**Faith in gentrification**
**Neighbourhood organisations and urban change in London and Berlin**

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# FAITH IN GENTRIFICATION

## Neighbourhood organisations and urban change in London and Berlin

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# 1 Introduction

## Hoxton

When Beth[1] started talking about it for the first time, it was awkward. She was embarrassed to talk about her financial situation in front of the entire church congregation. As a nurse and mother of two, Beth had struggled with money issues every month. In a similar situation to many of the people around her, she regularly filled the gap between her empty bank account and the next pay check with a payday loan, which guarantees quick money for an extremely high interest rate.[2] To pay the loan back, she often had to take out another loan – which led her further into the debt trap every month.

Beth has been living on a council estate in north Hoxton for 30 years. Bordering the City of London, Hoxton is often referred to as Shoreditch, a city-wide synonym for a vibrant night-life and home to a vast number of technology start-ups. Due to its large housing estates in the north, it is also among the 20 poorest wards in the UK. The area consists of polarised developments; long-term dwellers of a diverse ethnic descent and white working-class households in social rented housing live alongside an international scene related to creative industries, in which people are often branded as 'hipsters'. Increasing this divide, housing prices rose almost 50% between 2012 and 2015 alone, making it a pricier location than other areas in central London (Brooker 2015). The pressure of displacement in Hoxton is high.

The church of St Mary is situated right at the centre of Hoxton, in between the 'edgy' south and the poorer north. 'Money Talks' is one project the church has been involved in recently. Every few weeks, during the Sunday service, members of the church report their financial difficulties and their solutions, empowering others to address serious financial problems. Although Beth is not a strong believer, she began to visit the church regularly in 2011, when things in her life felt out of her control. At St Mary she found advice and now confidently helps others to do the same.

Despite the overall tendency of shrinking churches, the congregation of St Mary Hoxton has been growing steadily since 2010. Whereas in 2008 the

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[1] To guarantee privacy, names of people and locations are anonymised in this thesis. See chapter 2.4 for details.

[2] The interest rate is usually about 10-20% for a one-week-loan and adds up to an annualised percentage rate between 260% and 1,040%, depending on the company (Bhutta, Skiba and Tobacman 2015).

Church of England was on the verge of selling the building, today the church is growing with the neighbourhood and is filled with more than 150 visitors from a wide variety of social backgrounds every Sunday. Felix, a young vicar in his mid-30s, re-started the congregation after his appointment in 2010. He has built a diverse 'community' mainly by initiating and supporting social activities such as 'Money Talks', focusing on mobilisation and empowerment: local emergency aid such as the 'Hackney Food Bank', fundraising activities for local infrastructure projects, and political campaigns linked to the problems associated with money-lending companies. These various projects are organised by the church to create bonds between the members of the growing congregation and to forge links with its surrounding area. As a result, the church has identified itself as an engaged neighbourhood organisation and created a hospitable space for people to meet who would not meet anywhere else.

## Kreuzberg and Neukölln

Kreuzberg and Neukölln are two districts at the centre of Berlin's rapid urban change, which is creating an increasing pressure of displacement on low-income households (Helbrecht 2016). The two adjacent areas in Berlin are facing social polarisation similar to that faced in Hoxton, London. Comprised of a diverse population until the early 2000s, mainly the result of immigration during the guest worker programme and working-class households, the area was long stigmatised as socially deprived (Soederberg 2016). A rather underdeveloped housing-market left room for developers to anticipate large profit margins. Today, similar to Hoxton in London, the area of Nord-Neukölln and the eastern parts of Kreuzberg are popular places to live, particularly for younger people moving to the city from other parts of Europe. The area now has the highest rents in Berlin (Berlin Hyp 2016).

Rudolf recently moved to the very heart of what the real-estate industry in Berlin has labelled 'Kreuzkölln'. Initially, he was disappointed. Working part-time as a social worker to help fund his studies, he thought that a church located between the neighbourhoods Kreuzberg and Neukölln would be responsible for creating a space for everyone in the area; that this would be a place where he could engage with the social inequality surrounding him. But he felt that the people he knew from his work, along with the homeless and the poor, were missing from his neighbourhood. Otherwise, being new to the city, the congregation at Kirche für Kreuzberg was exactly what he was looking for. For Rudolf, the church felt cosy, with most of the congregation having a similar background to him, and yet provided an intellectually challenging

space with its slightly sceptical atmosphere, and a few small-scale social projects organised by the congregants.

Started as a young church plant in 2008 with only 10 members, the Kirche für Kreuzberg congregation grew steadily to 80-100 congregants, most of them in their 20s and early 30s. Their Sunday services are held in the attic of an old transformer station, deliberately signalling the absence of any church-like physical space. The congregation was initiated by two young pastors, who started the church as a Christian start-up sister church of Kirche für Berlin, which itself was only planted in 2005 and already attracts more than 600 people to its services every Sunday. These young congregations in the middle of an expanding Berlin are part of an international church-planting network that focuses its theology on the contemporary urban fabric of trendy neighbourhoods. Just as Rudolf was able to find satisfaction despite his initial disappointment, their way of 'doing church' moves back and forth between serving their own clientele and caring for their local context, of whose constant change they are a productive part.

What unites Beth's congregation in Hoxton and Rudolf's in 'Kreuzkölln' beyond their sense of Christian belonging are three things that make these cases particularly interesting from an urban studies perspective:

Firstly, these cases challenge the idea that increasingly fewer people belong to religious groups in a context that is dominated by continuing gentrification and secularisation. Despite the wide-spread idea of a decreasing interest in religious lifestyles in globalising cities like London and Berlin, and the shrinking of Christianity in particular, the aforementioned church communities are growing, both in terms of membership and outreach activities related to their urban settings.

Secondly, the examples of St Mary Hoxton and Project Kirche für Kreuzberg have distinctive ideas about the spaces they inhabit. They focus on questions closely related to the urban lifeworlds of their congregants and design their way of doing church around activities that serve a variety of needs in the urban spaces that typify inner-city neighbourhoods – from social welfare work for marginalised groups to the creation of a place that feels like home for hyper-mobile young people feeling lost and disconnected in a globalising urban context such as London or Berlin.

