) broadcast on Mozambican television and the Brazilian churches because of the supposedly similar way in which the *telenovela* actors and Brazilian pastors displayed forms of romantic love they found appealing (van de Kamp 2013b). For the Mozambican women with whom I spoke, there was something uniquely Brazilian in the ideal of romantic love. In our conversations about romance, love and marriage, Brazilian *telenovelas* were important sources of comparison and inspiration. These women always highlighted particular issues they found striking in the Brazilian *telenovelas* that were related to their own situation that were also addressed during Pentecostal church services and counselling sessions about love. These issues were: concerns about partners' infidelity towards each other; the independent behavior young couples could demonstrate in the organization of their marriage when negotiating with their families and the elders; and the influence of spiritual forces on romantic relationships. In some *telenovelas*, supernatural powers are visible, such as spirits

and images related to the Afro-Brazilian religions of Candomblé or Umbanda, including the sea goddess Iemanjá and the spirit of *pombagira* that show the ambiguities of female sexuality that were also being discussed in Maputo as part of changing models of urban femininity (Groes-Green 2011). Sexuality and intimacy materialize through the multiple levels of movement and framing between Mozambican Pentecostals, media like *telenovelas*, and pastors, and information related to notions of love. Pastors and soap stars encourage reflecting on urban society and women's expectations, desires and experiences. Pentecostal women, in turn, are analyzing their own situations and introducing new forms of dating with reference to these role models.

A similar process occurs in Brazil; *telenovelas* allow viewers to imagine and feel how the spiritual works (Oosterbaan 2017). Yet here, *telenovelas* principally seem to mediate the Devil because they are perceived as diabolical programmes. This is related to the ideological battle that takes place between media empires in Brazil, one representing Catholic and Afro-Brazilian religions (Globo) and the other Pentecostalism (TV Record), a battle that is largely absent in Mozambique. Even though Globo broadcasts on Mozambican television, it does not carry the cultural baggage that it does in Brazil; however, pastors in Maputo could also use the *telenovelas* to demonstrate how the Devil works. Furthermore, in my conversations with Pentecostal adherents in Amsterdam originating from Cape Verde, Brazil and Angola, they regularly referred to episodes from *telenovelas*<sup>11</sup> and Pentecostal services they had accessed on the Internet – through YouTube and Brazilian online channels such as Rede Super<sup>12</sup> – to strengthen their argu-

<sup>11</sup> The Luso-Pentecostal women I met in Amsterdam watched popular *telenovelas* from the early 2000s that can be viewed on YouTube, such as *Da Cor do Pecado* – featuring an Afro-descendant and addressing racial prejudice, and *Senhora do Destino* – about a poor family that moved from the Northeastern Region of Brazil to Rio de Janeiro to find a better life.

<sup>12</sup> [www.redesuper.com.br](http://www.redesuper.com.br)



ments about how God and spirits operate in the lives of urban citizens.

In short, the Pentecostal connections of similar, mostly Portuguese-speaking churches across time and space result in their operation in a specific transnational urban space that is part of the religious Lusophone Atlantic. This particular transatlantic space functions as a hub of Pentecostal religiosities in the making and is urban to a large extent. Through the circulation of charismatic leaders, narratives, rituals and various media, Pentecostal adherents in different cities constantly connect specific Afro-Luso spirits, ideas and practices to urban changes, opportunities and problems, creating belonging that is located in distinct global landscapes (Coleman 2013). As the cases below show, certain cities become nodes of transnational connections (Ong 2011) that, in this case, draw upon Luso-Pentecostal ideas; these connections are constantly re-contextualized and reimagined in an attempt to create or break established horizons of urban standards in and beyond a particular city.

