Introduction Going to 'Pentecost'

Outline of an Experiment

This book is a comparative study of Pentecostalism in Africa and Melanesia, focusing on the key issues of healing, economy and urban sociality. However, this is not an ordinary comparative book. Rather, this is an experimental approach to the study of global religious movements in general and Pentecostalism in particular.

Why do we need a new approach to religion? Because religion is no longer what it used to be. In his recent book *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, Olivier Roy (2014) argues that an understanding of the role of religion in the contemporary world must start with the recognition of the fundamentally transformed *form* of religion we are witnessing. Religion is no longer a matter of culture, of place, of territory. Religion no longer adapts to specific situations, to particular faith communities. Religion no longer takes the form of definitive, cultural versions. Religion is non-territorial. One of Roy's examples is Hindu communities in the West that abandon caste systems; Hinduism becomes non-territorial and disconnected from local places, histories, cultures etc.

In this book we argue that as anthropologists seeking to understand contemporary religious forms, we need to accept the methodological and theoretical consequence of this transformation. Oliver Roy's analysis is made with very broad brush strokes and with no eye for variation. Not all contemporary (global) religious forms are necessarily de-cultural. Furthermore, religions can be non-territorial to a certain degree, and not necessarily in an absolute sense. In this book, however, we will exploit

the analytical insight of this perhaps too general analysis to push our anthropological methodologies with an experiment. Thus, we do not discuss so much the degree to which Roy's analysis is correct, or 'true'. Rather, we ask: let us say that Roy is right, what would this then imply for anthropological methodologies? We claim that this implies a need to study religion, especially the forms that are growing most extensively, in new ways. To understand the new forms of religion we need a non-territorial methodology. This book is an effort at developing such a non-territorial methodology for the discipline of anthropology – the discipline of place-oriented methodologies *par excellence*. We thus take from Roy (2014) the impetus to rethink the relation between the local and the global, the territorial and the non-territorial.

How do we study Pentecostalism then? Since it is a global movement, do we need to understand what Pentecostalism is before we can understand how it operates in a local context? When we write about Pentecostalism in Port Vila, Vanuatu, or in the Trobriand Islands (two of the places we visit in this book), should it be a study of Melanesia, where an increasing number of Pentecostals are part of the context, or a study of Pentecostals that emphasizes the context of Melanesia? Equally, in Africa, when we study the locally originated Tokoist movement or the UCKG (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God) in Luanda, Angola (the third place we visit in this book), should the former be understood as a local prophetic movement (see Blanes 2014) and the latter as a global, neo-Pentecostal movement? The first territorial and the second non-territorial? The first local and the second global? A lot of the anthropology of Pentecostalism has focused on the scaling between the local and the global (Anderson et al. 2010; Coleman 2000; Coleman and Hackett 2015; Csordas 2007, 2015; Poewe 1994; Robbins and Engelke 2010). This literature has in many ways transcended the tradition of studying Christianity as local phenomena, establishing a space for critique in which one can understand what global culture is and how we can approach it. These studies have also to a certain extent pioneered transnational studies, at least within the anthropology of religion (but see Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996; T.H. Eriksen 2003).

Much of this literature is based on an idea that some religious forms are globally driven whereas others are locally driven. Pentecostalism is often connected to specific forms of organization, to specific ways of understanding denominationalism (see also Bialecki 2014) that are considered to be generated more from the global level than from the local or at least that one can pinpoint aspects that are more global and aspects that are more local. Of course, Pentecostal movements are usually

understood as both (local and global): they can never be anything but locally driven, in the sense that the movement consists of people in local communities who engage in a shared religious experience. They are global as well, of course, in the sense that people read, engage and reflect on phenomena originating outside their own locality and follow discourses, ideas, images and values that travel globally. In this book we want to understand the local in a different way, and not as opposed to the global. When the local becomes the opposite of the global, it often becomes a matter of history, genealogy and cultural continuity. We want to understand the local that does not rely on an understanding of cultural continuity. Therefore, we suggest structuring our analysis on the distinction between the territorial and non-territorial. By non-territorial here, we imply movements that are local (in the sense explained above: operated by people who engage together in a given locality) but do not require roots in local histories, and often related to problems and issues that originate elsewhere. As we will show in the next chapters of this book, the ideas, concepts, discourses and practices that define these religious movements work equally well in Angola, in Vanuatu and in Papua New Guinea. In other words, we focus on religious movements that are local and non-territorial.

We will suggest one specific way in which we can approach non-territorial religion in anthropology while retaining the basic anthropological method of place-based fieldwork. This does not mean studying Pentecostalism by simply going anywhere a Pentecostal church is located. One cannot go, for instance, to Melanesia to study Pentecostalism. The claim that this form of religion is local and non-territorial does not imply that one (as an anthropologist) can access it equally well in whichever locality one visits. Rather, we need to take the non-territorial aspect as literally as possible and thus rethink the meaning of the local. When we visit a place to study Pentecostalism, we need to make sure that we are accessing the same place as our interlocutors (the Pentecostals), remembering that although practices are local, Pentecostalism is non-territorial. Our impetus is perhaps almost automatically to connect the local to the territorial. A ritual of initiation in Port Vila, for instance, might automatically be related to traditions of initiation in Vanuatu or Melanesia. The territorial becomes primary when we understand the local. We therefore suggest here an approach that 'forces' us to think differently. Our experiment implies that we can still go to Melanesia, or to Africa, but we need to think of this place differently if we are to study Pentecostalism. We need to think of the place itself in a non-territorial sense. This might seem self-contradictory (going to Melanesia but not going to Melanesia), but the main aim in this chapter is to argue exactly this.

