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Occupying the Global City: Spatial Politics and Spiritual Warfare among African Pentecostals in Hong Kong

Benjamin Kirby

Occupy Hong Kong

I was in Hong Kong in the second half of 2014 at the time of the Occupy and Umbrella Revolution movements that mobilized an unprecedented number of people to stage mass sit-ins across the centre of the city in response to proposed electoral reforms and deepening inequality. The circumstances prompted me to reflect on the political ambitions and strategies of the four African-initiated Pentecostal churches at which I was conducting fieldwork. Many of the 30–100 people who attend the main Sunday services at these churches come from African countries, but the majority come from the Philippines and Indonesia and are employed in Hong Kong as domestic workers (see Yap 2015). For worshippers whose status as formal citizens or legal residents in Hong Kong could conceivably be called into question, there was an understandable reluctance to risk encounters with police at protest sites and an equally understandable sense that the protesters' struggle was not 'their' struggle.

Among the pastors, all of whom are legal residents in Hong Kong from African countries (and three of whom are from Nigeria), there was some difference of opinion about the protests. Pastor Samuel¹ wholly sympathized with the protesters' demands for 'better governance', while Pastor Isaac expressed to his congregation a concern that they were unnecessarily jeopardized the enviable prosperity and harmony of their city. Where I found real consonance between the four pastors, however, was in their conviction that any substantive political change would be reliant on two factors. Both follow from a shift in the wider born-again movement with respect to the perceived ends of evangelism, namely

towards accelerating the triumphant arrival of the Kingdom of God by enacting the 'ethical, social, and political transformation of entire societies' (Marshall 2016: 10). The first factor was that citizens, and especially those in power, should become 'God-fearing' and characterized by 'righteousness'. As Pastor Samuel put it:

When the righteous are in power, the people are well. Democracy would mean more if we had fear. The more you fear God, the more you make better decisions. In the end, every government will be under God. The Church is God's government. It is a very strong government in every nation on earth but it is the government *within* the government; it is ruling *spiritually*.

This conviction reflects well the concern that Ruth Marshall (2009: 125) identifies among Nigerian Pentecostals for 'sociopolitical redemption', the 'cornerstone' of which is a model of citizenship grounded in the 'moral government of the self'. The second factor was that a more decisive battle for Hong Kong should be fought through prayer. Pastor Samuel remarked that 'if we pray, changes will come; demonstration is very important, but prayer is more important'. Likewise, Pastor Isaac proposed that 'the best way to treat those in authority is not to criticize but to pray to dislodge powers and principalities so they can do good'.

This rhetoric is characteristic of an idiom of 'global spiritual warfare' that has been central to the global charismatic Christian revival in recent decades (see McAlister 2014). Under this rubric, Pentecostals in Hong Kong as much as Lagos or London are enlisted to participate in a zero-sum battle with demonic powers for political space and the governance of populations through fervent prayer and evangelism. Marshall (2016: 2–3) has offered a compelling account of spiritual warfare prayer as 'a form of political praxis', which entails the construction of 'militant Christian subjects' dedicated to occupying public space. She proposes that spiritual warfare theology be understood as part of 'a *bricolage*, a living, moving corpus of ideas, scriptural interpretations, images, discourses and techniques' by which global charismatic Christianity expands (Marshall 2016: 6). In this chapter, I draw on interviews with the four pastors, as well as insights from two months of participant observation at their churches, to explore how they stage a project of spiritual warfare in Hong Kong.²

Marshall has been primarily interested in the performative power of spiritual warfare prayer as 'insurrectional speech' that forms part of a wider born-again programme of subjectivation. In this chapter, I foreground the spatial politics of spiritual warfare, or rather its *geopolitical* dimensions. Specifically, I consider how these churches stage a campaign of spiritual warfare that assumes and

entails the production of a political geography organized around Hong Kong itself. I show how, through embodied practices of walking and talking about Hong Kong, congregants orchestrate an occupation of the city that is no less a demonstration against the conditions of precarity than that of the Occupy protesters. In doing so, I attend to programmatic articulations of this project, as well as to how it is performatively enacted in the localities of the city.