### **Pentecostal mobility in Maputo**

Brazilian pastors play an important role in connecting followers and cities across the transnational Luso-Pentecostal space (e.g. Corten et al. 2003; Freston 2001; Rocha and Vásquez 2013). A principal element of their work is to reveal to their urban audiences across the transatlantic world how the Devil operates (Corten et al. 2003). They speak about their experiences with *macumba* and how they have been saved from it. The relevance of these sermons and accompanying practices, however, varies in all the different cities where the Pentecostal pastors operate. In Amsterdam, the Luso-Pentecostal followers are almost all immigrants, whereas in Maputo, they are mostly locals, which has an impact on the relevance and appropriation of the transnational Pentecostal connections. In Maputo, transnational Luso-Pentecostalism is crucial for urban Christians to spur innovation through new entrepreneurial initiatives and alternative family forms in specific urban spaces.

Pentecostalism is relatively new to Mozambique, where before independence from Portugal in 1975, the religious landscape was largely defined by traditional African religions, Islam, Catholicism, classic Protestantism and African Independent Churches. In the postcolonial era, however, Evangelicals and Pentecostals are of growing importance and, according to the last census (INE 2010), now represent 11 per cent of the total population and 21 percent in the capital of Maputo.<sup>13</sup> This rapid growth is embodied in the neo-Pentecostal churches that have mostly come from Brazil, have sprung up in every neighbourhood in Maputo, and have come to define the face of Pentecostalism in the urban areas (Cruz e Silva 2003; Freston 2005). The most visible Brazilian Pentecostal church is the Universal Church, followed by the World Church of the Power of God. Many Pentecostals moved from one Pentecostal church to the other and also frequented the Maná Church (see above), for example, which was often considered Brazilian because of the similar style of discourses and practices, and because the Church is also active in Brazil. These churches appeared at the time market discourses were finding inroads in different spheres of Mozambican society. As observed by Lima (2007) for Brazil, there appears to be a correlation between the increasing spread of neo-liberal discourses about entrepreneurship, the market and self-reliance in Mozambique and the growing popularity of Brazilian Pentecostalism, which fervently propagates the Prosperity Gospel.

Most worshipers and converts of the principal Luso-Pentecostal churches in Maputo, were young – between 16 and 30 years – and relatively successful socio-economically and/or aspired to be and stay upwardly mobile in terms of education, career and lifestyle. The churches were full of future doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers and entrepreneurs. In contrast to many others in

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that the religious categories used in the census as well as certain numbers are debatable (Morier-Génoud 2014).

Maputo, they have benefitted from the new possibilities of socio-economic mobility that came with the transition from a socialist-oriented economy to a neo-liberal market economy as a result of the structural adjustment programs (see Pitcher 2002 for an overview). As in other places in Africa (e.g., Frahm-Arp 2010; Meyer 1998; van Dijk 2012), these Pentecostals are enthusiastic about the Pentecostal message of empowerment through the power of the Holy Spirit. This message calls on them to break with their dependencies on kin and to take initiative in building a professional career in a competitive setting where there are not enough well-paid jobs to accommodate the growing group of educated people (van de Kamp 2016).

The young Pentecostals often talked about realities elsewhere, in places like Brazil, the US and Europe, almost as if they lived in those places. They engaged with Brazilians and Europeans and liked to converse with them about different lifestyles and used the information they received to reflect on local cultural traditions. They were highly critical of Mozambican society because their government seemed unable to organize the appropriate infrastructures in the city, such as proper housing and sufficient jobs, and they had a deep longing to leave everything behind. Their aspirations matched the Pentecostal message of prosperity, which emphasized that they should distance themselves from local or national cultural practices and places and should 'take ownership' (*tomar posse*) of their lives, showing initiative in creating businesses and happy urban-based family lives. This new generation of Pentecostals was abandoning the 'local' and 'national' as the main or only arenas where cultural and identity politics are played out and accused their 'nation-state' – the government as well as their elders – of failing to acknowledge emerging new identities.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, youngsters' conversion

<sup>14</sup> Similarly, these youngsters' elders had contested former national and colonial identity politics, in some cases through their involvement in Protestant missions (Cruz e Silva 2001; see also van de Kamp 2016: 55-78).

to transnational Pentecostalism was an investment in transforming local realities.