With the approach we will suggest here, we want to achieve three objectives. Firstly, to get beyond what we can call a regional, contextual methodology or a territorial methodology (which automatically connects local with territorial), so as to gain an anthropological understanding of religion in a non-territorial sense. Secondly, to study a religious movement in a holistic way. Thirdly, to rethink anthropological ways of making connections between contexts – i.e. doing comparisons. We will explain these one at a time.

Challenging the Territorial Methodology

The common, general definition of Pentecostalism is the recognition and immediate experience of the Holy Spirit (Robbins 2004; Yong 2005). On the one hand, we have no problem identifying the kinds of Christian movements we can tag as Pentecostal, and often key identifying markers such as 'prosperity gospel', global awareness (Meyer 2002, 2004), breaking with the past and new 'born again' identities (Engelke 2010; Meyer 1998) point to important common traits. However, sometimes 'Holy Spirit movements' also seem to include aspects that are far more local. Here, Pentecostal ideas about breaking with the past, healing in the spirit etc. are developed in relation to local independence movements, for instance. The Tokoist movement in Angola (Blanes 2014) and the Kimbanguist movement in the DR Congo (Sarró and Santos 2011) are examples of the latter and are commonly referred to as Prophetic movements (Blanes 2012) or African Independent Churches (Fernandez 1978). These movements might be equally concerned with the presence of the Holy Spirit but in slightly (or significantly) different ways (see Blanes 2014; Eriksen 2009; Kalu 2008; Maxwell 2006; Meyer 2004). To a lesser degree they are identified as Pentecostal and to a larger degree as part of a territorial religious scene. In this book we will not focus on the differentiations of Pentecostal forms, or arguments about their origins and genealogies. Rather, in an effort to understand the methodological consequence of our ambition to analytically access the non-territorial dimension of religion, we will operate with what one might call a 'minimum definition' of Pentecostalism – that is, the direct experience of the Holy Spirit[1] (Yong 2005). The purpose is to avoid a discussion of where the specific forms of Pentecostalism emerge from, whether they are 'local' or 'global', Pentecostal or non-Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal or Prophetic etc. – and thus avoid what Fardon (1990) has described as the anthropologist's 'localizing strategies', which we might also call 'territorializing strategies'.

Let us try to make this point clearer. Usually, in anthropology, we understand Pentecostalism from the background of a local or regional context; a territorial context. This can imply both an historical and a cultural dimension. We tend to look for historical and cultural continuities when we understand Christianity in general and the Pentecostal movements in particular, perhaps more so in Melanesia (Eriksen 2005, 2008; Mosko 2010) than elsewhere. This is part of what we call a territorial methodology. In Melanesia, for instance, new religious movements are often compared to early cargo cults or to other ritual cults formerly known in the area (see, for instance, Eriksen 2009). Part of this is tied to what Robbins (2007) has identified as 'continuity thinking', which describes how we as analysts are unwilling to recognize cultural breaks because we tend to look at cultural and historical continuities. We claim that it is also related to the question: what is context? In anthropology, we argue, it is common to privilege the idea of a specific, territorial frame. This, we suggest, is foundational for anthropology as a discipline because of its methodology of fieldwork. We go some*where*. It is exactly this place we can experience, and this becomes the contextual frame for any analysis, whether of Pentecostalism or anything else. However, this is only partially true. We usually go to study something. Thus, the context is also one of (in the case of Pentecostalism) religion. Going to Melanesia to study Pentecostalism challenges our hermeneutical habits and the relationship between the site of fieldwork and the object of study (see also Heywood 2015). We need to rethink both what place means and what the idea of a contemporary religion implies.

Multisited ethnography (Marcus 1995) was a methodological approach tailored to deal with these challenges. This approach was based on the assumption that contexts are connected, and this is increasingly the case the more 'globalized' the world becomes. Thus, by following the object, the analyst can get a fuller understanding of the phenomenon/the object in question. In a study of Pentecostalism in Vanuatu, for instance, we can follow the preachers as they travel from Australia and through Fiji, PNG and Vanuatu. Or we could follow specific prayers, or a specific international church with headquarters in Nigeria or in the US and its many local affiliations. As Cook, Laidlaw and Mair (2009) have pointed out, multisited ethnography assumes that there is a transcendent, global scale that is graspable if we do not remain locked within a partial (local) perspective. In the case of Pentecostalism, it assumes that there is a higher level of the religion that can be found in its 'pure' or absolute form. However, by asking whether there is such a scale and whether the higher level of the global can be taken for granted, the authors propose 'that by conceptualising the ethnographic field in a way

that detaches it from the concepts of space and place, and thus making available the concept of an un-sited field, we can rescue the possibility of comparison across theoretically relevant boundaries in space …' (2009: 48). In other words, by not localizing the object of study in the first place, we can move beyond the idea of the multisited and towards that of an un-sited field. This is a useful first step in our approach to the study of Pentecostalism in order to avoid the 'siting strategy'. It allows us to get the non-territorial aspect of Pentecostalism into focus. Instead of seeing the relation between what is going on in Nigeria or the US and Fiji or Vanuatu for our understanding of Pentecostalism, we can see it as the same field.

Re-siting: The Holistic Study of Religion

In order to achieve the second goal of this experiment, a holistic understanding of Pentecostalism, we need a perspective on this religion as fully integrated in social life and not as a separate, un-sited sphere. For Pentecostals, Pentecostalism is not a context-bound phenomenon. It is not detached from the totality of local, social life. It is an integrated part of everyday life. There is thus a dimension of Pentecostalism that is removed if we think of it as only non-territorial and un-sited. Therefore, we need to add a second methodological step to the un-siting strategy: a *re*-siting. This re-siting, however, needs to be done in a non-territorial sense (it needs to be local but non-territorial, as argued above). In order to overcome the paradox of both negating and needing context, we suggest an experiment where we artificially construct a context.

