Three dimensions of religious place-making in diaspora

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Abstract   *In this article we explore comparatively how migrant minorities draw from their religious resources to carve out spaces of livelihood in three global cities (Kajang-Kuala Lumpur, Johannesburg and London). We also examine the spatial regimes through which the state and its apparatuses seek to manage the migrants' presence and (in)visibility within these urban spaces. In particular, we focus on three of the most salient dimensions of migrants' religious place-making: embodied performance, the spatial management of difference and belonging, and multiple embedding across networked spaces. Although these three dimensions intersect in dynamic, often tensile ways to constitute the fabric of the life world of migrant minorities, we separated them for heuristic purposes, to highlight the richness and texture of religious place-making.*

Discussions of diaspora space and place, multi-locality and transnational livelihoods have largely been the province of geographers and sociologists, and more often than not have focused on economic or social development, though with increasing attention to cultural exchange and circulation.[1] Although religious identity has been a key factor for understanding the sociology, cultural politics and global dynamics of diaspora communities, with notable exceptions the role of religion in migrant place-making has been under-explored.[2]

In this article, we explore some of the diverse practices through which migrant minorities draw from their religious resources to carve out spaces of livelihood. We also examine the spatial strategies that the state and its apparatuses deploy in order to manage the migrants' presence and (in)visibility. Our prism will be multi-scalar and relational, focusing on what geographer Doreen Massey (1994: 264) terms overlapping 'envelopes of space–time'. According to her, space is 'constructed out of

interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local to the most global' (1994: 264). Thus, while place-making is crucially about what religion scholar Thomas Tweed (2006: 80–122) calls 'dwelling', that is about 'mapping, building, and inhabiting' at various scales, it also concerns 'crossing', in so far as it is inextricably connected with mobility, particularly with journeys and circulation (see Levitt and Wong in this issue).

Following these insights, we will explore cross-cutting and intersecting spatial dynamics ranging from the emplacement of the body and the construction of the household and community as spaces of livelihood to the articulation of ethnic, national, transnational, and diasporic identities. More than simply providing a phenomenology of religious place-making in three global cities – Kuala Lumpur, Johannesburg and London – we seek to compare and contrast practices across sites as a way to throw into relief the spatial interactions between migration and religion.

In order to undertake this comparison, we will briefly locate each of our cities within evolving spatial regimes, relatively stable but always contested modes of spatial organization, which give rise to and regulate distinctions between the religious and the secular, the public and the private, the visible and the invisible, and the native and the stranger. Spatial regimes accompany different forms of 'governmentality', to draw from Foucault (1991, 2004, 2008), different mechanisms to 'conduct the conduct' of populations that correspond to colonial, national/post-national, and neo-imperial or multi-local periods (see Hansen in this issue). Each period is characterized by discursive and non-discursive techniques that, as part of a larger biopolitics, shape differentially the ways in which migrants build their identities, and relate to each other and to native populations in space. In turn, religion is a key medium through which migrants negotiate spatial regimes in everyday life. More specifically, religion provides the resources to craft moral and affectively charged maps that not only reflect and buttress the logic of spatial regimes, but may also offer tools to challenge them, to introduce heterogeneity by building alternative utopias.

For each of the spatial regimes, we have chosen an example that illustrates what we have identified as the most salient dimensions of religious place-making: embodied performance, spatial management of difference and belonging, and multiple embedding across networked spaces. Although these three dimensions intersect in dynamic, often tensile ways to constitute the fabric of the life world of migrant minorities, we have separated them for heuristic purposes, to highlight the richness and texture of religious place-making.

Three urban spatial regimes

Johannesburg

In South Africa, religious place-making among migrant minorities is strongly conditioned by the precarious transition to a post-apartheid dispensation. The previous spatial regime was based on racial segregation supported by a colonialist evolutionary and organicist view of culture. Each tribal group was thought to have its own self-contained culture that was isomorphic with its language, racial characteristics, and the

landscape in which it dwelled. This territorialization of African populations was predicated on the fear of miscegenation, which in the eyes of Afrikaners threatened the purity and integrity of their race, culture and religion. To avoid this racial and cultural mixing, it was not only necessary to create separate self-governing Bantustans (homelands) but to regulate the circulation of people through a system of pass laws, and to outlaw sexual relations among persons of different racial groups

In Johannesburg, from the first gold rush of 1886, black South Africans who were brought to work in the mines were forced to live in precarious conditions in hostels, away from their families. Indians who had completed their period of indentured labour in Natal's sugar plantations – mainly lower caste Hindi and Tamil-speaking Hindus and Urdu-speaking Muslims – also began to arrive, closely followed by Gujarati traders. The Transvaal's anti-Indian laws meant they too were forced to live in separate, squalid conditions (Beavon 2004: 8). Such land restrictions laid the groundwork for the growth in the 1940s of a whites-only Central Business District (CBD) ringed by inner residential areas which were soon populated by high-density, high-rise buildings.

The denial by Afrikaner colonists of coevalness and the affirmation of a deterritorialized white supremacy provided the ideological underpinnings of a moral cartography of segregations and exclusions that became legally sanctioned and enforced by state apparatuses in 1948, with the rise of the National Party. The abolition of the Groups Areas Act in 1991 brought in a dramatic transformation of Johannesburg's cartography. Black South Africans who had been prohibited from living in the CBD began to move in from the townships in large numbers. They were accompanied by undocumented immigrants from other African countries affected by political and economic turmoil including Angola, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Rwanda, and Mozambique. Between 2001 and 2007, the province of Gauteng, where Johannesburg is located, had a net migration gain of 418,000 (Landau 2009: 199).

Some recent immigrants, lured by the relative wealth of South African society, seek an elusive integration, but others see Johannesburg as a portal to access transnational and global networks. Religious purity and missionary zeal are often part of migrant minorities' 'tactical cosmopolitanism' (Landau 2009: 198), and have their roots and material support in Nigeria, Ghana, the UK and the USA, key nodes in global Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian transnational circuits. Religion is a source of 'transterritorial rhetorics' through which 'migrants can generate a subjectivity that allows them to be in but not of the city' (Landau 2009: 198).