Talking the global city

Over the course of my fieldwork, I attended a series of Bible study group sessions led by one of the pastors who was working through the Book of Revelation. I was struck by the manner in which the pastor and some of the attendees would frequently veer off into discussions in an apocalyptic frame about cities and nations being carved up between warring geopolitical forces. Not all of those present responded enthusiastically to these detours, and elsewhere a Nigerian congregant revealed to me that she had stopped attending the class because it made her feel like she was ‘in an international politics class but with the Bible as the textbook’. This neatly illustrates an observation that I wish to make at the outset, namely that an imagined geopolitics (see Sturm 2015) was invoked in these conversations which, it became clear, is both assumed and enacted by practices of spiritual warfare. The principal actors in this spatial formation are divine and satanic agents positioned at the top of an invisible ‘hierarchy’ of demonic powers that are distributed over space at different scales. Operating, in Pastor Isaac’s words, ‘like an army’, these powers are forever inserting themselves into a visible world of classically defined political sites and institutions such as and transnational organizations, as well as cities.

The malevolent powers with which the four churches compete in Hong Kong are principally embodied in the image of a dragon or beast which is ubiquitous across the city. Three of the pastors also frequently made references to the Dragon and the Beasts mentioned in the Book of Revelation. Pastor Isaac explained:

There is a dragon over Hong Kong which has power. It is the ruling spirit. The Dragon is over Asia. In Revelation 12:9, it says that the Dragon is Satan himself. This is the highest ruling class. Here [in Hong Kong] we have a phoenix which is supposed to be the wife of the Dragon, coming in the appearance of a female and operating *under* the Dragon. They call Hong Kong the ‘Pearl of the Orient’. Hong Kong is feminine, remember that it is called ‘Fragrant Harbour’. There are also other spirits, Thailand and Indonesia, which are under some kingdom.³

At a different scale, the Dragon and the Beasts are understood to have a concrete influence on the everyday lives of the congregants. For many migrant minority groups in Hong Kong, everyday life is characterized by a heightened state of precarity, not least in the case of the multiple Filipino and Indonesian congregants that number among Hong Kong's 300,000 domestic workers (see Ong 2006: 195–217; Sautman 2004). The forms and conditions of precarity that congregants experience are framed as spiritual afflictions rooted in the operations of this demonic hierarchy, and must therefore be addressed through spiritual warfare prayer. As Pastor Timothy put it to the congregation in one service, 'Hong Kong is a blessed place but the Beast eats your wealth and progress; pray against the Beast of Hong Kong!'

Pentecostal geopolitics

I focus my attention here on the visible protagonists of this geopolitical imaginary at the global scale, as it is advanced by the pastors. A handful of pastors and congregants that I interviewed who were aware that I am British steered our conversations towards current affairs and, to my surprise, voiced concerns about UK immigration policy. In expressing his sympathy towards the UK Independence Party, one Ghanaian congregant told me that 'Muslims are turning the UK into an Islamic state.' Citing a loss of nerve on the part of the government and general public, which have gradually bowed to spiritual apathy, moral corruption and cultural decadence, Pastor Samuel advised that people in the UK pray more that 'God will continue to raise more defenders of the faith' that will respond to 'territorial spirits'. 'If they don't', he warned, 'Islam will answer, and you can't deal with Islam politically, only spiritually.' On separate occasions, three of the pastors repeated these precise sentiments with emphasis, stressing that as long as they continue to try and tackle Islamic extremism by dealing with 'flesh and blood' (Ephesians 6: 12) rather than with 'Christianity', they will remain vulnerable to its spread. Indeed, among the four pastors there seemed to be little room for ambiguity about the fact that Islam, perceived as a 'spirit', is satanic at its root. Pastor Isaac spoke in a Sunday sermon about how he had been watching TV and had seen people 'saying they were fighting for God, and they were chopping off heads'. He concluded: 'Allah is an evil spirit [because] God can't tell you to do that.'