Thirdly, the vitality of religious organisations – such as the two mentioned above – challenges dominant theoretical conclusions about urban spaces in the Global North. Following prevalent urban studies paradigms, an increasing pressure of gentrification and a growing middle-class structure in neighbourhoods ought to lead to fewer religious communities, not more. Put simply: within established urban studies paradigms, St Mary Hoxton and

Project Kirche für Berlin, as well as their social and cultural productivity in inner-city areas, should not exist.

## 1.1 The absence of religion in urban studies

Academic and non-academic observers of trendy urban areas in cities of the Global North rarely reveal insights about the activities of religious groups in neighbourhoods. On the contrary, inner-city areas that are primarily characterised by rapid social changes and a pressure of displacement are often defined by the absence of religion. Gentrification is instead associated with variations of different cultural, social and economic indicators (e.g. Lees, Slater and Wyly 2010). Above all, gentrification has been related to a continuously evolving idea of late modernity, and equated with advancing secularity and non-religious lifestyles (e.g. Butler, Hamnett and Ramsden 2013). A closer look at most gentrifying areas of cities in the Global North reveals that religious groups and institutions remain an essential part of the social and cultural fabric of the urban – however, they are often overlooked by scholars.

Two observations support the thesis of the vitality of religious life within gentrifying contexts. Firstly, many of the inner-city areas undergoing gentrification today have a long history of concentrated poverty mixed with post-Second World War immigration. Immigrant religious groups are often an important nexus of social life in inner-city areas (Fleischman and Phalet 2012). Established Christian congregations are furthermore historically closely entangled with these neighbourhoods and continue to play a key role for different groups of people – believers and non-believers alike – as they are deeply rooted neighbourhood organisations that often serve as a pivotal point in the community (Ammerman 1997) and increasingly take on the role of social welfare provider (Cloke, Beaumont and Williams 2013). This demographic history of multifaceted social and cultural urban worlds, mixed with comparatively affordable housing, makes areas that are historically characterised by a mix of poverty and immigration particularly attractive to middle-class newcomers (Hamnett and Butler 2013). Hence, religious groups are often a central part of the social fabric of trendy neighbourhoods.

However, the vitality of religious groups is also a product of gentrification. It is particularly within growing and gentrifying areas that existing religious groups (established parish churches as well as free churches) try to heighten

their visibility and create new offerings for newcomers. Parish churches invent new conceptual ideas to create spaces that accommodate both the often better-off newcomers and established groups. Simultaneously, new church congregations are established ('planted') by groups with different denominational backgrounds. They pursue the particular goal of creating religious network-hubs for groups that are commonly associated with gentrifiers in the academic literature (Cimino 2013). Furthermore, beyond the longstanding narrative of declining church-memberships and the ongoing secularisation of post-industrial societies, people moving into gentrifying areas are (still) interested in religious congregations and take part in communal life (ibid.). This has been discussed in some aspects in the literature that will be more extensively referred to in subsequent chapters. In summary, there are many ways in which Christian congregations continue to play a central role in gentrifying areas of contemporary urban constellations in the Global North. As this thesis will demonstrate, first and foremost they create settings of social and cultural connections within cities.

The reasons for the absence of religious actors in urban studies are manifold. Above all, religious categories are rarely present in the academic world beyond religious studies or some niches of ethnographic disciplines (Kong 2010). But fields related to urban studies, in particular geography and sociology, rarely expand their analysis beyond the common secular rationale of urban development and spatial thinking (see Knott 2010, Beaumont 2008). For the past few decades, the common assumption of the growth of cities has been that the increasing attractiveness of inner-city areas to the middle classes has led to further secularisation and the displacement of religious communities alongside that of the poorer and less middle-class portions of society (Ley and Martin 1993).

The prevalent underlying ideas about urban spaces that lead to these conclusions are still central in urban theory and reveal some problematic preconditions in current research on gentrification in particular and in urban studies more broadly. Firstly, assumptions about the relations of the people who take part in or are affected by pressures of gentrification are often portrayed in a one-dimensional way. Groups associated with gentrification processes in the Global North are commonly described as different sections of middle-class structures with incomes above the average, a higher education, a distinctive taste or all three combined (Ley 1996, Hamnett 2003, Atkinson 2006, Smith 2008, Harris 2012). In the current state of research on gentrification the focus has been on the middle classes and the ways they maintain social boundaries between themselves and 'others', which leads to a "disaffiliation" from "the local physical and social environment" (Atkinson

2006: 824). This, it has been stated, produces "social tectonics" (Jackson and Butler 2015) in gentrifying neighbourhoods as the dominant spatial expression of their increasingly salient encapsulation.

The common binary opposition between middle-class gentrifiers and working-class displaced is problematic and often far from the more socially mixed demographics of neighbourhoods and the various steps that displacement takes as an ambiguous and often contradictory process (Freeman 2008). Lower middle-class individuals may be equally affected by the pressure of gentrification and not every person who is statistically part of the working class is spatially excluded by neighbourhood change (Paton 2014). Therefore, people belonging to different status groups might still share very similar ideas about the space they inhabit and might be led by similar motivations to show solidarity with each other and live a communal life (Redfern 2003) expressed in a strong "sense of belonging" (Savage 2010). And yet, crucially, this has barely been represented in research on trendy inner-city neighbourhoods such as Hoxton and Neukölln.

Hand-in-hand with the definition of 'gentrifiers' as middle class citizens with certain tastes goes the assumption of a negative correlation between education and religiosity, i.e. the more educated people are, the less religious they become (Ley and Martin 1993). Although this is mostly true when it comes to the intensity of personal belief and in some contexts education correlates with declining church memberships, it is not true for church attendance and faith practices (Reimer 2007). The people defined as driving gentrification are just as religious or secular as people who already live in the areas they are moving into. Consequently, religious organisations are an overlooked characteristic of trendy urban neighbourhoods. By reproducing one-dimensional ideas about the people involved in or affected by gentrification, urban studies to date also reproduce a tendency to segregate communities into those aiming for social homogeneity and those with no particular interest in their immediate surroundings (Butler 2003, Atkinson 2006, Bridge, Butler and Le Gales 2014, Uitermark and Bosker 2014, Kern 2016). As discussions in sociology show, religious involvement and membership in a congregation are positively related to people's civic engagement (Storm 2015) and the multiplication of norms of pro-social behaviour and solidarity (Loveland et al. 2005). Therefore, a closer look at neighbourhood organisations – which in this thesis religious organisations are understood to be examples of – can reveal a nuanced picture of people involved in gentrification processes, as these organisations are spaces of boundary work as well as the socially productive exchange of resources between established groups and newcomers (Small, Jacobs and Massengill 2008).