We can turn the object we study (Pentecostalism) into the context, thus making 'Pentecostalism' into 'Pentecost' as a place. 'Pentecost' represents the non-territorial but is still local – in the sense that it is engaged with in local communities. This also allows for us, as anthropologists, to access Pentecostal perspectives: it allows us to see how Pentecostalism as a non-territorial movement becomes local. It becomes local in a very specific way. As the chapters in the book will show, Pentecostalism becomes local by not becoming Melanesian, for instance, but by becoming 'Pentecost'. Pentecostals live in a Pentecostal world, a world locally defined by Pentecostal ideas, images, practices, values etc. Thus, as anthropologists, if we 'visit Pentecost' we can 'see' a world that is local in a very specific sense. This also allows us to see that 'Pentecost' is wider than just the activities of the Pentecostals.

As we will show in the following chapters, the local context of 'Pentecost' becomes an encompassing context for other parts of social

life as well. The context of 'Pentecost' is thus, of course, not a 'place' in the conventional sense. It is not a reference to a geographical location, although the island of Pentecost is a very real place just north of the capital Port Vila in Vanuatu. The 'Pentecost' (in quotation marks) we talk about in this book, however, is an analytical construction. It is a 'place' where the Holy Spirit is a defining feature of everyday life. Therefore, instead of defining Pentecostalism as a specific religious movement, emphasizing the specific churches in which we do fieldwork and the level of religious conversion of our interlocutors, we 'go to Pentecost'. From this perspective, we see the world as fully Pentecostal, as our interlocutors do. In this world, it is not only the Pentecostals that can see and feel the Spirit. Rather, the Spirit is already there, a taken-for-granted part of this 'place', and some engage with it and others do not. The distance between the materially real and the spiritually 'real' is negated analytically. This requires a little explanation. By 'fully Pentecostal', we imply that from the perspective of a Pentecostal, there is nothing outside the Pentecostal world; everything is Pentecostal. In other words, the Holy Spirit is relevant for any context, not only in specific prayer or church-related contexts. Of course, this is true for most religious perspectives (a believer does not, usually, switch on and off a religious perspective), but it is even more pressing when it comes to Pentecostalism because the doctrine fuses into every aspect of everyday life. For instance, Robbins argues that rituals are fundamental in Pentecostalism and practised in all social settings, creating what he calls 'Pentecostal social productivity' (2009: 58). Pentecostals do not hide, or keep to the 'private sphere', what they do. Pentecostalism encompasses all aspects of social life. In this way, when there are a number of Pentecostals in a neighbourhood and their worldview is constantly being made relevant in any kind of discourse (about sorcery, economy, architecture or politics, to name a few examples we describe in the chapters of Part II of this book), the world of those who are not directly part of the Pentecostal churches is also deeply affected. This implies that not only the converted are part of 'Pentecost'. Rather, 'Pentecost' is present for everyone.

This argument has been made by Meyer (2002, 2015) in the case of Ghana, where the public sphere is 'Pentecostally-infused'. She calls it a 'Pentecostalite' public culture. In this way, Pentecostalism has become generalized in some sense. This is not only the case for the public sphere, as the chapters of this book give evidence to, but also for social life in general. When shopping, when going to bed at night, when sending off children to school in the morning, the presence of the Holy Spirit and its negative counterpart, evil, is always considered. The 'cosmology' of Pentecostalism – the values, ideas, structures of meaning etc. – has

become a generalized social condition. Meyer (2015) describes the ways in which the sensational movie industry in Ghana in the last couple of decades has been key to the mediation of this Pentecostal cosmology. Getting an analytical 'grip on' the ways in which Pentecostalism 'moves' in social life is important for a full understanding of the implication of this movement and how and why it grows. Thus, as Meyer argues, we need to move beyond a study of Pentecostalism as primarily a study of 'deep, inner change on the level of the person' (2015: xx). The project of this book echoes this in many ways. However, whereas Meyer's primary focus is on public culture, we want to capture a more general cultural condition.

In the anthropological literature on Pentecostalism, there are several theoretical pushes to move beyond the 'locality' approach, which can give us analytic access to alternative social spaces, in particular in the study of transnational migration (see, for instance, Coleman and Maier 2011; Knibbe 2009; Krause 2014; Maskens 2012; Van Dijk 1997). In this literature, focus has been on the ways in which Pentecostalism creates alternative spaces and even alternative geographies. As Knibbe (2009) points out, Pentecostal geographies created in the context of transnational migration challenge other geographies that map and classify actors and flows between them, creating 'a force-field of contradictory geographies' (2009: 137). For instance, as Knibbe outlines, in Amsterdam, Nigerian Pentecostals, from the RCCG[2] are constantly confronted with the geography of state actors (the police in particular) and the wider public, where their particular neighbourhood is mapped as one of crime and illegal immigrants. This racialized, urban geography is challenged by the Pentecostal geography, where the same neighbourhood is one of 'a territory for conversion and expansion in preparation of the end of time' (2009: 148). Knibbe points out that the alternative geography created by Nigerian, or West Africans, Pentecostals in Amsterdam can be seen as a new layer of spatial geography: it adds onto, and challenges, those of the state. This challenge is one that alters structures of domination and the power to create identity. Others have pointed to a similar process, the creation of a 'heterotopia' (Bochow and Van Dijk 2012), where Pentecostals can challenge established social orders. Coleman and Maier (2013) have in a similar manner pointed to how Nigerian migrants in London create an alternative social geography where they as much connect to Lagos as to London but at the same time challenge the boundaries between them. London-Lagos is an alternative geography, an alternative space.