As outlined on one of the church websites, the preferred mode of response to the perceived spread of Islam is to replicate the expansionist logic, namely

by ‘enlarging your territory’ and ‘taking the ground back for God’ using the tools of spiritual warfare in the name of a ‘commanded blessing of increase and multiplication’. In a similar fashion, Pastor Timothy referred to God’s interactions with the Israelites in the Book of Exodus where ‘they are told they will drive out all the Hivites and Canaanites and Hittites and all Beasts and occupy the land’. Pastor Isaac explained that to evangelize ‘you don’t need to talk to the people, you just need to speak the Word; to *say* that they don’t have authority over the land. Then you get the heart of the people.’ This is well illustrated by a passage on another of the church websites in a section introducing China as a mission field:

In the future, China will preach the gospel around Asia and the Arab world, only if we do what we must do today: to take the pain and bring the sound gospel to China. If we fail Islam will grow like weeds over the land and cause a great opposition to the true faith.

As is implied here, China is prized as a mission field because there is a strong hope that it will offer a more robust response to Islam than that offered by the West. One pastor made neat parallels between ‘the Kings from the East’ that ‘will arise to play an End Time role’ in which ‘the East will be destined to dominate’ and ‘host the final events’. Another proposed that ‘China has a special place in the heart of God’, not least because ‘God is interested in *people*’ of which China has many. ‘All roads are leading to China now,’ he went on; ‘the Last Days mission field will be filled with Africans, but more importantly Chinese.’ This sense that Africans have a role in ‘passing on the baton’ to Chinese, so to speak, is echoed on the aforementioned church website as the pastor positions Asia as ‘the primary mission field for Africa’. He notes that ‘the African missionary [has] the most important identity of all times’ because he or she ‘has the required experience to work in the Asian terrain, having passed through persecution, slavery, long economic suffering, rejection, and exploitation.’⁴

Gateway to the world

All four pastors imagine Hong Kong as a global centre that functions, in the words of Pastor Samuel, as a ‘window and door not only to China but to the world’. This imaginary owes something to historical constructions of Hong Kong as a ‘gateway’ for the world (including born-again evangelists) to ‘reach a China that was recovering from Maoist closure’ (Siu 2011: 129). This symbol has been strategically invoked and repurposed by more recent branding efforts which have helped construct Hong Kong as a ‘world-class’

city and a financial hub (Ong 2011: 14; Tse 2004: 58). The imaginary also rests on a popular political geography indebted to the 'global city' paradigm of urbanization which, as classically articulated by Saskia Sassen (1991; 2012), identifies a complex of transurban networks and processes connecting highly integrated 'core' cities and urban 'peripheries'. The global city is invoked by the pastors 'as a timeless, universal paradigm with cosmic reference' (Elisha 2013: 317). This allows the pastors to stage 'inter-city comparisons' (Ong 2011: 17–20) with biblical cities such as Athens, Ephesus and Philippi as comparably cosmopolitan centres.

I take the example here of Pastor Samuel who drew particular attention to a 'very important spiritual rule' that applies to a sequence of established 'global cities' ('London, New York, Hong Kong, Singapore, Lagos, Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg') today as much as it did to 'Ephesus in the days of Paul'; namely, that they are capable of furthering the spatial advance of the born-again project of redemption because they facilitate the circulation and exchange of various goods across transnational networks. In Sassen's (2012) words, they serve as 'thick enabling environments'. 'You can't practically go around the whole world,' Pastor Samuel explained, 'but if you are in a place like Hong Kong, you can *find* the whole world; just in Tsim Sha Tsui alone you can find people from every society of the world.' It should be emphasized here that it is not merely the dense accumulation of bodies in a concentrated space that lends global nodes like Hong Kong this capacity, but also the multi-scalar trajectories and circuits along which these bodies travel. In other words, you can 'find the whole world' both *in* Hong Kong and *through* Hong Kong. As Pastor Samuel explained, Hong Kong is a remarkably 'itinerant' place; 'many converts live here in Hong Kong and then go back to their own locality' where the Gospel will definitely '[touch] their localities and nations, and they will definitely translate it to their languages to their people'. The Hong Kong churches are, then, occupied with making their congregants 'very strong in the Word' in order that they are able to 'argue and stand for the Gospel' by the time they return home, thereby ensuring that the project of spiritual warfare is extended to a new theatre. Pastor Samuel acknowledged that such tactile geographies are especially valuable in the cases of 'Indonesia and the Philippines; places that are not easy to get to', particularly because 'Indonesia is a Muslim nation'. It became clear over the course of my fieldwork that there are a remarkable number of instances of African-initiated churches in Hong Kong setting up ministries in South-East Asian countries, often at the request of their sizeable Filipino and Indonesian memberships.