The lack of religious actors and organisations, and the binary perspective on 'gentrifiers' and 'displaced' in research on urban areas is closely related to a more profound theoretical claim about the very nature of 'the urban'. Studies of urbanising societies go hand-in-hand with the notion of the modernising and – consequently – secularising trend of societies. Since the founding days of urban research in the Chicago School of the 1920s, cities have been understood predominantly as places where people develop a "blasé attitude" towards others (Simmel 2006/1903), kinship relations are suppressed by increased work and materialism, and community and solidarity with others are vanishing (Park 1915: 584ff). Cities, in this picture, are places of compressed modernity, where density leads to segregated urban spaces, homogeneity and superficial relations (Wirth 1938). Alongside this dominant narrative, cities were understood as purely secular formations, as it was assumed that the religiosity of people in cities was a question of pure individualisation but had no relevance for formal or collective formation (Cox 1990).

But religion has not disappeared, which proves a shortcoming of the secularisation thesis in two ways. It was predicted that in the course of modernity, religious belief would decline in total, societies would differentiate into different subsystems and religious practices would become more private, erasing religion from the public sphere (Berger 1967, Casanova 1994, Gorski et al 2012). Indeed, in most modern nation states one can observe the differentiation of societies into different subsystems, particularly the formal separation of the state from religious institutions. But the other two hypotheses of secularisation theory have failed to materialise: the societies of the 'modern world' show no significant signs of religious decline, nor of a continuing privatisation of religion (Gorski and Altinordu 2008, Casanova 2006, Tse 2014). Rather, religious actors continue to be present in the public sphere (Casanova 1994: 19, Habermas 2008) and, despite the overall reality of decreasing church-memberships, religious organisations continue to be relevant actors within inner-city neighbourhoods (Williams 2015). A more adequate description of the contemporary urban context might thus be a "postsecular" environment, where religious and secular practices are mutually constitutive (Beaumont 2008, Cloke 2015).

This thesis will scrutinise what these more recent insights about the complexity of "postsecular" society mean for the still dominant scientific understanding of the urban (cities and human behaviour) as modern and secularised. This, it will be argued, can be a productive way to question the predominant conceptualisation of urban spaces as segregated colonies, freeing up theoretical claims, which have become stuck, revolving in circles, and enriching the understanding of the urban social fabric, which currently

remains limited. The same can be said about research on gentrification, as shown above (see also Lees 2012).

## 1.2 Research questions

The predominant hypothesis about the secularisation of societies in the Global North has made religious actors almost invisible to academic and non-academic observers. But how would the urban look different from a postsecular comparative perspective?

That is the starting point for this thesis. In the following, the interrelationship between urban spaces and religious practices will be scrutinised. With a focus on religious organisations in gentrifying neighbourhoods, this thesis conceptualises religious organisations as sites of social and cultural production in cities and shows empirically how religious settings are made and unmade in specific situations (Olson et al 2013, Lichterman 2012). Postsecularity is a loosely developed term that mainly critiques secular narrow-mindedness. In this thesis postsecularity is understood as a lens to reveal the vitality of church congregations as socially productive neighbourhood organisations. At the same time, church congregations are understood as producers of postsecular urban environments.

This thesis aims to answer the following questions:
- How and why do Christian congregations survive in the secularising urban environments of London and Berlin? What are their strategies and tactics and how do they set them in place?
- Why are people who move into gentrifying areas interested in church congregations?
- How do the practices of congregations and congregants shape urban spaces and vice versa? What does this reveal about the restructuring of inner-city neighbourhoods?
- How can contemporary urbanisation and theories of gentrification be better understood through these practices?

The methodological setting of this thesis will involve the discussion of these questions in a comparative manner. Six cases in two urban contexts (London and Berlin) are brought into conversation with one another. The aim of

the comparison is to provide a strong theoretical basis for contemporary postsecular urban spaces by generating conceptual connections between the different framings. I take current comparative thinking in urban studies as a supporting inspiration to "think cities through elsewhere" (Robinson 2015). The 'elsewhere' in this sense does not define a geographical location, but conceptual differences and similarities (Lawhon et al 2016). The aim of composing a comparison is to generate conceptual connections through the variation of cases, which in this thesis means analysing contemporary gentrifying urban spaces through the practical realities of various Christian congregations.

This thesis is organised as follows: the next chapter (chapter 2) discusses the methodological settings of this thesis grounded in a composite of current theoretical discussions in comparative urbanism and accounts of postsecularity. The chapter further introduces the empirical urban settings of London and Berlin and discusses the current state of gentrification in the inner-city neighbourhoods in which the cases are situated: Hoxton and Bethnal Green in London, and Neukölln and Kreuzberg in Berlin. It then discusses how the empirical fieldwork has been carried out.

Chapter 3 conceptualises church congregations as neighbourhood organisations and discusses their relevance in understanding urban change. Furthermore, the chapter develops a theoretical understanding of church congregations as fields of boundary work, which will guide the analysis of the empirical data. The subsequent three chapters are based on the empirical results and build a consecutive story.

It is argued in chapter 4 that, as with other cultural phenomena, the presence of church congregations in inner-city neighbourhoods is a product of gentrification. The restructuring of urban spaces and processes of gentrification are the ground on which churches build their strategies to survive in secularising environments.

Chapter 5 zooms further into congregational life to discuss reasons for the growth of church congregations in inner-cities and why people are attracted to them. It is argued that the participation of particular groups in church activities can be read as a desire of the so-called 'gentrifiers' to belong to 'local communities' and an expression of solidarity with the diverse surroundings they are part of.