Given the breakdown of the old apartheid spatial order and the incipient and precarious nature of the new democratic dispensation, religious place-making among migrant minorities in Johannesburg is strongly focused on the management of risk, particularly on the question of bodily integrity and safety, as well as spiritual wholeness and purity. The key issue is how to navigate an environment that is perceived as dangerous, full of evil forces and spirits that can lead to the migrant's moral and economic downfall. Particularly in neo-Pentecostal churches, conversion and success in spiritual warfare is thought to translate into health and wealth, which many black South Africans and immigrants can only desire.

What is clear is that religious place-making in Johannesburg is not simply a mechanical response to Johannesburg's incurable pathological state, but can be an exercise in the creative use of opportunity structures – resources, networks, trust – afforded by already existing dense and vibrant ethnic and religious networks.

Kuala Lumpur – Kajang

In order to make sense of the current organization of religious and ethnic spaces in Kuala Lumpur and the neighbouring town of Kajang, it is necessary to understand the logic of the colonial spatial regime, which was embodied in a land code that legally allocated physical spaces around which collective religious activities took place. Two public spaces stand out for their role in building migrant identities, marking ethnic belonging, and preserving diasporic memories: temples and burial sites.

Immigrants to Malaya in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought a variety of different faiths with them, often from within the same ethnic group. The British colonial administration sought to manage this diversity through an Enlightenment-based secularized regime that combined state establishment of Anglicanism with tolerance for religious pluralism. It officially patronized the Anglican and the Presbyterian churches and made Islam an official religion under the jurisdiction of the Sultan of each state, but otherwise maintained a policy of open neutrality, allowing space for public expression to all incoming minority faiths. In order to maintain this balance between religious hegemony and tolerance, the colonial regime introduced a land code under which physical space for religious worship and burial had to be legally gazetted as such. Land was made available freely. Religious place-making by immigrant communities was very much part of the production of locality in the public space of the emerging nation-state.

Thus, in Kajang, several places of worship of different faiths established during the colonial period are to be found on inner city land specifically allocated for religious worship – including Catholic, Methodist and Anglican Churches, and several Hindu, Chinese and Buddhist temples. In the surrounding plantations, Hindu temples were erected by plantation staff on land provided by the estate management. In addition, a plethora of small Chinese and Indian shrines and private temples were strewn all over the landscape, illegal structures generally tolerated by the authorities. Burial sites for the different faith communities were also clearly demarcated. A visible and diverse sacred cartography was established by the immigrant faiths within generous limits set by the colonial regime.

After independence in 1957, the vestiges of the colonial religious regime were replaced by an increasingly Islamized one. A key concern of this new regime was the control of religious heterodoxy, particularly of the public visibility of religions other than Islam. The institutionalized legitimacy of religions that are not 'of the Book', such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Chinese religions, has been especially contentious. In addition, today's immigrants are not as a rule permitted to localize or settle. They cannot engage in formal public religious place-making. They must instead seek out existing places for worship. The present regime has transformed the dynamics of

public religious place-making for both existing non-Muslim faith communities and new immigrants. The demand for new sites of worship and burial for all faiths has grown in proportion to the burgeoning urban population. At state and national levels, a formal bureaucracy to regulate the Islamic faith has been developed; no such legal framework exists for the management and regulation of non-Islamic affairs.

Land for sites of worship and burial falls within the planning regulations of local authorities under the jurisdiction of the state government. The allocation of such land is determined on the basis of faith population size, with strict limits set, particularly for religions other than Islam. Moreover, building regulations stipulate certain conditions for the construction of non-Muslim places of worship, including that the height of the building should not exceed that of any mosque in the vicinity. Apart from the question of land and buildings, there is the issue of registration with the Registrar of Societies. Although this is usually a formality, the vast majority of smaller Hindu and Chinese temples have never been registered. Only registered bodies are entitled to receive grants from the local state assembly.

The overall effect of the new religious regime is to limit spaces for the institutional expression of collective religious activity among migrant minorities, making long-standing temples more central and, thus, increasing the status and prestige of the leaders who run and maintain them. At the same time, an upwardly mobile class of second and third-generation immigrants is finding ways to generate alternative public religious spaces that escape the limitations imposed by Islamization. Additionally, migrant minorities have come to rely on temporary public displays such as processions, marches, and annual festivals to mark their collective religious identity and generate collective effervescence.

London

London is a city with an ancient history and an imperial past that, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, emerged as a key command centre and financial node in a new global flexible regime of capitalist accumulation (Eade 2000; Sassen 2001). Its current pre-eminence among global cities is the result of complex processes of industrialization and post-industrialization. From its foundation as a Roman outpost in 50 CE, London has been a city deeply marked by migration. However, from the middle of the eighteenth century, the pace of change escalated dramatically, as did the level of global engagement. The industrial revolution transformed the face of London, as large numbers of workers moved into the city to work in its booming mills and factories. They lived in unsanitary conditions in cramped, overcrowded houses along the river Thames in London's East End and in neighbourhoods like Southwark and Clerkenwell, close to textile and pottery factories as well as print shops, distilleries and breweries. Following the famines of the 1810s and 1840s, rural Irish families came to occupy a prominent place in the East End proletariat, with Italians and Eastern European Jews growing in numbers from the 1850s.

Migration flows picked up dramatically after the 1948 British Nationality Act – introduced in recognition of the many citizens of the Commonwealth who fought on

the side of the British in the Second World War– which allowed 800 million subjects of the empire to work and reside in the UK without a visa. These flows brought large numbers of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies, including Jamaica, Barbados and Guyana. An important consequence of London's imperial relationships was its cultural and religious pluralism, as immigrants from the former colonies moved to the metropole.

Attempts to temper the influx of migrants with the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 and the 1971 Immigration Act were largely unsuccessful, as dependents of settled immigrants continued to arrive. Between 1971 and 1981, Afro-Caribbean and Asian immigrants doubled their share in Britain's labour force, accounting for 5 per cent of all British workers and nearly 20 per cent of inner London's population (Sassen 2001: 308). From 1991 to 2001, the minority ethnic population grew 53 per cent, from 3 million to 4.6 million, constituting nearly 8 per cent of the country's total population with London being the principal recipient. By 2001, a third of all Londoners were foreign-born compared to only 12 per cent of the population in the UK. London's 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2007) reflects 'a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade' (2007: 1024).