Terrain, instrument, object

Though dynamic and heterogeneous, this spatial imaginary contains sufficient lines of agreement to permit me to speak usefully of a shared imagined geography, the coherence of which is likely indebted to the fellowship group that the African pastors in Hong Kong attend. What I draw attention to here is the way that the pastors strategically appropriate spatial repertoires that circulate across born-again networks as well as popular media in a manner that betrays a series of contextual concerns. Rhetorical articulations of this geopolitics re-situate Hong Kong as a strategic site or *terrain* for the staging of a decisive spiritual battle and territorial expansion at a key intersection between China, the West and Islam. In other words, the pastors 'reground' Hong Kong by producing it as a centre; both with respect to the world (spatially) and the impending Last Days (temporally) (Garbin 2014: 379). In doing so, the pastors are performing practices of 'worlding' or 'mapping', which enable the congregations to cultivate, connect and imaginatively transcend urban localities (Garbin 2013: 681; Lanz 2013: 27; Ong 2011: 12–13).

Notably, several of the pastors and congregants that I spoke to emphasized that Hong Kong is widely regarded across African migrant networks as a 'third-best' destination; this was a place in which they had never really aspired to live in the way they had the United States and UK. By enhancing the scale and gravity of the churches' ministries, however, this geopolitics enables these congregants to render meaningful the physical journeys that they have made to reach Hong Kong, and thus contributes to a project of emplacement as well as that of establishing a public presence (Vásquez and Knott 2014: 343). As Pastor Timothy put it to his congregation one Sunday:

Why are you in Hong Kong? Do you think it is a mistake? It is not a mistake. God has a purpose. If his Kingdom can reign and influence, people who knew you before will never recognize you. Receive the power to become a general in the army of God.

Furthermore, by rhetorically framing Hong Kong as a node in a global infrastructural assemblage whose capacities his church seeks to exploit, Pastor Samuel casts the city (and its inhabitants) as not only a terrain but also an *instrument* of spiritual warfare. As he went on to explain, however, there is also a dark side to the 'spiritual rule' of global cities, and that is that 'Satan moves this way too; Satan moves and people can carry it back to their own people and country, just the same as God.' In keeping with the epistemological instability

that characterizes Pentecostal modes of perception and representation (see Marshall 2009: 13), Hong Kong and cities like it are ascribed an intense moral and spiritual ambivalence which is heightened by the importance afforded to them as sites or instruments of enormous strategic potential (see Elisha 2013). In other words, the traffic that flows through 'gateways' like Hong Kong does not move freely; these are highly contested thoroughfares. The struggle to break the region's principalities and to expand in both number and territory is, then, dependent on Christians neutralizing the spiritual powers that obstruct their work and pursuit of personal well-being at this threshold. What this entails is that Hong Kong itself becomes the target or *object* of spiritual warfare.

Walking the global city

Prayer that is explicitly framed as spiritual warfare is especially common at weekly night vigils and 'cross-over' services, as well as the meetings of overnight prayer bands. All of these events take place at church premises which are typically rooms rented in multi-storey buildings. I was struck by the way that Pastor Timothy in particular made extensive use of images of the world-famous Victoria Harbour skyline at night to decorate electronic invitations to night vigils, which were circulated online using social media. Images of this sort were also often projected onto screens at the services themselves. While Hong Kong is a territory that also comprises rural areas and small islands, the Victoria Harbour skyline has long been privileged as an object of representation in popular cinema and by the aforementioned city branding campaigns which have constructed an 'idea of Hong Kong' as a 'picture-perfect' cityscape (Donald 2006). As an icon of urban modernity and progress, the spectacular image of the Hong Kong skyline resonates with the aspirations of popular audiences worldwide. Through the production of imagined distance from the city, viewers are removed from the messy everyday realities of urban living and are presented with a 'coherent' image of Hong Kong as a visual object.