In our approach to 'Pentecost' here, we also direct attention to another, and alternative, way of creating social space. However, our approach is

slightly different than those mentioned above. Pentecost is not necessarily a 'layering' that challenges social structures and challenges the relations of power. In the description of Nigerians in Amsterdam and in London (Coleman and Maier 2013; Knibbe 2009), there is an explicit dialogue between the competing or alternate geographies; the one is in many ways a response to the other, and it is exactly relations of power (power to 'name', to 'map' and to 'categorize') that are challenged. With 'Pentecost' as a heuristic device, we seek to do something different: we seek to privilege completely the space that Pentecostals create, not as an alternative, or as a layer, but as the total space. Perhaps the difference between our approach and the approaches described above is the context of the transnational and the role of migration. The latter is the key contextual factor for the analysis of the moral and religious geographies. The alternative geography is thus an alternative social space creating alternative social categories and alternative power relations.

Another way in which the religious experience has been approached as an alternative space – which might not be easily accessible from a social science perspective, at least one based on methodological atheism (Bialecki 2014) – is the invitation to think about Christianity in terms of virtuality. This is, for instance, what Jon Bialecki has recently proposed (2012, 2017), in his suggestion to think of Christianity through Deleuze, as a space of multiplicity and generativity in which what we observe is equally determined by its potentiality – i.e. by the different possibilities that it allows for in terms of significance and experience. Thus, we would no longer need to take the Christian narrative as a single, located matter of fact but instead as an assemblage and articulation with unquantifiable limits. In this sense, our Pentecost is also virtual, because it does not restrict itself to the face value of things and exposes a 'field of generative potential' (Bialecki 2012: 308) in terms of how people relate to things, places and each other. It becomes, following Bruce Kapferer (2006), an 'imaginal space' through which certain articulations – e.g. between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals, between different modalities of Christianity, between 'locals' and 'non-locals', etc. – are possible and therefore 'real'. This explains precisely how Pentecostal discourses of belonging can simultaneously claim local, global, transnational and deterritorialized forms.

Focusing on the virtual in the study of Pentecostal experiences is helpful. However, this approach still retains an idea of a starting point: the ethnography starts out from an understanding of 'it', whether it is the Vineyard in California or the Redeemed Christian church of God in Nigeria as Pentecostal, and from there the virtual is outlined. In 'Pentecost' we can study Pentecostalism in a different way because we

do not need to define the religious affiliations of those we engage with beforehand. Our only 'map' to 'where' 'Pentecost' is, is people's discourse and experience of the Holy Spirit. As will become clear in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, this allows us as ethnographers to look for Pentecostalism in places where one usually does not. For instance, let us look at how Annelin Eriksen in her earlier studies of Pentecostalism in Vanuatu, and in the capital Port Vila in particular, has worked. In order to be clear about the 'object' of ethnography, she has distinguished between those who belonged to the mainline churches (Presbyterian, Anglican, Catholic), the new Pentecostal churches, and the more hybrid churches that have their local prophets and operate through and with the Holy Spirit, often called healing churches. She has talked to pastors and prophets, visited church services and meetings, but she always thought she was making differentiations that were slightly random. For instance, when she visited a Presbyterian prayer group, she realized that there was not much distinguishing it from the self-declared Pentecostal one she usually visited. Furthermore, they did not even call themselves a prayer group. They were just youth gathering around a person they believed had extraordinary gifts in the backyard of a house after church service (in the Presbyterian Church) in the neighbourhood where she was visiting. They were as much 'drunk in the Spirit' as the other self-declared Pentecostal prayer groups.

It was one of Annelin's long-time Port Vila-based Ambrym friends, who knew about Annelin's interest in healing, who directed her attention towards a young boy in the neighbouring house who had 'strong gifts', as she said. She also said: 'The power has started to move now; it is no longer only people in the new churches (i.e. the Pentecostal churches) who have the power. The power is everywhere.' This generalization of Pentecostal trends is in the literature often talked about as the Charismatic and revival/renewal movements and signals the way in which established churches become 'pentecostalized'. The effects are, however, even stronger: it has effects in everyday life, in sociality itself. It is this kind of 'charismatic sociality' the 'going to Pentecost' methodology seeks to capture – the generalization of a key dimension of Pentecostalism. Several other incidents during Annelin's fieldwork in 2010 and 2014 made her increasingly aware of this charismatic sociality. When she was visiting friends in the neighbourhoods around Port Vila, she realized that what the women gossiped about, and what they listened to on the radio when they were doing housework, the TV series they gathered together to see in the afternoon, the explanations they had for the lack of good grades in school among their children, as well as their husbands' drinking habits, was as much part of a Pentecostal

universe as their church activities, *independently* of whether they had any 'Pentecostal-like' church membership. To analytically capture what this charismatic sociality is about, and to understand it, we need methodologies and analytical perspectives that cast a wider net than the concepts we traditionally use to understand the growth of Pentecostalism or the Charismatic movement. Thus, we need concepts and methods that challenge us to see a little differently. Where one finds the charismatic sociality (i.e. experiences of the Holy Spirit) is not given. By 'going to Pentecost' we are open to finding 'it' everywhere, and not only in specified places. We are also able to see the whole context as a 'pentecostalized' one, which is also what our interlocutors do.

However, when we argue that Pentecostalism can, analytically, be turned into a 'place', this is perhaps counter-intuitive. Pentecost is, in its most literal sense, the name of an event, an annual specific day commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ, and the expectation of the return of this event. Thus, 'Pentecost' is more a dimension of time than space. In other words, our analytical experiment involves the turning of time into space. We want to 'see' how this time/event affects space. Signs of this time are present in space; space is a 'map' to the event and time (second coming) of Pentecost. The focus on Pentecost as a time dimension creates, as is pointed out above and described throughout the book, a specific perspective of the world, a specific culture, if you will (see Robbins 2004), or what we above referred to as a 'charismatic sociality'.