During the post-Second World War migration regime, immigrants tended to settle in certain areas of the city: Brixton, Tottenham and Stonebridge came to be known as West Indian areas, with Muslim immigrants from Pakistan and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) settled in the Borough of Tower Hamlets, in former Jewish and Huguenot strongholds associated with the textile industry. But neo-liberal economic reforms implemented by Margaret Thatcher's government unleashed a rapid process of urban renewal and social dislocation in London. The old Victorian industrial core finally gave way to a booming service economy, with a different spatial logic. The commercial redevelopment of the Docklands and the more recent construction of the Olympic park and village in Stratford have radically affected East London, including the areas of Tower Hamlets, Newham and the Lower Lea Valley.

Such processes of urban renewal and gentrification have made space a scarce commodity, especially for newer immigrant groups struggling to find affordable places to live and to conduct collective religious activities. One strategy has been the rental and refurbishment of old, decaying industrial spaces which have become thriving post-industrial religious districts offering a variety of competing spiritual services. The highly public construction of sacralized cityscapes is accompanied by the inculcation of a new embodied religious habitus that regulates the believer's daily practices and domestic life. For migrant minorities in super-diverse London religion plays a major role in processes of re-centring and re-inscribing space, linking the personal and local to the transnational and the global. In particular, religion provides some of the key idioms and practices to think and perform authenticity, purity, authority, moral legitimacy and belonging at the local level, *vis-à-vis* the liberal state, and in imagined and real reference to the diaspora.

What is common for migrant minorities in London, Johannesburg, and Kuala

Lumpur-Kajang is the marking, crossing, and negotiation of boundaries – whether between the sacred and the profane, between the religious congregation and secular world, the private and the public, the self and the other, as well as among religious traditions – as these minorities seek to carve out places to be.

We turn now from the spatial regimes of Johannesburg, Kajang and London to three associated case studies, on embodied performance, the spatial management of difference, and multi-scalar embedding, before drawing together the religious place-making endeavours of migrants across all three cities.

Three dimensions of religious place-making

Johannesburg: purifying the body in a sinful city

Martin came to Johannesburg in 2005 'to change environment … to earn much money, big money.[3] And too for [his] safety.' Although he had completed his Bachelors in business management in Nigeria, things had not gone well there. After a brief stay in South Africa and a hasty return to Nigeria, he wondered around not knowing what to do about his future. Then, one day, 'a man of God' revealed to him that Johannesburg was his 'divine destination'. 'We were praying, fasting and praying deliverance, someone started telling me everything about me. And what he told me, the things have come to pass. He said [Johannesburg] is my starting point for me to move on. It's a man of God that [*sic*] said it.' The journey to South Africa, however, proved difficult. With his original visa about to expire, Martin did not have any money to purchase his airline ticket.

> One woman of God said that I should go to church and pray. God will find a way for me to come. I went to church for five days. I fasted for five days. In the church during deliverance, fasting for five days, praying for God to give me money to come. You see, because my visa remained only one week to expiry and I didn't have almost a thousand dollars for my flight tickets.

On his second day of prayer and fasting, after asking many people to help him, Martin received a called from a friend he had met in the church five years before who offered him the money. With his ticket in hand, he went to South African consulate to renew his visa but his application was denied. 'They said [that] I should not go to South Africa. I prayed [to] God to allow them for me to enter.' Totally convinced Johannesburg was his 'divine destination', he decided to go directly to the airport. 'In the airport, they said I don't [*sic*] supposed to use that visa to come because it is only one day from the expiration of the visa. [But] God helped me; they allowed me in.' Once in South Africa, Martin was allowed to stay for three months at the end of which he reported to a home affairs office where he was told that he had to leave the country in five days. 'I prayed to God. God said I should change the home affairs office, to go another place. I went to another place … [and] they helped me there … I got a three-year working permit. That's why I know that this is what God wanted.'

Martin's story illustrates the centrality and efficacy of prayer for many African

immigrants in Johannesburg. When asked about what prayer means to him, Martin responds: 'praying is my food; it is the food I almost eat [everyday] day. I like prayer. It is prayer that helped me come to South Africa. It is prayer that got me a flight ticket … that let them allow me to enter … God allowed it to happen.' He continues:

> I normally see bad things in a dream before anything comes. If a person is my enemy, I see it in a dream. If I see a bad thing that is going to happen, I will cancel it, pray and cancel it so that it will not come to pass. Only the good works will come to pass. [Because of] prayer [you can] turn that bad thing – 'God, convert that bad thing into good … God, convert [the] negative dream to be a positive dream.'

That prayer plays such a vital role in Martin's life is perhaps not surprising, given that he is a member of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), a Nigerian-based church founded by medical doctor Daniel Olokuya in 1989 in the living room of his house. Today, the MFM builds itself 'as the largest single Christian congregation in Africa with attendance of over 100,000 members in single meetings', with church branches all over Africa, from Benin to Zambia, the United States, Canada, and Europe.[4] According to their website, one of MFM's key objectives is 'to build an aggressive end-time army for the Lord. MFM is an end-time church where we build an aggressive end-time army for the Lord'. Essential to this task is prayer: 'the greatest spiritual insecticide … aggressive prayer is considered as an aid to spiritual focus and a check against being overwhelmed by the flesh.'

As a speech act, prayer involves a certain linguistic and ritual competence from the performer, which is acquired through the training of his or her body, and carries an illocutionary force (Austin 1962, Schieffelin 1998). For the religious practitioner, prayer is not only a dialogical act involving a divinity but an action that constitutes events and contexts, effecting exchange between material and non-material spheres. In other words, prayer is 'ontogenic', it has the capacity to summon moral maps and histories against perceived secular cartographies of sin and brokenness. Within these maps and histories, prayer also interpellates particular subjectivities, places and times, a power that is all the more important to migrant populations confronting precarious life conditions. Prayer literally generates a sacred energy that can be harnessed to purify, discipline, convert and protect the self from the temptations of the flesh, from the demonic powers that dominate a city like Johannesburg (Jeannerat 2009). Moreover, this sacred energy can transmute bad dreams into actual positive material outcomes and bring the personal trajectories in line with narrative of salvation, with divine plans. This is why MFM speaks of 'prayer points', as if both to quantify the power of prayer and to underline its direct and concrete applications. Thus, there are prayers for 'the power to prosper', 'for new beginnings', 'destiny preservation', 'against evil patterns', and for 'breaking stubborn curses'.