David (20 years) was one of these young Pentecostal individuals. When I first met him, he frequented the Maná Church and took courses at the Universal Church. He was finishing his Bachelor of Laws degree and wanted to pursue his studies in the US 'to get to know a new world' that is 'far away from Africa.' At the same time, he was proud to be Mozambican, although he was feeling ashamed about the current socio-economic circumstances of his country. David took a business course at the Universal Church that consisted of ten weekly lessons given by pastors after the evening services in different branches. I attended a few sessions, during which pastors constantly asked how people planned to become successful. One pastor proposed that David start a business in the field of tourism. According to the pastor, foreigners were coming to invest in tourism, "but you Mozambicans are here already. There are so many possibilities. Rent an office, take pictures all over the country and put them on a website!" David seriously considered to start a tourism agency, but first wanted to finish his studies while he was writing a business plan.

Like his contemporaries, David watched Brazilian television programmes on TV Record, which is owned by the Universal Church, and the international Maná broadcasting platform ManáSat. These programmes affirmed his opinions and supported his aspirations. For example, his grandparents wanted him to partake in initiation rites that David considered backward and demonic. David, however, longed to receive a proper education about sexuality and personal hygiene which he found lacking at home and at school; therefore, he took the online Maná courses on family, sexuality and marriage. When the Maná leaders in Maputo started a local television channel (TV Maná Moçambique), David proudly played a role in the locally designed Maná soap series on issues of traditional ('rural') and modern ('urban') culture.

David also participated in a youth group at the Maná church. The group met with church leaders

every Saturday; one day, they discussed the role of elders and ancestor spirits in the local marriage arrangements and ceremonies called *lobolo* (often translated as brideprice; Granjo 2005). Generally, Pentecostal leaders speak critically of *lobolo* because ancestral spirits are involved. In return for their blessings, the ancestors receive different gifts during the ceremonies. The Pentecostal leaders located *lobolo* and other so-called traditional practices in rural areas with which one should break in the urban domain, creating a binary between the rural as a supposedly backward place and the urban as modern. Some participating youth reacted by saying that it was possible to modernize *lobolo* by not consulting ancestral spirits, but involving a Pentecostal pastor instead. A discussion followed between those who were positive about the combination of *lobolo* and Pentecostalism, and those who vehemently opposed it because they had experienced the 'bad side of tradition'<sup>15</sup> and felt it should be contested.

David's and other youngsters' appropriation of transnational Pentecostal discourses and practices is a form of transcending the limitations of their daily life in the city and of creating new urban middle class life forms.<sup>16</sup> Being part of the local society, unlike in situations of migration, many converts in Maputo struggle to keep their Pentecostal morality and spirituality unaffected by local circumstances and cultural realities. Even though they remain in the same location physically, they dislocate themselves subjectively by embarking on a journey regarding social and cultural perceptions (van de Kamp 2013a), which they do by, amongst other means, engaging with the discourses and lifestyles portrayed

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<sup>15</sup> Examples they gave about the 'bad side of tradition' were failing marriages and relationships, witchcraft accusations and an overall lack of success that was attributed to evil (ancestral) powers. The word 'tradition' (*tradição*) was often used to refer to local customs, including beliefs and rituals related to (ancestral) spirits.

<sup>16</sup> For discussions about the different meanings of the term middle class in Africa – 'somewhere above Poor but below Rich' – see Melber 2016.

by the various transnational Pentecostal leaders through various media, church services, courses, and discussion groups.