Anna Strhan (2013: 340) has shown how an evangelical church in London uses a promotional video which, by offering a view of urban pedestrians from the vantage point of a skyscraper, allows congregants to 'read the city as peopled by the "lost," upon whom they are encouraged to feel a response of compassion'. By way of contrast, urban users are invisible in the skyline image favoured by the Hong Kong churches, and instead the built environment takes centre

stage. This is in keeping with the priority that is afforded to spatial politics in the distinctive campaign of spiritual warfare that the four churches advance in Hong Kong and China, where (in the aforementioned words of Pastor Isaac) capturing ‘the heart of the people’ primarily consists of challenging the ‘authority [of principalities] over the land’ and, indeed, the urban environment rather than ‘[talking] to the people’ (cf. Strhan 2013: 337). The perspective from which the viewer looks down onto the wealthy urban centre from the Kowloon peninsula elicits a sense of detachment and control (Dorrian 2006: 20–1). As such, the image lends itself to spectacular mobilization in connection with church services that are dedicated to staging spiritual confrontations with demonic powers that ‘block’ channels of prosperity and impede Pentecostal expansion. Specifically, viewers are invited to reflect on their orientation to the imagined city and the promises that it extends to them. It is through these acts of invocation that the image serves to not only reflect dominant constructions of the city, but also *reassemble* them. It does so by folding them into a Pentecostal urban imaginary, presenting Hong Kong as a terrain or object in a geopolitics of spiritual warfare. I use this example to bring into relief another technique of spiritual warfare that invites congregants to become pedestrians, a contrast that corresponds to Michel de Certeau’s (1984: 92–3) famous comparison of the ‘voyeuristic’, god-like perspective offered from above and the lived reality of the city as it is experienced by urban walkers.

Power walking

There was wide agreement among my respondents that the strongest weapon in the church’s arsenal in the struggle for the redemption of urban space is the prayer walk which, in contrast to the night vigil, takes place *outside* of the church building. Prayer walks may be staged by the pastors alone or involve entire congregations. When I asked Pastor Isaac to define prayer walking, he described it as a ‘very regimented’ and ‘very organized administration’ directed at ‘the principality of the city, or powers over the Jordan area.’ He went on:

Remember in the Bible, God said to Joshua, ‘Every place you put your foot I will give you,’ and to Abraham, ‘I will give you as far as your eye can see.’ There is a spiritual significance to walking. It’s also a warfare; crossing the line is very significant.

This ‘crossing the line’ entails, for all four of the churches, the staging of performative confrontations or ruptures with prevailing cultural forms in Hong

Kong as part of what Marshall (2009: 214) calls a 'politics of conviction'. As has been widely observed of Pentecostals, there is a tendency to contend with rival ideologies and 'traditional' cultural and religious practices in a fashion that can serve to preserve rather than diminish their ontological plausibility (see e.g. Meyer 1998). Here I show how prayer walking incorporates this mode of cultural criticism into a performative urban critique.

At a transnational scale, the project of spiritual warfare advanced by the four churches in Hong Kong is in no small part directed at Islam. With respect to the lived city, however, and despite the visible presence of Muslims, the pastors are more concerned with how malevolent powers are cultivated in Hong Kong through the performance of Buddhist and traditional Chinese religious practices, as Pastor Isaac explained, 'The atmosphere in Hong Kong is spiritually polluted. There is incense, not to God but demons. This is because, when people burn stuff, they attract demons from heavenly places; they are communing with devils.' Similarly, invoking the aesthetics of urban dystopia, Pastor Samuel explained that '*physically*, Hong Kong is the best place, but we know there is darkness all over Hong Kong: evil is accepted, people are superstitious; people believe that when their ancestors die, they must give them food'. The churches, then, are concerned with 'strongholds' and other occult architectures that host these 'polluting' religious practices. These 'foundations', Pastor Isaac explained, are imposed on the city in order to delay the arrival of the promised 'New Jerusalem' by disrupting the 'perfect alignment between heaven and earth'. Hong Kong's many shrines and temples are appropriated as important elements in an imaginary demonic infrastructure that connects the city with 'heavenly places' and diffuses these errant powers into the urban landscape. Pastor Enoch vividly described how these infrastructural units function as part of Hong Kong's wider built environment:

Do you know that Lantau is where the airport is? It's the gateway of Hong Kong. The [Tian Tan Buddha] statue there is the highest Buddha. It's strategically placed so that people must pass through where the shrine is to go to Hong Kong. Every community in Hong Kong has gates. For example, there are the Temple Street pillars. Only the spiritually-minded would notice them. Once you go in the gates, you are under the influence of whatever people worship there, and this is the only way in.

If the 'only way' of accessing public space in Hong Kong entails coming 'under the influence' of demonic powers, it must be asked how urban space is made usable or indeed 'inhabitable' (Tweed 2006: 82).

Anti-pilgrimages

One pastor's wife gave a memorable 'special testimony' about a 'Buddhist shop' selling 'religious stuff' that she would walk by daily. Every time she passed, troubled by the thought that it was 'misleading people', she would direct prayers at the shop in order that it would be closed. As she narrated to the delight of the congregation, it eventually did. 'You have the authority to close *anything* that is not of God,' she proclaimed, 'start using that power!' Most strikingly, two pastors separately spoke of how they had made a trip to a major shrine in a bid to break a major territorial principality. One told of how, at the outset of his ministry in Guangzhou in mainland China, a period of spiritual mapping culminated in a prayer walk up Mount Xiqiao to the statue of Guan Yin where he prayed and anointed the statue with oil. This 'broke the yoke' of that principality so that 'a door was opened' in his ministry, with the result that 'there are no issues with the police now' because they had neutralized their 'spiritual powers'. As the pastor advised, 'starting from the top' like this is the most effective strategy because 'when you are dealing with the highest principalities, you are dealing with them all'. Pastor Enoch's church annually rents ferries and buses to take his entire congregation to the Tian Tan Buddha at Lantau Island which is, alongside the Victoria Harbour and Peak, one of Hong Kong's most important visual icons. He described these trips, which might be called 'anti-pilgrimages', as follows:

We would all meet at one spot at the premises. There would be, say, 100 people, and we would send five people north, five people east, and so on. We would spread out, silently praying and walking around like we are all tourists. Buddhist monks would be there chanting and we were doing our own chanting! We would go to the top [of the steps to where the statue is located] and come back and pray around. Sometimes we would go into the shrine but we don't do the incense, we just pray and walk out. We don't do it in such a way that they would be provoked. We use wisdom. This is their premises, not a neutral ground where we can do anything. The police can be called.

Understood as practices of performative insurgency, these deliberate and methodical prayer walks (both of which are tellingly staged in rural areas) are clear instances in which local religious spaces and infrastructures become sites of affective and symbolic contestation for the purpose of redeeming urban space. The discreetness implied in Pastor Enoch's account, however, sits uncomfortably alongside anecdotes that the other pastors enjoyed sharing about confrontations with local authority figures such as police and shrine attendants (who would receive them with shock or simply flee in fear). The churches generally favour

ephemeral and socially invisible appropriations of space that might be described as *aspirational* in nature, in that they prefigure (and aid the cultivation of) an established public presence in the city (Vásquez and Knott 2014: 338–9).

Psychogeography

Prayer walks need not be focused at religious sites, however. Another strategy involves staging vast psychogeographical excursions across the city as a means of uncovering hidden demonic openings, infrastructures and atmospheres. At Pastor Enoch's church, for instance, several months at the start of the year are dedicated to nightly prayer walks, some of which begin at midnight and continue until dawn:

We really cover long, long distances. From here to Mei Foo is one hour plus. We went [from Jordan] to Diamond Hill and Siu Hong once.⁵ We take the boundaries, the places where people go for hiking, and behind them the smaller roads meant for pedestrians only. It's not just that these paths are high so that we can look down on the city, it's also that by following them you can encounter spiritual doorways and entrances.