What we do in this experiment is not radically different from what anthropologists have always done: create a label – for instance, categories like 'Melanesia' or 'Africa' – for a group of people they for different purposes find useful to categorize under one label. One might argue that 'Melanesia' is just as arbitrary as 'Pentecost' to categorize a 'culture'. The most important methodological point, however, is that the presence of the Holy Spirit affects social relations and perspectives on the landscape, on economy, on material production, on rituals etc. In other words, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and expectations of its arrival, affects the totality of social life (or of culture, if you will), so let us look at this as 'one place'. This allows for a methodological and analytical openness towards what the phenomena is; we need to 'go there' to understand it. It is particularly useful for a movement like Pentecostalism, which should be understood as a web of ongoing entanglements, rhizomic in its character. We will argue that this might be analytically useful in spite of the apparent contradiction emerging from what we just stated – that Pentecostalism is rhizomic in its character and therefore has no boundaries (and can thus not be 'bound' to a 'place'). As a heuristic device,

we can construct it as if it has such boundaries, as a 'place', in order to overcome the predefined idea of what Pentecostalism is and where it can be found. In short, in this book we suggest that in order to study 'global religion' we must turn the object into the context (thus un-siting the field) and turn the object into a 'place' to make it local (re-siting the field), as a heuristic device.

To sum up, the re-siting strategy ('going to Pentecost') enables a holistic approach to Pentecostalism in two senses: it allows us to take the 'religious' life of our interlocutors as primary (as they do), as well as to 'see' the landscape as they do, an overcoming of a distance between the 'real' and the 'spiritual'. It also allows us to include all aspects of their day-to-day social life in the study of religion – the workplace, cooking, shopping and childrearing – as part of the study of Pentecostalism. Social life in general is 'pentecostally-infused' (Meyer 2002).

So far we have outlined two reasons why the 'going to Pentecost' experiment might be a good idea. There is also a third reason: to enable a direct comparison between the three geographically separated field sites in this book (Luanda in Angola, Port Vila in Vanuatu and Kiriwina in the Trobriand Islands) as well as a comparison between 'Pentecost' and anthropology. In this book we will follow two lines of comparative investigation, the first between three local places (the three locations in 'Pentecost') and the second between perspectives in 'Pentecost' and the perspectives in anthropology. This argument is given some context below.

Rethinking Comparison

Anthropology is, basically, about comparison. Comparison is about setting things in relation to one another. This is done by identifying two or more entities that are to be compared, thus creating separation (between A and B, which is to be compared), and then by making a connection between them. The separation and connection can be created in different ways, reflecting different anthropological paradigms. Most anthropologists, across very different schools and traditions, will agree that this method is foundational for anthropology. What kind of comparative relations one creates and the purpose for them, however, is quite a different matter. One might say that the kind of comparison one engages in reflects the kind of anthropology one wants to produce. When we talk about comparison here, we imply the explicit and conscious methodology of making comparative relations, in one form or the other, and not the implicit form of comparison that we all engage

in by the very act of description. By using the term 'cross-cousin marriage', for instance, one immediately sets the ethnographic description in a comparative relation, one of identification, with other instances of 'cross-cousin marriage'. The explicit method of comparison, however, is something more. Here we will delineate some of the major traditions in anthropological comparison, focusing in more detail on recent contributions, but also giving brief descriptions of classical perspectives. Then we will outline the comparative element in the 'going to Pentecost' experiment that responds directly to what we here will identify as problems and challenges in anthropological forms of comparison.

Presently, one of the major divisions in anthropology is the one between what we might call 'representational' anthropology and 'non-representational' anthropology. These different epistemological traditions reflect very different goals and ideas of what kind of knowledge and effects anthropology produces. They are also based on very different forms of comparison. The first refers to the specific knowledge ideology in which anthropologists describe phenomena and relate these phenomena to what happens elsewhere and thereby classify the phenomena. This is a kind of knowledge ideology that was stronger in the early phase of the discipline's history than today. However, this does not mean that the paradigm does not still hold. Although perhaps few anthropologists today will explicitly identify with the positivist idea that we can describe and understand phenomena in an objective manner, many are very critical of an absolute break with the idea of striving towards this ideal. The other direction or paradigm has unequivocally moved away from the first. It is explicitly non-representational. Marilyn Strathern's 'Partial Connections' is perhaps the best example. Here she argues that ethnography is evocative rather than representational (1991: 7). Viveiros de Castro (2004) has made a similar claim in his argument that comparisons are always based on 'misunderstandings' (or 'equivocations'). Our anthropological concepts can never really represent the perspective of that which is described. Rather, in this latter paradigm, anthropology has become something else; it is not about understanding human cultures and societies in general but understanding ourselves. Anthropology is about confronting our assumptions and challenging our concepts.

This distinction between the two paradigms in anthropology can be mapped onto what Candea (2016) calls the heuristics of frontal and lateral comparison. However, Candea rightly points out that these heuristics (as opposed to the paradigms) are not mutually exclusive. Rather, in earlier phases of anthropology they operated in tandem in many ways. Candea explains the two different heuristics in the following way after

quoting a passage from Evans-Pritchard (1951): 'At this level of abstraction, one can say that Evans-Pritchard's account begins with a frontal comparison between an ethnographic "other" and the ethnographer's own "background". It ends with a lateral comparison in which different anthropological cases are confronted to each other' (2016: 185).

Here we can see that the frontal approach entails setting what one observes in explicit relation to what one takes for granted – what one knows from one's 'own society'. The lateral comparative relation, however, is based on what one, in the time of Evans-Pritchard, would perceive as the 'proper comparison', the outline of a specific case in relation to other similar or different cases. The former approach has gained in prominence in the past few years as the non-representational paradigm has won ground. It is still true that many anthropologists work with them both, but one might also claim that there is always a hierarchy between them: if the lateral approach is centre stage, the frontal one is, as in Evans-Pritchard's case, mentioned more in passing. And the reverse is the case for frontal comparison. When the goal for an anthropological analysis is to challenge our own concepts, lateral comparison is often in the background.