Yet David's participation in the local Pentecostal soap opera and the youth group also demonstrates that the everyday realities of young, urban Pentecostals in Maputo are not so much caught up in struggles between two different cultures --the 'traditional African' culture versus the 'modern', supposedly 'urban' Pentecostal culture (Jones 2005) -- but are navigating between specific local, national and transnational socio-cultural domains, striving to negotiate their embodiment of multiple identities. David found a fulfilment of his identity renegotiation in his role in the local soap opera, parts of which were also shown on ManáSat. The soap focused on young people and their dreams of romantic love, luxury and freedom. Looking for paths to success, the neighbourhoods surrounding Maputo's city centre figured as spaces where material, social and spiritual battles were being fought.

Different areas of Maputo are associated with specific meanings that have been shaped historically. The capital city of Maputo developed as an administrative colonial centre, and the Portuguese colonial authorities transformed the place into a city of whites and 'assimilados', a city for the 'civilised' (Penvenne 1995).<sup>17</sup> According to Jenkins (2006: 111), the development of colonial Maputo 'reflected a long-established Portuguese attitude towards urbanism as representing "civilization" when juxtaposed with the largely agrarian character of the country and its population.' From the start, Maputo was made up of two distinct parts: the Portuguese *cidade de cimento* (cement city) and the indigenous *cidade de caniço* (reed city) that surrounded the southern European-styled inner city. Even if the 'reed city' is now increasingly becoming a 'cement' one, making the already permeable boundaries between the two even more diffused (Bertelsen et al. 2014), the ideological divisions these spaces

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<sup>17</sup> During the colonial period the city was named Lourenço Marques.

represent continue to play an important role in how people position and imagine themselves in the city. In the popular middle class imagination, the neighbourhoods or *bairros* surrounding the inner city centre continue to be associated with immorality, disorder and *feitçaria* (see also Groes-Green 2011: 307).

The Pentecostals in Maputo build on these perceptions by warning each other of negative spiritual influences that are hiding everywhere. Especially now that the former city zones of 'reed' are being redeveloped by new upwardly mobile individuals looking for more affordable housing, they need to make sure that they will not be contaminated by neighbours and healers in the area supposedly involved with 'evil' spiritual powers (see also Nielsen 2010). The stories Brazilian pastors tell in their sermons about the 'reed cities' or *favelas* in the Brazilian cities where they come from and where they sometimes belonged to drug cartels (Lanz 2016) add to these perceptions about the war that is being fought between God and the Devil or good and evil in particular city spaces (see also Oosterbaan 2017). Brazilian pastors talked about how they or their family members needed to earn a living as drug mules for particular gangs in the *favela* where they lived and how people around them lost their lives due to fights between gangs or with the police. They told of pacts between gang leaders and the Catholic church or Afro-Brazilian priests of Candomblé or Umbanda that kept drug couriers entangled with evil powers. They presented the rituals of exorcism and liberation in the Pentecostal churches as turning points in their lives that offered them a way to break with their old lives. These personal trajectories of Brazilian pastors are used as examples of what faith looks like and what it can achieve, and young people like David are invited to do the same. While David and others might have felt caught by evil powers in the national domain, such as in their 'reed' neighbourhood that still needs to become more urban and 'modern', the Pentecostal space offers an alternative urban world where each individual is able to begin a new life that is not necessarily

free of violence and problems, but which offers images, narratives and techniques to take matters into one's own hands (see also Oosterbaan 2017; Van Dijk 2010). With the power of the Holy Spirit, they can choose their own marriage ceremony and have the opportunity to open a tourist office in their neighbourhood, contributing to the development of their city. They are part of a transnational Pentecostal army that fights evil in urban battlefields. As a 'worlding' process (Roy and Ong 2011), God's soldiers are part of a transnational Pentecostal army that will conquer the most difficult urban battlefields across the world. In other words, the affinity between Maputo and Rio de Janeiro seems to undermine the geographical distance between the two cities, and their born-again inhabitants are living in one idealized Pentecostal megacity with real effects in everyday urban life where the fight between good and evil is at the heart of what constitutes the city (see also Wariboko 2014).