Like Marvin, James, another member of MFM, engages in 'deliverance prayer', which involves five days of fasting and prayer, as he did in Nigeria. However, he notes that there are important differences in the way prayer is conducted in

Johannesburg.

> In Nigeria you have to stay in the church morning and night, praying but here it is only in the morning. If you are looking for power, you want to get power, you fast and pray, you get power. I fast every day, every month, I need power. I pray silently. Sometimes I go to the kitchen and pray so I will not disturb [my roommates – he lives with nine other people]. I pray three hours, from midnight to 3 a.m., sometimes to 4 a.m., or even five hours straight. I will not sleep. Because there is something that is bothering me. I need something from God … I am looking onto God for survival. It is only to God I belong.

James's stress on endurance, wakefulness, and suffering make sense when understood through the prism of Elaine Peña's (2011) notion of 'devotional capital',[5] in which the level of bodily discomfort and physical effort guarantees the effectiveness and authenticity of the prayer. The more religious labour is invested in the form of a body disciplined through rigorous schedules and spiritual exercises, the more ontogenic the prayer is. In her study of transnational pilgrimage among Mexican immigrants who are devotees of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Peña (2011:149–50) found that the '[d]evotees' tired tongues, tense shoulder muscles, scraped knees, and calloused feet – in communication with metaphysical and transcendental forces – dictate what is sacred … their embodied practices do the work of maintaining and acknowledging a place as holy.'

Illustrating Massey's notion of 'envelopes of space–time', prayer functions as a 'chronotope'.[6] The most efficacious prayer takes place at midnight, because according to Marvin, that is the time when 'bad people are having a meeting. Every bad thing happens in the night, because of the darkness in the night.' Ralph, another MFM's member, is more explicit, echoing the church's aim to 'build an aggressive end-time army for the Lord':

> I am a member of God Violence Army (GVA), I am a watchman. We have a prayer vigil every Friday beginning at 11 p.m. We pray violently, like in Matthew 11:12. He says right from the days of John the Baptist to now [the kingdom of heaven] has suffered violence and the violent take it by force.

The importance of prayer is not unique to MFM. In her work on Pentecostalism in Nigeria, Marshall (2009: 150–1) found that '[p]rayer – "unceasing" and "fervent" as the Born-Again prescription has it – is a central technique of the self, in which, through a personal communication and discussion with God, the convert articulates both desires and fears, plenitude and lack, and is brought to envision an imagined future.' Nor is the discourse of violence and spiritual warfare unique to MFM. It is, in fact, common to many Nigerian, and even African, Pentecostal churches. The 'weaponization of prayer', to use Marshall's expression, takes place against the backdrop of the modern, secular city, as an anomic and particularly sinful space. As Orsi (1999: 6) puts it when referring to Antebellum America, 'the "city" – rendered as

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the site of moral depravity, lascivious allure, and the terrain of necessary Christian intervention – became from this moment an enduring commodity of American popular culture and the compulsive domain of prohibited desires and unattainable satisfactions.' As such, the spatial purification of the city, its redemption by the exorcism of territorial evil spirits that cause all manner of sins and misfortunes, is essential to the Great Commission.

> [T]he dirty city is also the holy city: by the conventions of the genre, it is precisely in those dark, filthy depths that God comes. The dramatic and spiritual fulfillment offered by these Christian narratives of urban conversion lies in their affirmation of the power of grace to touch absolutely the darkest, most vile, and most inhuman corners of the city's sinfulness.
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> (Orsi 1999: 11)

Such a logic seems to apply especially in the case of South Africa, which, following years of Apartheid and a disorderly, inconclusive transition to a multi-racial democracy, is perceived 'as a somewhat deracinated and damaged society in need of salvation and cultural cleansing by people rooted in purer and more authentic cultures, mak[ing] the foreign preacher particularly compelling' (Hansen et al. 2009: 192). As they pray in the solitude of their crowded rooms in the heart of Johannesburg, Marvin, James and Ralph call forth spaces to dwell, to borrow from Thomas Tweed. According to him, dwelling 'involves three overlapping processes: mapping, building, and inhabiting. … It is homemaking. In other words, as clusters of dwelling practices, religions orient individuals and groups in time and space, transform the natural environment, and allow devotees to inhabit the world they construct' (Tweed 2006: 82). Indeed, as Marvin, James and Ralph invest their embodied devotional capital through fasting, endurance, and wakefulness, they carve out personal and domestic spaces of purity, order and tranquillity against the machinations of demons and witchdoctors, spaces that are rendered meaningful by being framed within a larger, divinely sanctioned and fated life project. Through their religious labour of wakefulness, they become 'watchman', standing guard at the performatively enacted boundaries between the sacred and profane.

In that sense, the place-making power of prayer for MFM is about 'rooting amidst the rootless' (Landau 2009: 198). However, prayer also generates 'a subjectivity that allows [migrants] to be in the city but not of the city' (Landau 2009: 198), for, while it localizes, it also invokes a 'tactical cosmopolitanism' (ibid.) in which believers see themselves as members of transnational religious networks. Prayers in Johannesburg always refer back and are modelled after those at MFM's 'Prayer City', a vast complex that the church has constructed in the Lagos–Ibadan Expressway where 'prayer goes on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, non-stop'. Thus, although for MFM and other Pentecostal churches prayer is a personal act, an intimate and embodied dialogical performance between the believer and Jesus, it derives some of its efficacy and authenticity from transnational religious fields, as when an individual prayer is part of a 'chain of prayer' performed at various points along religious and migrant

networks. Pointing to the multi-scalar dimension of religious place-making, which will be the focus of our case study in London, we can say that, just like commodities, prayers have a 'social life'; that is, they have 'trajectories' or 'biographies', adopting different valences, morphologies, and functions in response to their diverse contexts of production and reproduction.[7]

In addition to an auditorium that will eventually accommodate one million people, Prayer City offers a variety of chalets for visitors seeking special spiritual aid. Here Prayer City functions as a total religious institution in the Goffmanian sense, as the terrestrial antithesis of the depraved city, of Johannesburg and Lagos. Here we see that tactical cosmopolitanism is not just transnationally oriented. Ultimately, MFM's members see themselves as citizens of a supra-territorial Kingdom of God. In Ralph's words:

> It does not say in the Bible that my nationality is South African. It says my nationality is in heaven. So, I believe that, no matter what permits I was given here in South Africa … [it] is just a document, just a paper. I work for it, but my working for it I got from Jesus, who has given me the skills to work and make money, and to support myself.