Let us now look more closely at the forms of comparison Candea calls frontal and lateral. Fred Eggan's (1954) well-known call for a controlled comparison in anthropology is perhaps a prototypical example of the lateral form of comparison. Eggan's aim is to 'formulate and validate statements about the conditions of existence of social systems … and the regularities that are observable in social change' (Radcliffe-Brown 1951: 21 in Eggan 1954). The comparison needs to be controlled in the sense that the context for the comparison should be carefully delineated to make sure one does not compare phenomena of a very different kind. Making identifications, or contrasts, needs careful contextual work. The aim is to understand social phenomena in general. The world is perceived as *one*, and it is graspable through the method of controlled comparison.

A very different version of the lateral comparison is outlined by De Coppet (2008) in his call for a comparative method that is informed by Dumont's model of value hierarchies. De Coppet argues that one cannot compare 'the same' in different societies. For instance, the 'body' in the West cannot be uncritically compared to the 'body' elsewhere, let us say in Melanesia. Rather, the concept of the body has a specific place in Western cosmology; it represents a specific place in a value hierarchy. In particular, it refers to a specific body – of the sovereign, of the nation and of Christ. Ultimately, the body refers to a primary value in Western sociality; the indivisible individual. When setting up a comparative relation

to Melanesia, one needs to find the value that occupies the same place in the value hierarchy as the body in the West. These are then comparable categories. As De Coppet points out, one can only compare entities of the same 'value-magnitude'. In the Solomon Islands' case of the Are'are that he describes, the Western body is thus comparable to shell money. Shell money for the Are'are is a representation of the ultimate value of relationships. The body and shell money are thus comparable entities in a lateral comparison.

Symmetrical Comparison

For both Eggan and De Coppet, but in very different ways, context is crucial before the comparative relation can be established. For Eggan this will make it possible to compare the same. For De Coppet the context (the value hierarchy) makes it possible to compare phenomena of the same order. Using Candea's terminology, these are both examples of comparative approaches in which the lateral heuristics are of major importance. For both of them the comparative methodology is a technology for classification.

For the proponents of what Candea calls the frontal approach the goal is rather different. It is the relation between 'us' and 'them', between what 'we' think and what 'they' think, that is the focus. This contrast is worked on systematically – for instance, by 'controlling' the 'equivocation' (Viveiros de Castro 2004) or by working 'recursively' (Holbraad 2012). This (re-)turn to a frontal heuristics, as Candea also points out, reflects a major shift in the anthropological knowledge paradigm. However, we will claim that this shift is not only one in a 'horizontal' direction (which the distinction between frontal and lateral points to) but also one in a 'vertical direction'. The frontal approach involves a radical 'levelling' of perspectives. The lateral approach relies on a privileged concept that created the comparative relation between the contexts, for instance the idea of the value or the more directly comparable concept of 'moiety' or 'kin group', or 'descent'. These concepts created the comparative relation, but the relation was, in itself, above the concepts.

Although in some instances, as in Schneider's (1984) reanalysis of his Yap material, there is a form of 'feedback loop' to the anthropological model and concepts, most forms of lateral comparison elevated anthropological concepts to an almost *a priori* level. For instance, the concept of 'patrilineal descent' or 'moiety system' sets two cases in a comparative relation to each other without looking so much at how the empirical material can inform the concepts. Either one identifies the concept in

the material or one does not. In some sense, one might argue that the lateral comparison relied on an asymmetry between anthropology and the comparative relation. In most lateral approaches, the anthropological concepts or models are tools for the comparative relation and are not in themselves objects for scrutiny.

In the 'new' frontal approach, anthropology is set in a symmetrical relation to that which is compared. Anthropology is in itself a context of comparison. It is not above comparison or the technology of the comparison. In many ways this frontal approach involves a turn to what we can call 'symmetrical comparison'. The idea is that the concepts and models themselves are being focused upon in a direct way. Thus, anthropology will, following the ideal of the symmetrical model, enable ongoing conceptual innovation (see, for instance, Holbraad 2012). Ideas and concepts from empirical cases can be directed at the analytical level, thus challenging our own ideas much more effectively. Strathern's (1988) analysis of gift relations in Melanesia is perhaps the ideal model for this. In her analysis of the split agency, for example (based on material from Battaglia 1983 on mortuary ceremonies in the Trobriand Islands), she employs local conceptual models, which distinguish between a person and an agent to challenge anthropological models of agency. For Holbraad (2012) this is the ideal for what he calls 'the recursive methodology'.

Still, there are some major difficulties with the new symmetrical approach in anthropology. First, as Candea (2016) also points out, the perpetual innovation that the 'recursive' or 'ontographic' (Holbraad 2012) methodology promises seems hard to achieve. There might be a tendency to constantly set up some very established contrasts. Difference is a key logic for this form of comparison, and difference is most effectively achieved when it is radical. This has been a major critique against, for instance, Strathern (see Carrier 1995; Josephides 1991 etc.), and it has also been renewed in the critique against the 'ontological turn' in general and against Holbraad and Viveiros de Castro in particular (see, for instance, Vigh and Sausdal 2014). Furthermore, and following the same line of thought, the symmetrical, or frontal, approach is more developed in anthropology from places that are geographically distant from the West – typically Melanesia and Amazonia, or Mongolia (Pedersen 2011), or Siberia (Willerslev 2007). The frontal approach thus requires a distance, or an 'exotification' (Kapferer 2013) of some sort before the comparative relation is established. This is in itself not so problematic, but it might result in a reproduction of typical patterns concerning where the exotic can be found. How can we study a non-territorial movement, for instance, applying the frontal approach?