#### **Connections and Disconnections in Amsterdam**

The rise and diversity of Pentecostal churches in Brazil (IBGE 2012) is reflected in the growing number of churches that have sprung up in Europe (Mareels 2016; Oosterbaan 2014; Sheringham 2013). In Amsterdam, where only about eighteen percent of the registered citizens feels connected to Christianity but does not necessarily attend a church (Schippers and Wenneker 2014: 13), I have found fifteen Portuguese-speaking Pentecostal churches comprising twelve different denominations; ten of these churches were started by Brazilian immigrants and one is the Maná Church. But there could be several other churches and house groups. The majority of the congregations could be described as diasporic Lusophone churches with migrants coming from Portuguese-speaking countries, in particular from Brazil and Angola. The services were mostly held in Portuguese. The Universal Church also offered services in Dutch and attracted Dutch Afro-Caribbeans as well. In general, the Portuguese-speaking churches drew between 30 and 120 people per service. The leaders of the

churches often host traveling prophets and pastors from South-America and different African countries who speak about urban realities there and link these to the situations in European cities, mostly in the domains of entrepreneurship and relationships.

I met most of the Dutch-Angolan Pentecostals in the Maná Church. The church's building is located in a former industrial building at the margins of the city; overall, Dutch citizens are unfamiliar with the church and with international Pentecostalism in general. Despite this marginal position in Amsterdam and the usually small presence of about 20 to 30 people in church, the performances during the church services presented the church and its followers as the central junction in a large international network. As previously discussed, within five minutes of the beginning of the church service, many global cities pass by via ManáSat, and Apostle Tadeu's voice greets the whole world. All screenshots show technologies of mobility and the messages, sounds and images communicate the opposite of marginality: mobility, globalism and centrality.

The visible tensions between the marginal position of this Maná Church and the techniques and practices of mobility seemed to have accommodated each other in the activities and lives of the Dutch-Angolan Pentecostals (see also Garbin 2013). The first evening that I arrived at one of the church's house groups (*grupo familiar*) to participate in a Bible study that was taking place in a typical social housing flat on the outskirts of Amsterdam, the lady of the house, who was Angolan, talked to me about events in Canada, about her brother who was living in Germany for some time, her aunts in Portugal, and finally about her country of origin, Angola. She has a very marginal position in Dutch society in the sense that she is currently unemployed and receives a welfare allowance on which she and her three children can barely survive. She was very critical about the neighbours in her flat and about Dutch people and the Dutch government in general because they could not cater to a transnational person like her. They would

approach her as a foreigner who wanted to benefit from the Dutch welfare system, and they were not seeing what she had to offer to the Dutch, as she explained. As she had no money to travel to the Maná church building every Sunday with her children, she participated in services by connecting to ManáSat in her living room – if her laptop and internet connection functioned well – singing and praying together with thousands of followers in Africa, Europe, Brazil, and Canada.

During the church services and during the discussion of the house group, there was no space to talk about the difficulties people like this woman experienced as the focus was on living in victory as a follower of God. Even if some participants in the Maná church were quite successful entrepreneurs and most of them had residence permits, many in this church seemed quite isolated from Dutch society. They participated or tried to participate in terms of working and paying taxes, but felt discriminated against because of their African background. Yet this forced isolation could be perceived two-dimensionally. A young Dutch-Angolan man who worked for a construction company told the other members of the house group how he pitied his Dutch colleagues who spoke badly about foreigners, but were unfamiliar with the power of the Holy Spirit.