Kuala Lumpur-Kajang: The politics of identity and the spatial management of difference

While it is important to acknowledge the ontogenic power of religion to call forth subjectivities, places and times through practices like prayer, it is also crucial to recognize that religious performances are themselves emplaced. They are situated and creatively respond to the spatial configurations in which they are embedded. As we saw in our discussion of the spatial regime in Kuala Lumpur, the place of religion in Kajang reflects the 'strategies' through which long-standing settler and new migrant communities have been managed from above – by national and local leaders, their priorities and policies – as well as the 'tactics' these communities have deployed to establish themselves in a context where space is at a premium and where political strategy and cultural innovation is needed to get a foothold.[8] In the colonial plantation economy, where opening a *surau* (mosque), temple or church was encouraged by owners to ensure peace and stability among those from different ethnic, linguistic and caste backgrounds, the number of religious structures grew significantly though the land on which they were built was often not owned by the groups themselves. In Malaysia's current spatial regime, which favours the majority Muslim Malay population, this has led to disputes over ownership and the management of space that have accentuated the different positions and interests of groups. Indian and Chinese communities have found their religious places threatened by both commercial and local Malay interests in the contest for scarce urban space.[9]

One such dispute concerns the Sri Kalumalai Karumariamman Temple. Established originally as a small shrine around a sacred stone in 1900, it served Indian Hindu labourers from the nearby West Country rubber plantation, as well as Chinese

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miners from the surrounding tin-mine who contributed materials for the construction of its canopy. With the plantation abandoned, the temple today is now surrounded by two Malay middle class housing estates, in which some Indians and Chinese also live.

One successful Indian family took a particular interest in the site. The retired patriarch devoted much of his time and attention to it and invested in substantial renovations and development, despite not owning the land on which it was built. This led to an enlarged following: about 80–100 people visited the temple daily, with as many as 250 on Fridays, and a major annual festival was introduced. The expansion and revitalization of the temple resulted in complaints made to the local authorities by the neighbouring Malay *surau* committee. In 2005, the local council instructed those responsible to move the temple, failing which a court order would be sought for its demolition. With the advice and assistance of a local Indian political party, the temple then registered with the Malaysia Hindu Sangam under the Societies Act, and an application was filed for the land to be gazetted as religious land.

In 2007, the decision was taken to postpone temple demolition until further negotiations had been conducted. The patriarch, now temple president, remained opposed to moving the temple, located as it was on sacred ground. He argued for the legitimacy of longer settlement: 'our temple is almost one hundred years, their *surau* is new; they ask us to move the temple, why don't they move the *surau*?' Recognizing the ramifications of the dispute for the governance of ethnic and cultural minorities and the issue of spatial segregation, he retorted: 'If they want us to move the temple, they might as well ask all the Chinese and Indians living here to move. Let only Malays live here, Indians in one area, Chinese in another area!'

Like Hindu shrines in Kajang, most Chinese temples – more than 100 of them – had never been registered, although the land on which they were sited often belonged to Chinese families (though not gazetted as religious). Irrespective of this ownership, had the state government so wished, it could have demolished these temples, though in practice a blind-eye was often turned. Instead, community leaders were left to handle ensuing inter-community conflicts if and when they arose. This is illustrated in the case of Nian Jue Ling, a Chinese Buddhist temple in Kajang.

Nian Jue Ling was founded a decade ago by a Buddhist monk from Penang trained in the Theravada tradition. Located on a hill near a Malay village, despite being registered, it was on land belonging to the state. Discontent had been voiced by local Muslims because of the temple's location at an elevation higher than the neighbouring Malay *surau*, but matters really came to a head during the first major temple event when a new Buddha statue was to be installed. It took a hundred people or more to pull the huge statue up the hill. The ensuing crowd and the passage of the Buddha through the Malay village on its way to the temple led to a complaint being filed by the Malay village headman. Reacting hastily, the authorities contacted the monk and demanded the cessation of religious activities. Temple demolition was averted by the swift action of a local Chinese political leader who made it clear that Chinese votes would be lost if this were to happen: 'I told him [the Chief Minister] not to touch on Chinese religious matters, because it would affect our support from the Chinese community in the elections.' Advising him to submit an application for land grant

approval, the Minister stressed that everything should be done in a quiet manner. Flags should not be put up close to the Malay village; there should be no trouble.

The centrality of temples in place-making among migrant minorities in Kajang is part and parcel of the politics of recognition. Scholars of multiculturalism in settings such as Malaysia have increasingly moved from the understanding of identity as a static, given category that individuals bring to encounters with others to one that sees it as 'the result of a dialogic process with others who have the ability to validate one's identity claims' (Noble 2009: 876). In this view, recognition is the result of 'situated sociability', revolving 'around legitimacy and competence, temporality and situatedness that relate to the contingencies of participation in a particular domain and setting' (Noble 2009: 876, 877). In other words, multiculturalism is not simply a state policy to manage difference, but also a 'sensuous' quotidian experience (Wise 2010): recognition and belonging are locally-negotiated processes of shared being-in-the-world, of co-habiting and co-building of places.

Religion enters this sensuous and spatial politics of recognition not only through the public performance of embodied competences, as the case in Johannesburg demonstrates, but through other materializing practices such as the building of churches, mosques, and temples that render migrants and long-standing settlers visible to each other. Tweed (1997: 93) puts it well when he writes that

> Constructing place religiously involves engaging in contests with others within the natural terrain and at social sites. … With and against others in the community … religious men and women are continually in the process of mapping a symbolic landscape and constructing a symbolic dwelling in which they might have their own space and find their own place.