The above-mentioned critique is based on what we see as a misunderstanding; the move from a lateral to a frontal comparison follows a paradigmatic shift in anthropology as outlined above. The critics, however, do not take this into consideration. They do not consider the full project of the 'frontal turn'. The 'non-representational' form of anthropology has been foundational for the move towards the new form of frontal comparison. Strathern (1988) is explicit on this. The *Gender of the Gift* is not a description of Melanesia; it is an inverted mirror image of anthropology. Thus, the frontal methodology is just that; it is an inversion method. The goal is not a more realistic description of the world but more critical self-awareness. This has, of course, huge implications for the discipline and for the kind of knowledge we produce.

For the purpose of this book, it is the focus on the heuristics and methodology that we want to emphasize. The frontal approach, relieved of its representational ambition, can be more open to experiments and conceptual innovation. It can also explicitly seek to challenge the established perspectives in anthropology and social science in general. This does not mean that one will not seek to give ethnographic accounts that as closely as possible reflect the kinds of experiences one has in the field. In this sense, one still works with forms of representation but these are non-exclusive representations – they are not evaluated on their 'truth-value'.

Let us now turn more concretely to the topic of this book: Pentecostalism and the forms of comparison involved in the 'going to Pentecost' experiment. Pentecostalism is the fastest growing religious movement in the contemporary world (Anderson 2013). Yet the study of this movement is not easily compatible with either the lateral or the frontal/symmetrical approach, not only because it is non-territorial but also because it is often understood as just a reflection of the contemporary social system. It is, for instance, the religious answer to present-day capitalism (see, for instance, Robbins' 2007 critique of Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). Thus, in Pentecostalism one cannot find the neatly circumscribed empirical case one can set side by side with other cases in a lateral kind of comparison (where does one case end and the other begin when the movement is non-territorial?), nor can we immediately find the kind of radical difference that the frontal approach is dependent upon. Pentecostalism is usually understood as modernity, capitalism, global flow etc. The 'going to Pentecost' methodology allows, however, for both a lateral and a frontal comparison of Pentecostalism. Below is a more concrete explanation of how we engage in comparison at two different levels in this book.

The Lateral Approach

In Part II of this book we engage in a specific variant of the lateral comparative approach. We have already established that 'Pentecost' is a 'place/space' (although only heuristically so). However, as in any other place, such as in Melanesia or Africa, there are regional variations between different areas. Thus, what we do in Part II is to start each chapter in one specific locality of 'Pentecost' and identify a specific 'trait', a specific idea or concept, so we can then move on to the other two areas of 'Pentecost' to see if there we can find the same trait, or some variation of it. The next chapter starts in the second area, performing the same exercise. Then, of course, the third chapter starts in the last of the three areas. What we achieve with this exercise, we hope, is to engage in a more direct comparison of specific phenomena in 'Pentecost' in order to establish whether this is of significance or not. The 'Pentecost' device gives us the opportunity to bypass the more geographically regional questions and debates that perhaps would have tied up our discussions instead. Thus, our representation of the places we describe are explicitly focused on a holistic understanding of a key dimension of Pentecostalism, understood here through a 'minimum definition' of engagement with the Holy Spirit, instead of, as is more common, a holistic understanding of social life in a geographical locality.

In Chapter 1 we start in Port Vila with the healers in the squatter neighbourhoods. We identify a key logic that we find also in other social contexts, that of borders between an 'inside' and an 'outside'. Moving this concept on to Luanda and Kiriwina, we can identify the logic of the healers, although in slightly different forms and in slightly different parts of social life. In the next chapter we start in Kiriwina, where Michelle has noticed the almost obsessive focus on keeping the village clean and free from the 'rotten banana leaf bundles' that traditionally have been so valuable. This move from 'wealth' to 'waste' signifies a major shift in this area of 'Pentecost', one that signals a fundamental shift in cosmic order – from the cyclical renewal of life to a major life versus death divide. This is 'echoed' in the other two localities. Chapter 3 starts in Luanda, where Ruy identifies the significance of what he calls 'anti-relativism'. This implies a turn to order, and predictability that can be found also in Port Vila and in Kiriwina but, again, in slightly different ways. In order to achieve a comparison between the three contexts of 'Pentecost' that is as direct as possible, we co-author this book throughout (save, of course, the responses in Part IV). This has also had its methodological advantages because it has forced us to directly deal with

the ethnography of the other two authors and to relate directly to the experiment of the book, which we are working on in the same context. However, each chapter has a 'lead' author who has done the ethnography with which the chapter starts.

This form of lateral comparison is not significantly different from what we would have done had we 'just' gone to Luanda, Port Vila and Kiriwina. However, it is different in one important sense. We take for granted that we are looking at the same context instead of the reverse. This, again, enables the next level of comparison carried out in Part III of the book, where we engage in a frontal form of comparison.

The Frontal Approach

Since the chapters in Part II are not 'only' specific regional descriptions but descriptions of major characteristics of 'Pentecost', we can delineate, in the mode of symmetric comparison, ethnographic 'theories' from 'Pentecost'. Each chapter in Part III starts out with an articulation of this theory from 'Pentecost', which is then set up against major theories in anthropology and social science in general. In the first chapter of Part III, we set the theory about borders in a comparative relation to major theories of individualism in the anthropology of Christianity and, more importantly, in philosophy. This chapter illustrates the complexity of individualism, and it shows that 'Pentecost' is 'producing' an individual whose primary goal is protection from evil, which is *external*. In the next chapter, from the Trobriand Islands, the idea of waste and this new significance of death are set in a comparative relation to theories of economic prosperity, which has been central for an anthropological understanding of Pentecostalism. The argument is that in 'Pentecost' the prosperity gospel might not necessarily be about wealth in a narrow sense but rather about 'life' – a vitality turn, in other words. In the last chapter of this section, the theory on anti-relativism and the need to engage with what is perceived as a chaotic world is set in a comparative relation to major theories about Pentecostalism and its focus on the significance of breaks with the past. What is at stake in 'Pentecost' is not breaks with what has been but what is ongoing – with the chaos of the present.