Chapter 6 shows that growing church congregations are fields for mobilising and empowering people for local, city-wide and national political issues. This is also the area where the vitality of church congregations has the strongest positive contribution to the outcomes of neighbourhood change.

The final chapter (chapter 7) 'theorises back'; it reviews the initial methodological settings of this thesis in light of the conclusions made at the end of the empirical chapters. Two further theoretical contributions to urban studies will be developed. Firstly, it is argued that church congregations are not merely a segregating force. As socially diverse 'reviving communities' they can also provide a nucleus for the revitalisation of mutual living in inner-cities. Secondly, by opening up 'spaces of possibility' through 'theo-ethic' practices, church congregations create further possibilities for transformation within processes of urban change. This finding is taken as the basis to question the gentrification 'frontier' as a boundary between different lifeworlds – theorising it instead as a contested passage of urban change.

**CHAPTER 2**

# 2 Settings

This thesis is a study of contemporary urban dynamics in gentrifying contexts through the lens of religious organisations. The aim of this chapter is to ground the thesis in its methodological settings. Settings are meant as both methodological grounds that lead the researcher through theoretical and empirical explorations as well as more practical frames of conducting research. As argued in the introduction, urban studies has been relatively silent about religion and its effect on the development of the urban. To (re-)introduce this perspective in urban theory, the methodological focus of the thesis is grounded in two recent discussions in urban studies: firstly, comparative urbanism as a way of critiquing certain one-dimensional ways of understanding the urban and secondly, postsecularism as a lens on contemporary urban forms, opening up the empirical scope to include religious practices. Both of these framings have a laboratorial character, in the sense that they formulate applicable ideas to the questions this thesis aims to answer.

The thesis is an attempt to ground this laboratorial character in a concrete empirical field. Both, comparative urbanism and postsecularism are considered as lenses to de-centre common ways of looking at urban spaces such as London and Berlin and to gain more from the scrutiny of the empirical object. These methodological settings are discussed below. They are followed by an introduction to the current dynamics of change in the inner-cities of London and Berlin, and a discussion of their concrete contexts as gentrifying areas in this study. The chapter ends with a discussion of the applied methods and the ways the fieldwork has been conducted during this research.

## 2.1 Composing comparisons

The empirical scope of this thesis lies in the heartlands of western urbanisation and gentrification, in close proximity to the financial hub of London and in central Berlin, an increasingly contested space (Holm 2014). Whereas London represents, in the larger scheme of things, the heartland of global urbanism with urban politics centred on the economic development of a steady and fast growing city (Holm 2014), Berlin has been characterised more

by a divided history between socialist idealisms and trapped subcultural developments (Colomb 2012b). But taking the developments of the latter in recent years into account, Berlin's population is growing fast and housing prices are on the rise – along with the accompanying pressures of gentrification and displacement (Helbrecht 2016). To compare cases embedded in these two urban environments means to compare the "usual suspects", to quote a common complaint from post-colonial urban scholars (e.g. McFarlane 2010: 732). London in particular is well researched in the field of urban studies and Berlin is fast catching up – both in terms of its economic and demographic growth (Fields and Uffer 2016) and the amount of urban research being undertaken. So it seems fair to ask what perspectives it might be academically productive to study such a well-known phenomena (gentrification) in already well-researched European contexts (London and Berlin) from? And how might the productiveness of this approach be assessed? One plausible answer lies in new comparative urbanism as a methodological grounding, as will be argued in the following paragraphs.

The methodological setting of this thesis follows the claim that, particularly within urban studies, a greater level of theoretical pluralism is needed to better understand empirical phenomena in contemporary urban spaces. Since "the re-discovery of the city" by the academic world in the 1990s, it has been stated that urban studies is, perhaps more than other disciplines, trapped between the explanations of either seemingly too abstract post-structuralist theories or overly rationalised explanations from the field of political economy (Amin and Graham 1997: 412f). The call to understand cities as multi-dimensional, complex, ambiguous and indeed "ordinary" (ibid) rather than as coherent objects of analyses has since then been echoed in a number of productive ways. One way that has initiated fruitful discussions has been the recent contributions under the umbrella of 'comparative urbanism', which focuses on new ways to combine general theoretical claims with methodological developments in urban research (Robinson 2006, Roy 2009, Ong 2011, Lawhon et al 2016).

The initial and most substantial claim for a 'new comparative urbanism' is to diversify urban studies by shedding light on urban developments in the Global South and thereby critique the dominant geographical and historical locus of theory-making. Most prominently, Jennifer Robinson argues in her manifesto on "Ordinary Cities" (2006), that the historical root of urban studies in the fast-growing and industrialising cities of Euro-America (i.e. the North American cities of the Chicago School and Western European capitals such as London, Paris and Berlin) is a problematic burden. The historic and geographically limited momentum of cities with exploding numbers of inhabitants, growing infrastructures and an urgent need for housing has

produced limited theoretical perspectives on how people of today and in other parts of the world actually live in cities – which in turn has highly influenced the ways cities around the world are built and planned (Robinson 2006: 14ff). The academic belief of the urban as a place of modernity, rationality and progress produced – in the aftermath of the Chicago School – quasi-universal theoretical narratives about world cities inhabited by blasé human beings who, as a consequence of population density, have lost their sense for cooperation and solidarity beyond their own well-being (ibid: 23f). This dominant paradigm of the modern, economically successful metropolis produced as its counterpart the traditional, crowded urban area of the Global South. This has been predominantly classified as a-place-about-to-become-modern. Hence, the condensed post-colonial critique of familiar ways of conducting urban studies, as claimed by Robinson and others, is essentially a call to diversify the geographical locations of theory-making (Robinson 2002, 2006, Roy 2009, Roy and Ong 2011). The comparison of different geographical as well as theoretical foundations of urban spaces is hoped, to put it simply, to de-centre dominant modes of theory-making in order to come closer to urban realities around the globe.