Nocturnal prayer walks of this sort are also staged across more clearly defined areas and neighbourhoods. Three of the churches that I conducted participant observation at are based in the densely populated Jordan area of Kowloon where particular concern is directed towards the famous Temple Street; not only its aforementioned pillars and gates, but also the tarot- and palm-reading booths in the area, and its marketplace. In fact, all four of the churches periodically join together to anoint with oil the 'key intersections of the city which are the strongholds of the Devil' and follow a biblical directive to 'denounce the power from the city'.

My use of the term 'psychogeography' here deliberately alludes to a series of ludic and political practices typically associated with the Situationist International who were active in London and Paris in the mid-twentieth century (see Coverley 2006). The most prominent of these practices is that of *dérive* or drifting, denoting the means by which participants float through the city in a simultaneously aimless but purposeful manner that aims to disrupt the everyday routines of the modern city and its dazzling spectacular dimension. Through this embodied practice, the psychogeographer seeks to encounter and document urban experiences (past and present) and the 'invisible currents that flow through the city ... which are its true guiding principles' (Hussey

2006: 84). I find it analytically helpful to read the prayer walks conducted by the four churches as a form of psychogeographical practice aimed at generating a new urbanism, particularly in the case of citywide excursions. Doing so illuminates the ludic and political dimensions of prayer walking as an experimental urban activity geared towards occupying and deciphering public space. As Pastor Enoch emphasizes above, the aim of this type of prayer walk is not only to glimpse the spectacle of the city skyline at night, but also to conduct 'spiritual mapping'. As the pastors explained to me, this term designates a series of cartographic and archaeological practices by which cultural forms, urban spaces, material infrastructures and political sites at different scales are deciphered and exposed as operating under the governance of invisible demonic principalities.

Simon Coleman (2010: 188) has emphasized that for charismatic Christians, such maps should be understood as indexical in that they offer a perspective from a particular subject-position. As with the image of the Hong Kong skyline, and indeed rhetorical articulations of a Pentecostal geopolitics, mapping practices transform the world into 'an object to be owned, or at least controlled by, the believer' (Coleman 2010: 199). Accordingly, the 'identification' of a power through mapping practices is then followed by its 'judgement' in the name of Jesus, involving a performative 'cleansing' and 'reclamation' of urban space through prayer. In contrast to how night vigils tend to invoke and appropriate dominant constructions of the city, the prayer walker as *dériveur* can be said to be engaged in a 'counter-mapping' of the spatial regimes of the modern metropolis by contesting the built environment and prevailing modes of urbanism. In other words, prayer walking constitutes a mode of urban critique which seeks to reconfigure how the city is produced and experienced; it draws attention to objects, spaces and atmospheres that are overlooked, and invites congregants as pedestrians to perceive familiar urban landscapes anew under the cover of darkness.

It is not inconsequential that these walks take place at night, a time when the practitioners again strategically embrace a certain public invisibility that facilitates their insurgent appropriation of public space. Furthermore, night is perceived as a very potent time because it is when, in Pastor Timothy's words, 'the enemy is out' and 'the meeting takes place for what happens in the day' (see van Dijk 2007). While the pastors understand themselves as born-again Christians to be especially at risk of being 'taken' or 'afflicted' by malevolent spiritual powers when conducting overnight prayer walks, there is a strong sense that these insurgent practices are beneficial to the wider public because they entail

what David Garbin (2013: 693) describes as ‘urban regeneration’ through moral and spiritual renewal. One congregant explained that ‘we are the watchmen of the city; God wants someone to intercede for the nation’. Similarly, Pastor Isaac spoke of the churches ‘confessing the sin of people’ in a city where people merely ‘go to work’. He emphasized that prayer walks have been instrumental in reducing crime and suicide rates in the Jordan and Yau Ma Tei neighbourhoods, a fact that police had purportedly acknowledged. Flagging another neighbourhood in the city where there had recently been three suicides, he added that ‘if I were part of a church there, I’d be out praying!’ Likewise, Pastor Timothy explained that the Holy Spirit often leads him in his nocturnal prayer walks to focus on big roads and junctions where ‘occultist people [have dedicated] the place to the Devil so that accidents happen there and there is fighting’.