This Pentecostal perspective in which Dutch people are pitied for their short-sighted 'national' and 'local' outlook, as opposed to the global power of the Holy Spirit that makes one a world citizen with many opportunities and blessings, was also central in the narratives of a variety of followers of Brazilian Pentecostalism in Amsterdam. For example, during the church services of Sara Nossa Terra (Heal our Land),<sup>18</sup> several undocumented Brazilian participants shared their experiences with Dutch people in Amster-

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<sup>18</sup> The neo-Pentecostal Comunidade Evangélica Sara Nossa Terra was founded in Goiânia, Brazil, in 1992, when it seceded from the *Comunidade Evangélica*. Today, it has a strong presence in the capital city of Brasília and targets the new middle class by stressing the importance of entrepreneurship and consumption as Christian practices (Mareels 2016).



dam. One of the female leaders of the church said that even though she could not speak Dutch, she could read people's faces in the schoolyard, when she would bring her children to school, for example, and know that they have all kinds of problems. "I know this," she said, "because I am a follower of God." Thus, the leader had the spiritual gift of understanding people's situations by reading their faces. It is this spiritual wisdom that makes people like her able to act everywhere in the world, independent of migratory regimes and national regulations and languages. This goes accompanied with a strong belief that a city like Amsterdam needs a radical message that is part of a logic of 'reversed mission' (Freston 2010). As the pastor explained: "In the past, Europeans brought the Gospel to Brazil and Africa. Now that people in Europe do not know any more about it, it is our task to tell them". Brazilians are mostly not able to talk directly about the Gospel to Dutch citizens because of language issues and sometimes also because of their precarious situation as undocumented migrants, but their actions and Portuguese words bless the city where they live, following the logic of the Pentecostal Faith Theology (Anderson 2004: 39-165). Thus, a young Brazilian woman who cleaned various houses in the city, said on the church's podium that even though she hardly ever met her employers as they were mostly not at home, she could bless them by praying for them while cleaning their houses. Moreover, many Luso-Pentecostal churches organized prayer walks in urban neighbourhoods – in the case of Sara Nossa Terra, these were organized by specific church groups with the telling name 'connection groups.' Across the world, Pentecostals invest in the transformation of cities by doing prayer walks – they pray for the well-being of their neighbourhood by walking through the streets in small groups and praying. They feel strengthened by their connections with other prayer walkers in other cities in the world, building the Pentecostal megacity together. The message was always very clear: whatever their situation looked like, such as being undocumented migrants who have

no formal right to live in Amsterdam, they contributed to the city's development by their faithful actions. This Pentecostal victory is communicated and spread through the various media the churches use and circulate within and across urban spaces. Most of the churches I visited have a YouTube channel featuring church services and people from across the world subscribe to these channels and post their comments.<sup>19</sup> Recordings of the Maná church services in Amsterdam are transmitted via the satellite to the Church's audiences in Brazil, Mozambique and Portugal.

In addition, being a Pentecostal world citizen was constantly made real by being and staying on the move. During one church service of Sara Nossa Terra, a participant who worked for an NGO was called forward to the podium because the following day he was going to travel to an African country affected by war. He explained that when in war, "you never know what the next day will look like, you need to trust God." The pastor added that "we never know where we are going to . . . My wife always asks where we are going [in Brazil they had planned to go to Italy, but settled in the Netherlands], I don't know where we are going, *but we go* [emphasis mine]. For missionaries in particular, travelling is an important strategy of spiritual development (Mariz 2009). To transform, one must travel and transcend the familiar, including one's family and culture, and suffer hardships to create new possibilities. Being on the move facilitates an individual's break with his/her former life and allows for the formation of a new person. In addition, to be able to build cities that are full of the power of the Holy Spirit, one needs to transcend national, cultural and spiritual boundaries, which can be materialized by travelling to various cities and by walking and praying through cities.

Despite the wish to achieve a strong local influence, the constant urge to diffuse Pentecostalism in as many urban places as possible by opposing and 'overcoming' local realities also

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvjOLRdfFWZ7RGgqh2Z3uBQ>, accessed on 18 May 2017.



seemed to work against the ability to possess urban places. As the pastor of Sara Nossa Terra explained to me, he was so busy building connection groups throughout the city, finding money to pay the rent for the church building, and travelling to other European cities – principally to Lisbon – that he did not find the time to learn Dutch, to learn about Dutch society and connect to local Christian leaders. However, he was successful in creating a sense of belonging to urban spaces globally, for himself and his followers, and in the Lusophone domain in particular (see also Vásquez 2009), which resulted in feelings of both spiritual and personal fulfilment.