Tweed (1997: 93) goes on to affirm that '[t]he significance of religious mapping, as well as the precarious character of both spiritual cartography and identity formation, seems clearest when people become *out of place*.' This is not surprising given that religion is fundamentally about memory and 'topophilia' – the emotional and visceral attachment to particular places, especially home and the homeland (Hervieu-Leger 2000, Tuan 1974). According to Johnson (2007: 11):

> Space and memory are twin anchors of any discussion of diasporas, as diasporic sentiments of affinity for a distant place require memories and their intentional evocation – the recognition of a present absence of a place that must be recalled, if not in physical then in symbolic forms. Diasporic religions are in this sense memory performances.

Tweed's work on Cuban exiles in Miami offers a good example of the performance of 'spatial memories'. It shows that in diaspora embodied memories of the homeland are sustained and transmitted through the transpositions of landscapes – the imagined, idealized homeland – to the society of settlement, a transposition that often involves the construction of temples.[10] In fact, temples are increasingly important as contested

spaces for the construction of identity, as the children of migrants seek to negotiate their parents' expectations and the demands of their societies of birth.

Precisely because visibility is a matter of legitimacy, migrants must manage it carefully, lest they produce a strong reaction from settled groups, as we see in the cases of the Chinese and Hindu temples in Kajang. As the previous examples illustrate, paradoxically, invisibility becomes a tactic for the establishment and survival of minority presence. There are, however, other occasions when it is visibility that becomes the appropriate demotic strategy for the very public expression of religious identity. The innovative introduction of two annual religious processions illustrates this (see also Garbin in this issue).

On a beautiful moonlit May night in 2006, a large procession of some 10,000 people snaked its way through Kajang to the huge, brightly lit temple to Guan Yin at the top of the hill in Sungai Chua. Onlookers lined the route, some making a gesture of respect as the four floats with Buddha images passed them by. It was Wesak Day, when Sakyamuni Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death are celebrated. Weeks before the event, posters in Chinese, Malay and English announcing the procession had been plastered all over town. At the launch ceremony, comprised largely of speeches by local politicians and including the singing of the national anthem, it was suggested that religious traditions of this kind could serve as tourist attractions. In fact, this two-day Wesak 'tradition' – consisting of the procession, a temple chanting ceremony and blessings by invited monks – had only been introduced in 1986. With the temple annually filled to overflowing with thousands of visitors, its public reputation had been secured as *the* Buddhist centre among the local populace: 'Our aim is to bring Buddhist teaching from the temple to the households, to the people, to the town. … They help us, we help them.'[11]

Inspired by the success of the Wesak Day procession, the Assembly of God introduced an ecumenical Easter March through the town, with the participation of 24 Kajang churches, including the Catholics. In an interview with the Pastor, in addition to church unity, the principal public aim was acknowledged to be visibility: The many marchers of varied ethnic backgrounds, dressed in red T-shirts, circulated through the main streets of Kajang town centre, singing and praying. With Christians being a religious minority comprised of people from various ethnic minorities (Chinese, Indians, Indonesians and Africans as well as indigenous peoples of East Malaysia), the demonstration of a unified public presence was felt to be a significant performance of identity as well as a spiritual transformation of the town.

Wesak and the Easter March represent a tactic of recognition that we can characterize as 'spatial mimetics', whereby a new migrant population or a minority inscribes its legitimate presence in the landscape by creatively adapting the spatial practices of a more established or dominant group. This mimetics draws from vernacular religious narratives and practices to simultaneously mark difference and signal integration to the dominant biopolitics. In this case, these enactments of minority religious identity were tolerated locally because they involved the temporary sacralization of space rather than a direct challenge to Malaysia's governmentality. Moreover, in the case of Wesak, they added to the tourist economy. More broadly, the

governance of religious space has clearly not been based on 'one rule for all', with non-Malays disadvantaged in local struggles because of complex issues around registration, the gazetting of land, and land-ownership. A piecemeal approach has resulted, at the discretion of local authorities and state governments, with the mediation of conflict managed by political intermediaries and elected representatives in a system of communal representation.

Unlike the cases of transnational place-making and Tablighi-Jama'at in London (see below) and of new migration and embodied spiritual performance in Johannesburg – both of which indeed have their counterparts in Malaysia – these Kajang struggles are peculiarly local. They show how long-standing settled communities – that continue to be cast as migrant minorities in a Malay-majority, Islam-dominated state – focus on the forging of religious place-making in their struggle for local space and recognition. Indeed, religious space becomes an index for community space more generally. The threat of temple demolition, for example, signals a challenge to a community's right to its place within the nation. But subaltern counter-moves remain a possibility, whether achieved by political mobilization, by raising the spectre of segregation in the context of a dominant discourse of social integration, or by making one's religious presence seen and felt through the sacralization of secular urban spaces (cf. Metcalf 1996). Effective, spatially-enacted identity claims are the result of innovation and mimesis, of instrumental inter-faith and inter-ethnic relations, and of selective tactics of visibility and invisibility.

London: The multiple, interconnecting scales of religious place-making

Temple-based struggles in Kajang illustrate the ways in which religion contributes to the complex production of local spaces by diasporas. However, religious place-making is rarely restricted solely to the contested articulation of the local. Rather it is always criss-crossed by translocal flows and networks.