But there is also a significant short-coming in this line of thinking. Criticising the dominance of theory making in Euro-American/Western rationalities through an emphasis on a different geographical focus does not automatically advance urban theories. To contrast a dominant case (the case of urban theory from 'the Global North') with another urban case from a geographical distinct area ('the Global South') risks adding a particularistic statement without necessarily stimulating a conceptual conversation across different modes of urban theory (Peck 2015). The empirical reality of looking at similar/different phenomena in different places might even deepen a North-South divide by placing more emphasis on the incommensurability of differences. Such a unidirectional corrective as a "disruptive exception" (Peck 2015) seems legitimate for opening up a discussion, but it also forfeits the opportunity for comparative research to find differences in similar-looking urban phenomena, because it might be exactly those differences as a result of conceptual conversations which lead to theoretical innovations, independently of the geographical context of the research in question. Therefore, what seems theoretically more promising than a mere geographical relocation of empirical endeavours is to include a "dialogue across (contextualised) theoretical traditions and between different urbanisms" (Peck 2015: 171).

Greater theoretical pluralism through comparative urbanism may then, as a premature conclusion, very well be succeeded by the comparison of different urbanisms as parts of similar or even the same geographical locations. Instead of 'globalising' urban studies by going further 'south' one might also think of

dislocating 'the western way' of theory production by 'provincialising' common ways of thinking about the urban. 'Provincialising', a term coined by Chakrabaty (2000) to dislocate the European way of linear historic thinking from a post-colonial standpoint, means, more generally, to "scrutin[ise] from the standpoint of peripheral perspectives that lie outside the core" (Leitner and Sheppard 2016: 4). The premise of such an understanding is not simply to dismiss a dominant core of theory making, but to get to the heart of its situated origins and challenge the "seeming naturalness of its knowledge-claims" (ibid.). At the heart of dislocating theory in this way lies the opportunity to compare the different ways urban spaces can be understood, by engaging with different empirical and theoretical contexts, and the active circulation of ideas and findings. Epistemic provincialising puts the field of research at the centre of theory making, because it is the experiences in the field "that induce the researcher to question the theoretical predispositions that accompany her into the field" (Leitner and Sheppard 2016: 6).

To provincialise urban theory through comparative research/urbanism adds an important aspect to the question, as in how far it is academically sensible to study a well-researched phenomena (gentrification) in well-researched contexts (London and Berlin). Gentrification is an extremely broad term, but it can be summed up as the conceptual, globally travelling reality of the commodification of cities that includes the danger of displacement (see Lees 2012). Gentrification describes the demand and supply of rapid neighbourhood changes and these processes are extremely fundamental for understanding contemporary urban spaces (Shin et al. 2016). But such lenses offer a limited perspective, as they rarely help to understand the consequences of these processes beyond the exchange of populations, local amenities and the politically and economically driven fundamental change of housing structures.

Those predominantly negatively framed events of gentrification represent a dominant perspective on inner-city areas and rarely leave space for alternative thinking. Within cities like London and Berlin gentrification has occupied an elite-like natural status in explaining and projecting neighbourhood change – in the academic world as much as in popular debates (Holm 2014). This leaves out alternative scenarios. In particular, the strong focus on displacement as permanent residential relocation is problematic, as it is hard to measure (Helbrecht 2016) and it often remains unclear whether it occurs in such intensities as assumed (Freeman 2008). The effects of gentrification on people who manage to stay put (Doucet 2014) and their interaction with newcomers and organisational structures aiming to reduce pressures of gentrification by creating spaces and narratives of connections rather than separation (Shaw

and Hagemans 2015) are valid perspectives on gentrification that are barely represented in research (> 2.3).

As argued above, it is not theoretically productive nor the aim of this thesis to replace one shortcoming with another. The postcolonial approach of a 'southern urbanism' risked replacing one particularistic statement with another; for urban studies to just turn the page and argue for the positive side-aspects of neighbourhood change would likely do the same. A simple contrast to the theoretical core does not seem a satisfying answer, particularly as urban realities of rapid neighbourhood changes and displacement are undeniably present in both empirical scopes of this thesis. What is instead aimed for is to partially provincialise gentrification through comparisons. A pragmatic way to dislocate the dominant state of gentrification seems to be to open its theoretical box by composing various theoretical angles and empirical observations as a tactical comparison (Robinson 2016: 18ff). The core of this tactic is, on the one hand, to look out for similarities and differences across locations and contextualised cases, but also, on the other hand, to stimulate those observations with different empirical as well as theoretical angles. Composing, at this point, refers to the openness, the extension and the subtraction of the naturalised knowledge one can also find in current urban studies. This way of comparison lies midway between the theoretically narrower approach of "tracing connections" and the very open tactic of "launching new concepts" through comparison (Robinson 2015: 10).

The composing comparison as a pragmatic setting and research tactic is different to more well-practised ways of conducting comparative urban research but also shares some theoretical constraints. Commonly, five different forms of comparison are distinguishable in urban research, and they mainly differ in their inherent causality assumptions (Robinson 2011: 5, Tilly 1984). Firstly, researchers may claim that urban worlds are incommensurable, hence incomparable and inherently plural. This would involve the denial of comparability. If comparability is not denied, it has usually been referred to four tactics as first introduced by Charles Tilly (1984) and recently discussed by Jennifer Robinson (2011: 5ff): individualising, universalising, variation-finding and encompassing comparisons. Individualising approaches may refer to one case and openly or implicitly compare findings with theoretical claims from other geographical areas and cases. Such a comparative tactic often leads to a historical or spatially specific assumption about urban phenomena.

Universalising and variation finding approaches are both driven by the idea of searching for more universal laws of a phenomenon that are applicable in a variety of cases. The tactics differ in their ways of choosing cases: whereas cases are usually most different in universalising approaches, very similar cases are chosen in variation-finding approaches.

Encompassing comparisons, a fourth approach applied in urban studies, relate cases to more systemic universalising processes, such as capitalism, globalisation or secularism. Importantly, encompassing approaches differ from the aforementioned tactics of variation finding, universalising and individualising in their openness to understanding cases and their contextual urban spaces as relationally situated and not as spatial entities. Encompassing comparisons consist of cases that are influenced by ideas that travel and are situated in spaces that are conceptually closely related to one another. The composing comparison of this thesis is closely related to encompassing approaches.