### Conclusion

Recently edited volumes and special issues on the role of religion in contemporary cities (e.g. Becci et al. 2012; Becker et al. 2014; Lanz and Oosterbaan 2016) have demonstrated and underscored the mutually constitutive relations between the urban and the religious, approaching religion as an integral part of all dimensions of the city. Building on these works, as well as on the insights about transnationalism and the city (Krätke et al. 2012), I have examined two important processes with regard to the intersection of Pentecostalism and the city. One is the Pentecostal approach of urban space as an urbanscape, not only encompassing a single city, but a space of interconnected cities across the world. Pentecostals build transnational urban milieus through the borderless power of the Holy Spirit, realized by satellite connections, urban prayer walks, travels and the circulation of media and spirits, creating belonging to connections and trajectories (see also Coleman and Maier 2013; Krause and van Dijk 2016). The second is that the transnational urban landscapes that Pentecostals create are not necessarily global, but are indeed transnational – Pentecostal connections build on and shape particular infrastructures across specific borders. To put it differently, the investment in distinctive transnational connections creates belonging to a global urban Christianity (Krause and van Dijk 2016).

In this framework, the Lusophone Pentecostal urbanscape is a particular relational network in which Portuguese languages, African-derived spiritual concepts and Brazilian media circulate easily. Thus, Brazilian Pentecostal pastors speak of *macumba* or *feiticeira* in every city where they see ‘evil’ powers at work. In Maputo, Paris and the Dutch Randstad, people with an African background in particular break with *macumba* to lead a more prosperous city life. Afro-Brazilian spirits that relate to female sexuality are demonized and the good and evil powers at work in the lives of urban women are discussed with reference to Brazilian *telenovelas*. At the same time, connections between Maputo and Rio de Janeiro are established through similar experiences of ‘evil’ in the cities’ *favelas* and ‘reed spaces.’ One’s life in one single city incorporates urban localities and practices elsewhere by performing Pentecostal actions of prayer, spiritual scrutiny and entrepreneurship.

All these connections become real in specific cities in different ways. In Maputo, for example, Mozambicans invest in transnational Pentecostalism as a way of becoming more mobile spiritually, culturally and socio-economically. The transnational Pentecostal space enables one to overcome the limitations of urban life in terms of employment and marriage arrangements. In Amsterdam, Portuguese-speaking migrants are already mobile because they have travelled and literally crossed several boundaries, yet they are located in the relative peripheries of Amsterdam on different levels – language, work and religion – and are therefore invisible. Here, transnational Pentecostal connections make their work visible as they contribute to the spread of the power of the Holy Spirit, adding to the significance of their presence in the city. The circulating images of their prayer walks and other activities through Pentecostal media across the Lusophone world intensifies the experience of being at the centre of global city formation.

In their everyday lives, as much in Maputo as in Amsterdam, however, Pentecostals do often face disconnections, despite their presence in a

Pentecostal transnational landscape. While their Pentecostal connections are not limited to one state, they have to operate in and are controlled by state structures (Glick Schiller 2005: 440) that do not give them a residence permit (Amsterdam) or do not offer appropriate urban infrastructure – namely work, electricity, and transportation (Maputo). It is precisely this tension between different urban spaces – between a transnational Pentecostal and a national urban space – which seems to provide believers with the possibility to ‘test’ and ‘prove’ their faith. Pastors give numerous examples in their sermons of how they have been able to build churches across Europe without having visas and permits; God paved the way because they acted courageously and risked their lives. They also tell of how they have been able to overcome ‘evil powers’ in Africa that frustrated their work. In other words, the road to success is long, but if one forges on and shows faith participating in Pentecostal activities, one is a legitimate member of the transnational Pentecostal army that will conquer the most difficult urban battlefields across the world.

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