In his testimony of being 'born again' as a Muslim, Kamal, a 25-year-old British Bangladeshi from East London, explained how it was he came to adopt a new religious identity through his encounter with the global Islamic revivalist movement, Tablighi Jama'at:[12]

> I've got a friend who lives around the corner. He's a *Tablighi alim* [learned, scholar]. He saw me, I was wild, listening to music, I've got a nice car. He goes to me one day: 'I see you in the mosque'. He was giving me *da'wah*. He was preaching. He asked me: 'Why don't you come down one day and listen to this talk, just five minutes, not long?' I was interested 'cos I want to know my religion … I said: 'where is it?' He said 'West Ham'. I went there … I really liked it. I learned so much, so many things I picked up, like how to do a *wuzu* properly, ablution. I didn't know how to pray properly. I didn't know how to have a bath properly. Every step you make is *ibadat*, rewarding. It's following the command of Allah.[13]

15

Like prayer and conversion in Pentecostalism, being 'reborn in Islam' through Tablighi Jama'at involves a particular relationship to both the religious and social body, through the progressive adoption of new '*techniques du corps*' (Mauss 1934) and the reformation of habits. For Tablighis, these habits are modelled on the Prophet's life and tradition (*sunna*) (Metcalf 2003; Sikand 1998). The Prophet's society in Medina represents the Golden Age of Islam which the faithful seek to relive through an encompassing experience of *din* (faith). This experience is constructed as a retreat from *dunya* (the world) and draws on a nexus of connecting socio-spatial scales: the disciplined and purified body, the localized territories of Islamic devotion and interaction in the rectified mosque, and the globalized sphere of Islamic universalism and travelling missions 'in the way of God' (*nafr*). Also, notice once again the chronotopic character of religious practices, liking Muhammad's exemplary habitus and community with the embodied ethos of Tablighis.

For neophytes like Kamal, body and home are intimate sites open to theological and practical work and reinterpretation through purification, prayer (*namaz*), remembrance of Allah (*zikr*), Qur'anic recitation (*tilawat*) and the outwardly-directed work of preaching (*tabligh*) (Metcalf 2003: 139). But it is *da'wah*, mission, the invitation to others – rather than the call to social reform or political participation – that directs the individual practitioner to engage at spatial scales beyond the self.

In the neighbourhoods of East London, Tablighi Jama'at, like other Islamic organizations, has actively engaged in the 're-Islamisation' of local Muslims, though their methods, interpretations and intentions differ to those of other groups. Tablighis, for example, have cast others as morally corrupt in their quest for political power, preferring to pursue an a-political ascetic approach to *da'wah*: 'Jama'at-i Islami, they have a political agenda and their leaders do it for power. They don't do it for others as we do it through Tablighi missionary work. We do *Tabligh* for the good of the people, to bring them to the right path of God.' (Imam of the Christian Street Markaz, the main Tablighi mosque in Tower Hamlets)

Tablighi Jama'at's critics, however, have seen their lack of political involvement as a failure to meet the local and national needs of Muslims. Indeed, this unwillingness – some referred to it as political naivety and an inability to organize – contributed to the movement's failure to win the battle to develop a new *markaz* (mosque) and Islamic complex on land they had bought at Abbey Mills near the 2012 Olympic site in Newham (DeHanas and Pieri 2011: 809–10; Eade 2011: 161). Originally planned to hold 40,000 and to be a multi-million pound, cutting-edge project designed by the internationally-renowned Muslim architect Ali Mangera, the proposed *markaz* was a victim of 'scalar politics' (DeHanas and Pieri 2011). The project's attempt to transform post-industrial East London by purifying and consecrating its derelict landscape collided with the hegemonic religious map and secular visions of urban renewal. The project was cast in the media as the 'Olympics mega-mosque' and reported as overshadowing – physically and symbolically – existing religious buildings in Britain.

When television viewers around the world see aerial views of the stadium

during the opening ceremony in six years' time, the most prominent religious building in the camera shot will not be one of the city's iconic churches that have shaped the nation's history, such as St Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey, but the mega-mosque.

(From *The Telegraph* 2006, in DeHanas and Pieri (2011: 807)).

Even though Tablighi Jama'at scaled down its plans and changed architect, mobilization against the planned mosque from a local Christian alliance that feared it would damage the cultural balance of the area, as well as a national petition (found eventually to have been initiated by a British National Party supporter), along with the movement's own failure to keep up with the demands of the planning process, thwarted the venture. Commenting on this case in the context of other mosque developments, Eade (2011: 161) noted,

> The project reflected once more the economic and cultural changes taking place across London as a former industrial site provided the opportunity for a prestigious development by a religious minority. However, the application had been hampered by concerted external opposition, internal tensions and inexperience. The task was made even more difficult by its proximity to an Olympics site which was exposed to the full glare of metropolitan, national and global attention.

The amplification of a local mosque dispute to larger scales drew Tablighi Jama'at into a public controversy it would normally have been at pains to resist on theological grounds. The movement's commitment to its global mission is pietistic rather than political in character, and is aimed at reform, moral education and the establishment of a worldwide Tabligh community. For the Bangladeshi Tablighis of East London, for example, travelling to spread the message of *tabligh* may have a transnational aspect, keeping them in touch with family members in Sylhet or Dhaka, but it also connects the different nodes of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the cities of Europe (London, Rome, Paris) and North America (New York, Toronto). Such religious mobility also plays a significant part in the construction of both a deterritorialized brotherhood of Tablighis and an imagined global and universal Muslim *umma*.

After listing the many countries he had visited, Ahmed, a 60-year-old Bangladeshi living in Tower Hamlets, framed his own travels in the context of the *hijra* and the missionary journeys of the Prophet and his Companions:[14]

> But we send groups all over the world, at our own expense. … When you go to different areas, you get experience. You get experience of the locality in the particular country. Spiritually it's called *hijra*. This makes you perfect, because you sacrifice for your religion. So when you sacrifice your home, your business, your children, your wife, for the *din* (faith), for Islam, you get more *suab* (blessings/rewards).

Through the concept of sacrifice, Ahmed connects the global, through the local, back to the most intimate of scales, to home and family – which may have to be relinquished – and to the self, to personal piety and the blessings of Allah.

The case of Tablighi Jama'at in East London reveals how religious place-making operates at multiple scales – from body, through locality and nation, to global scale, interconnected transnationally - arising in part from the theological understanding of the movement but also from its need to make a space for itself locally and globally. Three processes which cut across these scales can be noted. The first is sacralization, in this case Islamization (Metcalf 1996), of 'stamping the earth with the name of Allah' as Werbner (1996) puts it. Tablighis, in their commitment to engaging hearts and minds the world over through *da'wah*, take this process seriously at every scale. In doing so, they connect to their brothers and sisters elsewhere – in Johannesburg and Kajang, for example – where similar multi-scalar activities are in operation. Extension beyond the local, linking universally through the Tablighi network then is the second of these processes. Making connections, both real and imaginative, through space and time (Knott 2005: 20-5) provides a vital sense of common purpose (*din*) and shared norms and traditions which transcend both ethnic differences and geographical distance.