Crucially, nocturnal prayer walks performatively re-enchant the urban landscape by breaking and redrawing connections between urban localities and imagined global and celestial geographies (Garbin 2013: 693). In Steve Pile’s (2005: 8) words, the congregants contribute to the ‘work’ by which Hong Kong life is produced as a ‘phantasmagoria’ or ‘a serial procession of hauntings ordinarily hidden from sight’. This re-enchantment has important consequences for the wider project of emplacement through which the churches frame urban spaces ‘within a larger, divinely sanctioned and fated life project’ (Vásquez and Knott 2014: 335). Specifically, prayer walks juxtapose utopias and dystopias that contribute to a heterotopic and overdetermined urban imaginary. This imaginary reflects the aforementioned epistemological ‘instability’ that characterizes Pentecostal modes of perception and representation. The *reiterative* enactment of performative prayer is required because spiritual warfare entails the perpetual ‘diabolization’ of the city. Put simply, the very means by which urban space is made inhabitable reveals it to be uninhabitable.⁶

Conclusion

On Halloween in 2014, droves of costumed partygoers piled into Central District. Nearby, protesters persevered with their occupation of Admiralty. Back in Jordan, there was a handwritten poster on the shutters at the entrance of Pastor Samuel’s church that read ‘CHRIST PARTY: PLEASE GO TO BACK YARD ENTRANCE.’ The instructions led me to an upstairs room where I found Pastor Samuel preparing a small assembly of his congregants for a night vigil: ‘It is good that we are meeting tonight. There will be spiritual warfare tonight.’

We are the armies of God. Hong Kong is our Jerusalem. Duty begins at home, and Hong Kong is our home now.' The way that the pastor speaks about making Hong Kong 'home' here is illuminating in that it is shown to be explicitly bound up with an injunction to 'break principalities' as part of a campaign of spiritual warfare. In this chapter, by attending to the spatial politics of this operation at different scales, it has been repeatedly shown how a project of dwelling is conflated with one of re-territorialization and takes the form of a staged occupation.

At a transnational scale, through the rhetorical articulation of an imagined geopolitics and transurban infrastructure, Hong Kong is produced as a global centre and node of decisive strategic importance for territorial expansion. Accordingly, congregants are encouraged to assume a mode of inhabiting the city akin to military encampment by which they can connect to this global project of cosmic significance, as well as to channels of 'wealth and progress' amid conditions of precarity. This campaign is also executed at a different scale as congregants labour to redeem cityscapes by staging night vigils and prayer walks as part of an aspirational project of urban critique and regeneration. By performatively worlding, mapping and re-enchanting Hong Kong, they cultivate an urban sense of place, claiming the rights and rewards of the city and assuming the responsibility of being silent 'watchmen' serving an oblivious public. In a city where many of the congregants are denied substantive citizenship rights, these are rightly understood as experimental 'acts of citizenship' by which they 'constitute themselves as urban citizens' (Isin and Nielsen 2008: 2). Yet Pastor Samuel's allusion above to the 'New Jerusalem' of the Book of Revelation reinforces a sense that this emergent citizenship belongs to a city that is *elsewhere*; one that is 'yet to come' and for which they must struggle. Through prayer walks, Hong Kong is produced and experienced as semiotically, spatially and affectively overdetermined and unstable in a manner that problematizes urban dwelling. In sum, there is what Ingie Hovland (2016: 18) calls a 'heterotopic quality' to such Pentecostal modes of emplacement, meaning that it remains unclear *which* Hong Kong the congregants claim as their 'home', or indeed *whose*.

What this renders plausible is a mode of urban personhood that permits congregants to be both 'in but not of' the city, somewhat reminiscent of the 'tactical cosmopolitanism' articulated by Loren Landau (2009: 206) by which non-citizens may assume an 'ephemeral, superior, and unrooted condition'. This disengaged disposition is well illustrated by the above image of the congregation

gathering for the prayer vigil, an assembly staged consciously in the knowledge that masses of people were gravitating towards the parties and protests in the centre of the city. As Pastor Isaac explained to me, 'Born Again people are like ambassadors; they don't really belong here but they are bringing the Kingdom of God to Hong Kong.'