What Is Gained?

The question, of course, is what has the 'going to Pentecost' experiment enabled us to see that we could not have seen otherwise? Is this just much ado about nothing? Are we not simply discovering what we would have discovered anyway? Is it possible that the ideas of anti-relativism or borders or 'life-centeredness' would have been as much present in the ethnography and analysis if we had not 'gone to Pentecost'? On the one hand, and as we pointed out in the opening of this introduction, the methodology of doing fieldwork and engaging in participant observation in many ways guarantees that one gets a holistic impression of what social life in a locality is about and not just social life in a singled-out context – for example, that of a church or a prayer group. When living with people every day, every week, one usually discovers their general concern and interests. One will discover the work of healers, the gossip in the market place etc. by 'just' going to Port Vila, for instance. On the other hand, ethnography is not just description (Ingold 2014). It involves an analytical effort. What we see during fieldwork is also already set in an interpretative frame. We think in categories that are hard to 'neutralize'. This experiment has pushed us explicitly to think differently. In the end, we think we have described processes that are not initially thought of as part of a Pentecostal universe. Our description of boundaries and protection (Chapter 1), order (Chapter 2) and life-centeredness (Chapter 3) are in many ways giving a quite different picture than the most dominant theories of Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism is often understood as a movement that creates global awareness (Coleman 2002; Eves 2011, 2012; Meyer 2004; Poewe 1994; Schaefer 2002; Van Dijk 1999), although perhaps of a varying kind (Coleman 2013), and a movement that reproduces the capitalist logic of growth and prosperity (Coleman 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; but see Haynes 2012). The conscious effort of not operating with a very well worked out definition and thus not focusing as closely and clearly on Pentecostalism as we could have done has allowed us to see what is more at the periphery of the phenomenon and what is characteristic of the context in which Pentecostalism thrives. By 'blurring' the focus on the specifics of Pentecostalism, we have gained a clearer understanding of that which might not always be clearly articulated and most prominent in debates. We have, perhaps, disturbed the picture of what Pentecostalism is about at its most basic level. Or, at least, we have painted a portrait of what Pentecostalism is *also* about. We have produced a slightly different picture of what goes on in contexts where Holy Spirit churches grow in popularity.

In sum, the chapters of this book portray places where the need for protection and security and an absolutist perspective on the world is necessary. We describe places where people are creating small, controlled and ordered communities, places where the idea of wealth and productivity is more connected to vitality and a form of life-centeredness than to the immediacy of moneymaking and prosperity.

Where Is 'Pentecost'?

We end this introduction by pointing out the obvious. The three actual places we have visited and turned into 'Pentecost' – Luanda, Port Vila and Kiriwina – are all geographically situated in the 'global south'. Is 'Pentecost' therefore in the South? We think the most obvious answer is that we cannot know, since our research has been focused on these particular localities. However, this might not be a sufficient answer. There is, of course, literature that may be consulted. The mode of lateral comparison could give us some answers. It could show us the sense in which 'Pentecost' is as much in Uppsala in Sweden (Coleman 2004) as in Chicago or California (Bialecki 2017; Luhrmann 2012) as in Luanda, Port Vila or Kiriwina (i.e. places in Africa and Melanesia). Can the (new?) form of individualism we are describing be found also in ethnographies from elsewhere, from Europe or the US? What about the idea of anti-relativism, or the search for absolute truths?

Our hypothesis is that the phenomenon we have 'found' in 'Pentecost' is a 'global south' phenomenon. Maybe it is a case of a 'theory from the South' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012), a phenomenon developed not at the periphery of the world, in a disadvantaged 'global south', but in the new centres. Maybe 'Pentecost' is most visible for us in the 'global south' because it is here that it is developing and thus more clearly articulated. In many ways, the global south is in the forefront of social development, in the forefront of experiencing new forms of capitalism, in thinking and conceptualizing what these forms are, of understanding new social conditions. 'The West' is no longer the centre of significant innovations, neither intellectually nor politically or economically (see Commaroff and Comaroff 2012). When we understand what Pentecostalism is about in our 'going to Pentecost' experiment, it is exactly to the global south we should go. What 'Pentecost' is might be better articulated in the global south because it is here that it is experienced first. Instead of trying to understand what Pentecostalism is by following the social and theological genealogies back to Europe or the US (depending on what 'waves' one focuses on), one might start the thinking from the new centres, from

the global south. It is here that new ideas and theories of the individual and the social is developed and later, in a reversed geopolitical order, transported to the North.

This book is an experiment that more explicitly turns our attentions towards the new and perhaps not-so-expected social phenomena we can observe in regions like Melanesia and Africa. Building on the new frontal approaches (Candea 2016) to comparison (as Holbraad 2012; Strathern 1988; Viveiros de Castro 2004 etc.), this book attempts to look for other kinds of theories. The experiment is not intended as an absolute form; it is neither a programmatic declaration nor a manifest but an effort at rethinking methodologies. It is an attempt to try an alternative approach, which might be useful for some purposes, sometimes.

Notes

1. One might, of course, ask whether it is at all Pentecostalism that we are describing because we operate with such a 'loose' definition. Perhaps we are describing 'charisma'. To be clearer, it would perhaps be better to use a slightly broader term – for example, Pentecostal charismatic churches – to make it more obvious that we are including churches and religious perspectives that are not Pentecostal in a narrow sense but part of a broader charismatic wave. However, we do think that the experience of the Holy Spirit is the most important, and foundational, aspect of Pentecostalism (see, for example, Robbins 2004 for a similar general definition); the experience of the Holy Spirit is indeed at the core of the matter. We hope the reader, therefore, can excuse the lack of focus on what makes Pentecostals different from other charismatic churches.
2. Redeemed Christian Church of God, a Nigerian mega-church with global presence.

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