To sum up, the comparative tactic undertaken in this thesis is based on a composing comparison, through which theoretical concepts and empirical narratives and fragments are brought into conversation with one another on the basis of their variations. The aim is to identify generic elements across similar and yet very different organisations. Empirically, this thesis compares six cases (religious organisations) in two urban contexts (London and Berlin). Theoretically, from the perspective developed above, the academic interest in studying a well-researched concept like gentrification located in spaces of the "usual suspects" (Mcfarlane 2010: 732) lies in the hope of dislocating/ provincialising some of those aspects of urban theory whose taken-for-grantedness has become a barrier for thinking differently about the future of urban spaces. Theory, at this point, is not understood as universally applicable laws, but rather as situated in between law-like explanations and description (Ong 2011: 12).

With the focus on religious organisations, the encompassing nature of this comparison is related to the more ubiquitous and powerful claim of continuously secularising urban spaces in the Global North. As will become clearer in the next part of this chapter, the counter claim of a postsecular urban as a further methodological setting of this thesis is a way of re-thinking cities and their dominant processes "through elsewhere" (Robinson 2015). "Elsewhere", in this thesis, does not refer to a geographical location, but a different (empirical) lens through which to explore variations of a different urban now – one that has rarely been at the centre of research on gentrification.

## 2.2 The postsecular urban

The second setting of this thesis is the postsecular condition of contemporary urban spaces. This is the conceptual link between religious organisations and urban spaces. Before entering into specifics, this subchapter begins with a brief but necessary discussion of the relation between secularity and postsecularity.

Postsecularity stems from a critique of secularisation, which has been a powerful theoretical claim for at least the past 150 years. As a conglomerate of sociological as well as philosophical theses, secularisation represents an umbrella concept of complex accounts of the whereabouts of societies. In its most simple form, the state of secularism describes the separation of state and church and secularisation refers to the continuously decreasing importance of churches as social institutions as well as the disengagement from religious values in the late 19th century of industrialising societies (Weber 1922). It is of major importance for the narrative of secularisation that the secular has always been constructed as an oppositional category to religion, which made the co-existence of both rather unlikely in the (secular) academic world (Cady and Shakman Hurd 2010: 5).

Within social sciences, secularisation has been understood as a multidimensional process, in which religious belief declines in total, societies differentiate into different subsystems, and religious practices become more private (Berger 1967, Casanova 1994, Gorski et al 2012). As others have shown, secularisation theories were right in predicting the differentiation of societies into different subsystems, particularly regarding the formal separation of the state from religious institutions. But secularisation theory was rather misleading about the other two hypotheses: the societies of the "modern world" (Casanova 1994) show no significant signs of religious decline nor of a continuing privatisation of religions (Gorski and Altinordu 2008, Casanova 2006, Tse 2014). Rather, as current research shows, the presence of religions in secularised/secularising national contexts is growing due to changing demographic situations in immigration societies and a growing self-awareness among religious actors (Habermas 2008, Brunn 2015). Accounts surrounding the concept of the postsecular try to capture this observation in a variety of fields (Gorski et al 2012).

The provincialisation of urban theory, it has been claimed above (> 2.1), is based on a geo-temporal process (Sheppard, Leitner and Maringati 2013). The observation of a secularising society is also temporal and geographically focused, as it predicts modern societies becoming more differentiated, less

religious and, to stay in the picture of developmentalism described in the previous section, 'pre-modern' societies becoming secular. The mere existence of religious actors in urban environments, as has been described in the introductory chapter, doesn't falsify the thesis of secularisation. But it gives a hint that the rule-like forecast of the vanishing of religions in the modern nation state is incomplete (see Casanova 1994). Moreover, analogously to the dominance of gentrification in urban studies, the picture of the secularised metropolis of the 21st century is equally dominant regarding urban spaces of the present. Gentrification and secularisation are therefore products of the same modern idea of urban spaces. The experimental mode of composing comparison in this thesis aims to dislocate some of the claims that are inherent in theories of contemporary urbanity. Beyond the use of a composing comparison – as a setting for and a tool of carrying out research on urbanity – postsecularity is also useful as a further methodological setting and lens through which the de-centring can occur.

Postsecularity, then, conceptually captures the observation of religious vitality in secularising (urban) environments. The empirical basis of the conceptually vague term of postsecularity is the increasingly perceived presence of religious practices and discourses in the general public as the result of different processes. On the one hand, the terror attacks around September 2001 and the following violent acts in the name of religions as well as the subsequent war on terror are named as a starting point of a new public consciousness of religions in Europe and North America. This has been the crucial point for Jürgen Habermas to introduce the term postsecularity in philosophical arenas and extend his former accounts that were purely secular with the religious conscious of the public (Habermas 2002, 2008).

Within European cities more specifically, on the other hand, migration has led to a religious pluralism (Peach 2002) and the public presence of Islam in the form of buildings (Schmitt 2004, Ehrkamp 2010), practices (Goekariksel 2009) and discourses (Lichterman 2012) has thus been widely discussed. The continuing (super-)diversification of West European societies (Vertovec 2007) and political developments on a global scale are thus two processes that introduced the conceptual beginnings of a postsecular society.

Postsecularity, however, does not refer to an end of secularising tendencies (Wilford 2010) or an active "de-secularisation of the world" (Gorski eta al 2012: 6). It rather points towards a continuing de-privatisation of religions in some parts of the world and therefore an increasing public presence of religious practices. It highlights the weaknesses of secularisation theories (Cloke and Beaumont 2012: 3). Early approaches to the term tended to overemphasise a revitalisation of religions in public spaces and argued that

this would prove the failure of theories of secularisation altogether (Oosterbaan 2014). Such approaches have rightly been criticised for repeating the shortcomings of secularisation theories (Thomalla 2012). From an analytical standpoint, however, it seems promising to frame discussions on the religious presence as an argument for the co-presence of secular and religious categories in today's urbanised societies (Fordahl 2016: 15).