The third process is contestation, which Chidester and Linenthal (1995: 15–20) see as intrinsic to the production of sacred space, irrespective of religion, scale, time or place. Tablighi Jama'at's missionary approach exhibits several of 'the characteristic modes of symbolic engagement… appropriation, exclusion, inversion, and hybridization' (1995: 19) that Chidester and Linenthal associate with sacred place-making. As we saw at several scales, despite their ostensibly a-political stance, Tablighi Jama'at's quest to appropriate and reform Muslim bodies, to overturn local political discourses and transform neighbourhoods, and to preach their message globally requires its members to differentiate themselves, exclude Islamic others, negotiate and come to terms with secular authorities. Such challenging and contested engagements are a necessary part of the process of making faithful bodies and places, a sacrifice rewarded by the conviction that this is work done in the name of Allah and, as a result, accrues blessings.

Discussion

We have drawn from fieldwork in three sites to highlight some of the specific roles that religion plays in the dynamics of place-making among migrant minorities. As Tweed (2006: 98) remarks, 'religion begins – and ends – with bodies'. Thus, we used the example of prayer among Pentecostal immigrants in Johannesburg to show how embodied performance allows religion to summon chronotopes, spatio-temporal envelopes that enable migrant minorities to dwell meaningful and effectively in the midst of widespread dislocation. Extrapolating beyond this case study, we can say that religion offers multiple practices of sacralization, purification, rectification, and conversion that link physical migrations with spiritual journeys, rendering them meaningful as part of moral maps and cosmic histories of redemption, salvation, or

liberation. In the process, religion builds sanctioned places in which to be. This is what Hervieu-Leger (2000) describes as the construction of spaces within shared belief systems and what Tweed (1997) calls the supralocative aspect of religion, the intertwining of human and sacred histories, as well as home and cosmos.

But such home-making does not occur in a vacuum. The locative work of religion involves navigating the religious and secular ecologies in which migrants settle. Religion also becomes entwined with spatial regimes and biopolitics, particularly with national and local modes of governmentality, modes of managing immigrant and native populations. Thus, as we saw in the case of the tensions around the building of temples and the staging of public events such as processions and marches in Kajang, religion is a means to affirm, negotiate, and regulate difference, both from above (by the state and religious elites) and below, at the quotidian level. Religion is about border-making and border-crossing through the work of re-memorializing and materializing imagined homelands in diaspora, about recognition, inclusion, and exclusion, about rending self and community visible or invisible in the face of diversity.

Finally, through the case of the Tablighi Jama'at in London, we have shown that religion involves the complex and tensile interleaving of multiple scales from the body and the home to the urban through the national, transnational, global and virtual. This is possible because religious organizations and movements such as the Tablighi Jama'at or Pentecostalism operate as multi-directional networks through which immigrants, missionaries, itinerant pastors, religious entrepreneurs, pilgrims, and tourists circulate alongside prayers, sacred texts, relics, icons, symbols, videotaped sermons, money, modes of piety and other *techniques du corps* (Levitt and Wong in this issue; Vásquez 2011). These networks are nucleated in a variety of interconnected nodes: production nodes, like Lagos and Accra for Pentecostalism; gateways nodes such as Johannesburg, which serves as a staging area for migration and missionary work to global cities; and those mixing and amplifying nodes *par excellence*, such as London and New York, from where religious messages can be beamed globally. The same goes for Tablighi Jama'at networks that extend from India and Bangladesh to Malaysia and the UK. And as the debate about the Tablighi mosques in London, religion also enters mediascapes that shape the local and national processes of place-making and identity formation.

Together these case studies illustrate the multifarious and efficacious contributions of religion to place-making among diasporas and call for the need to study not only how religious practices and discourses are shaped by migration but also how they play significant roles for migrants in mapping their journeys, constructing their identities, and facilitating their embeddedness at multiple scales across transnational social fields.

Notes

1. We thank members of the 'Religious Lives of Migrant Minorities' project for data and text included in this article. Throughout the article we refer to 'diaspora' – to diaspora space and time, diaspora communities and diasporic identities – by which we mean a lived sense of

connection to a temporally and/or spatially distant homeland, locale, people and their culture and social life.

2. See Stump (2008) for an introduction to religious place-making; exceptions include Hüwelmeier and Krause (2010), Johnson (2007), Metcalf (1996), Peña (2011), Phillips (2009), Tweed (1997, 2006) and Valins (2003).

3. We draw the material for this section from fieldwork conducted by Caroline Jeannerat. See also Jeannerat (2009).

4. See www.mountainoffire.org/index.php/about-mfm/overview/.

5. 'Devotional capital reinforces our understanding of the regenerative links between religious practice and socio-economic forces; it proposes that religious practice is capital' that circulates 'according to a site-specific faith-based value system' (Peña 2011: 11).

6. Bakhtin (1981: 7) coined this term to stress 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships' in language. More broadly, chronotopes are 'points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; like space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people.'

7. Here we adapt Appadurai's work (1986) on the social life of commodities to highlight the processual, heteroglossic and multi-scalar character of prayer.

8. de Certeau (1984: 29–42) distinguishes between strategies, spatial practices that reflect the hegemonic gaze of the urban planners and the tactics, the everyday, lived practices of city dwellers.

9. Material and themes for this section were provided by Diana Wong and the KL team.

10. See Tweed (1997).

11. From an interview with Lee, the lay leader of the Pertubuhan Budhis Manju Suddhi, May 2007.

12. Tablighi Jama'at is a grassroots revival movement that originated in India in the 1920s, seeking to purify Islam of Hindu influences. The movement has expanded beyond South Asia, to Southeast Asia, Europe and the USA. See Sikand (1998), Metcalf (2003).

13. The ethnographic material for this case study was collected by the London team, and some of the text was provided by David Garbin (cf. Garbin 2008).

14. The migration of the Prophet (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina took place in 622 CE (also marking the first year of the Islamic calendar). See Wong (in this issue) for further reference to *hijra* and Islamic spiritual journeys.

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