Beyond the empirical realm, concepts of postsecularity also reveal a lot about the academic world itself. As it has been argued in the introductory chapter, many disciplines and particularly urban studies dismissed religions in their studies for a long time, as secular perspectives have been the dominant narrative for the past few decades and this has led to a religious-like blindness to the presence of religions (Gorski et al 2012: 14). As a consequence, the scientific study of religious actors outside religious studies was absent from academic discourses until the early 2000s. Since then, within different disciplines, postsecularity has been a starting point for highlighting intensified relationships between, and redefinitions of, religious and secular practices and discourses (Molendijk, Beaumont and Jedan 2010, Gorski et al 2012, Cloke, Beaumont and Williams 2013). The value of these perspectives compared to earlier work on religions within geography or the sociology of religion is that postsecular accounts conceptually understand religion as a site rather than as a category in itself. This does not mean that religious contents and religious differences are irrelevant, especially where they shape and motivate practices and create new spatial arrangements. But the perspective of religion as a site rather than a category opens up the methodological box of religion and foregrounds its relationships to other (secular, political, cultural, religious) concepts and its discursive constructions in specific situations and places. Religion then becomes "a location to observe social life" within a continuous secularising context (Guhin 2014: 580). This is the perspective on the postsecular urban in this thesis.

Urban environments play a specific role in the conceptual assumptions of the postsecular society. The "postsecular city" (Baker and Beaumont 2011) refers to the idea that within continuously globalising urban environments of the Global North, "the roles of religion and science, faith and reason, tradition and innovation are no longer rigidly enforced, and new relations of possibility are emerging" (ibid: 2). This is grounded in the observation that the withdrawal of the welfare state in many European cities since the early 2000s fuelled the third-sector involvement in care-work and welfare provision, and that an increasing number of welfare providers in city-centres in Europe are faith-based organisations (Dierckx, Vranken and Kerstens 2009). Hence, emerging spaces of "postsecular rapprochements" (Cloke 2011: 486) are characteristic in a variety of areas from which the state has withdrawn its support: from work

with the homeless and people in need of food supplies to the involvement of churches and other faith-based organisations in local political campaigns and the provision of social housing (Williams 2015). Within these domains, faith-based organisations are often understood as more than gap-fillers of the neoliberal state; they can also be potential enablers of protest and resistance to neoliberalism (Cloke, Beaumont and Williams 2013). Consequently, in dense urban environments, "the boundaries of religion and secular seem to be breaking down as diverse religious voices adopt collaborative pragmatism to work towards common ethical and political commitments" (Williams 2015: 194).

The postsecular urban as a conceptual setting helps frame the practices of religious viability and integrate that frame in this thesis in a number of ways. Empirical evidence from others as well as the research included in this thesis shows that religious organisations (still) shape urban landscapes of super-diverse and fast gentrifying environments like London and Berlin. The recently experienced rapid changes in inner-city neighbourhoods and the withdrawal of the state from social welfare services leaves a gap religious organisations are willing to fill. In a secularising social world that is becoming increasingly socially differentiated, with increasing options for the individual (Warlord 2010), religions are adapting to local changes and offering people the domestic stability they are often seeking (Bartolini et al 2016). Many neighbourhood churches address local problems in their work and are perceived as important yet often ambiguous actors by the wider communities (Lichterman 2012). In a micro-perspective, churches as neighbourhood organisations are providers of communal spaces and create hubs for mutual encounters with difference and the negotiation of different values.

Churches are not only becoming welfare providers and attracting those engaged in civil society. Christian congregations have also grown in gentrifying neighbourhoods as they have learned to adapt to local demands and link their programme to the new people moving into their neighbourhoods (Ciminho 2013). Young and freshly 'planted' church congregations often specify their form of doing church and their contents to attract people from certain groups in certain trendy hot-spots, such as students, so-called 'young professionals' and artists (see Strhan 2013). So-called network churches link Christian programmes with specific occupational and other interests of new target groups.

These different Christian organisations share some ideologies about 'the city' in general. Depending on their orientation and denomination, 'the city' and 'urban spaces' are most often represented in sermons and further church life as either a great field of opportunities for Christians to be actively

charitable, or "its morally corrupting potential threatens spiritual pollution" (Bielo 2013: 306). Orientations and reproduced narratives about urban environments promoted in congregations can have a strong impact on people's experiences of urban environments and enable them to show solidarity and be engaged with their immediate and wider surroundings, helping church-goers feel at home in urban environments perceived as hostile (Eade 2012). This will become more explicit as discussed alongside the empirical material further on (> 5).

Religious neighbourhood organisations such as churches have rarely been the focus of studies on urban change in the Global North. This reflects less the empirical reality of contemporary cities than the effect of a general academic unease towards religion (Warlord 2010). With a focus on church congregations in gentrifying neighbourhoods, religious organisations are conceptualised as sites of social and cultural production in cities that produce religious actors in specific situations (Olson et al 2013). The visions and narratives of these organisations about urban spaces, the congregants' practices in gentrifying neighbourhoods and the institutional links they obtain, have impacts on urban spaces. Postsecularity, then, is a lens to reveal the actual vitality of church congregations as significant neighbourhood organisations that do not necessarily stop gentrification, but shape its consequences for people living in these areas.

## 2.3 Urban change and gentrification in London and Berlin

This section discusses the concrete changes characterising the inner-city settings of this study in London and Berlin in general, and in Hoxton, Bethnal Green, Neukölln and Kreuzberg more specifically.[3] At the end of this section, the understanding of gentrification in this thesis will be discussed.

The dominant developments of cities in the Global North are directed by two main drivers of change: the growing attractiveness of living near the centre close to its amenities, services and jobs (Ley 1994, Butler 2003, Savage et al 2005), and secondly a massive influx of capital as a consequence of the

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[3] Maps to show the central location of the study areas are attached in the appendix.

commodification of housing and the financialisation of the housing market (which is usually supported by pro-growth urban policies), particularly after the economic crisis of 2008 and its aftermath (Rolnik 2013, Paton and Cooper 2016, Fernandez, Hofmann and Aalbers 2016).

Both sets of processes are well reflected in the literature on gentrification as either supply- or demand-driven explanations of urban change. Processes analysed in both perspectives together create rapid change in inner-city areas, mirrored in rising housing prices, an increasing shortage of housing that is affordable for lower income groups, the rapidly changing face of supply structures and 'atmospheres' in neighbourhoods, accompanied by various forms of displacement – from the physical displacement of people to a more vague pressure of displacement, making neighbourhoods "less liveable" for people (Marcuse 1985: 207). These dominant characteristics of urban change are usually summarised as gentrification, an extremely broad term, which in itself is a changing and locally specific process (Lees, Shin and Lopez-Morales 2015).

The local settings of London and Berlin are characterised by an increasingly dynamic housing market, growing populations and variegating pressures of displacement. However, although they share many directions of change, the cities developed quite differently in the past decades and urban politics reacted very differently to internal and external pressures of transformational change. Whereas the term has been coined upon observations made in London by Ruth Glass (1964) in the 1960s, gentrification and large-scale neighbourhood change is a comparatively young phenomenon in Berlin and has only been part of the academic discussion in the past 5 to 10 years (Holm 2014).

Regarding urban policies, it is no exaggeration to ascribe London a very friendly climate towards economic growth and transformation. The city's ambition to become one of the most important global cities and the financial hub of Europe can be traced back to the Thatcher era in the 1980s, which vastly reshaped the city's social landscape through schemes of urban regeneration (Imrie, Lees and Raco 2009). This pertains to the eastern boroughs of the city in particular, as those have been stigmatised as London's poorhouse for centuries, well into the 1990s, and is still present in processes of stigmatisation of local communities today (Rogers and Fisher 1992, Palmer 2000).

The regeneration of the so-called 'East End' has thus been the basis of the remaking of inner London, mirrored in large-scale projects from the development of former shipyards into one of the most iconic financial districts of the 1980s, Canary Wharf, up to the very recent efforts to develop large-scale infrastructures in the wake of the Olympic Games in 2012 (Campkin

2013, Watt 2013). Those changes are the iconic landmarks of a continuously changing urban environment, in which economic capital and political will in combination are the main drivers of massive price increases on the housing market and the gentrification of the whole city that has accompanied the steady growth of the population (Hamnett 2003). A general indicator of this large-scale statistical gentrification in London is "the spatial redistribution of poverty in the city, from the inner city to the suburbs", as a recent report for the period of the 2000s showed (Fenton 2016).

Berlin's current period of change, in contrast, started in the 1990s after the reunification of Germany with the "reinvention" of the city (Colomb 2012b). Berlin was again to become the capital of a united Germany and with it came high political ambitions of forming a new world city. But the fall of the wall first of all brought Berlin back to economic realities. The western parts of the city had been in a state of exception for 40 years, with a highly subsidised economic sector and a protected social world. The eastern parts, equally, had their own economic and social system. The restructuring of the city in the years after reunification was a result of global social changes and a particular local need for the basic development of economic and social structures (Krätke 1999). The ambitious plans were to make Berlin a global city and 'service metropolis' with a fast-growing population.

However, instead of steady growth, the city's population shrank by more than 100,000 inhabitants in the following decade, followed by problems of vacant social housing structures and a shrinking economy (Häußermann and Kapphan 2002: 92ff). Simultaneously, the state supplied the basis of large-scale urban change in some of the former eastern boroughs (particular in Prenzlauer Berg) by subsidising renovations of Wilheminian housing structures of the founding times (Gründerzeitbauten) and therewith paved the way for the displacement of lower income groups during the 2000s in these boroughs (Bernt and Holm 2009).

The overall situation of continuing population shrinkage combined with a growing budget deficit led to fateful forecasts in 2003: an expert commission projected further shrinking and recommended that Berlin's political leaders privatise existing social housing structures and step out of the city's social housing support programmes (Empirica 2003). The reason for these resolute actions on the housing market were, besides the projected shrinking of the city, a highly indebted city budget. The ensuing privatisation minimised the public influence on the housing market drastically – from more than 30% of publicly controlled housing in the early 1990s to less than 14% in 2011 (Holm 2016: 225).

As a consequence, the room for manoeuvre for the state, and its ability to keep affordable housing on a high level, was lost. Since 2008, the city's

problems with a shrinking population vanished and it is only since then that the city's attractiveness as a place to live for people – particularly from other European countries – has resulted in a rapid change of the housing market and hence new pressures of gentrification (Helbrecht 2016).

Berlin's recovered attractiveness to an international clientele in particular,[4] and its growing housing-market, which still has a relatively low price fundament and works as a magnet for international capital, today results in a huge rise of rents all over the city that has justified the assumption of large-scale gentrification in Berlin as a whole (Holm 2016). Rising rents are now particularly salient in the inner-city neighbourhoods, with an average increase of 14% per year between 2011 and 2015 (Steinig 2016).

## Urban change in Hoxton, Neukölln, Kreuzberg and Bethnal Green

These broad tendencies of urban change on a city scale are also the main drivers of change in the four inner-city areas the church congregations in this study are mainly located in, which are Hoxton and Bethnal Green in London, and Kreuzberg and Neukölln in Berlin.

The neighbouring areas of Hoxton and Bethnal Green are part of the boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets.[5] These areas are central parts of what is historically known as the 'East End'. They are closely located to the City of London, the financial and administrative centre of the city. Since the middle of the 19th century, the area that has been framed as the East End has stereotypically been known as a home to London's working-classes, shaped by over-crowded housing structures and known as always being affected by smog and pollution due to the nearby manufacturing and production plants (Palmer 1989).

However, while still partially holding onto its stigma of localised poverty and social disorder, the historical roots of Hoxton with large industrial and warehouse structures was the basis of large-scale regeneration during the 1990s and 2000s led by the influx of the massively state-supported cultural

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[4] With a continuing net growth of approximately 40,000 people every year in the years 2010-2015 (SenStadtUm 2016)

[5] The two areas that are commonly referred to as Hoxton and Bethnal Green are not congruent with the administrative wards of Bethnal Green and Hoxton as of 2014. Both areas have historically been parishes that are much larger and with less clear boundaries. Hoxton and Bethnal Green are the central categories used by most of the participants in this study to demarcate 'their neighbourhood' and the church congregations in this study mostly refer to the old areas. As most of the interviewees don't refer to the wards but the ancient neighbourhoods, when it is the administrative wards referred to, this is clearly stated.

and creative industries (Harris 2012). Parts of Hoxton have been established as the home of an alternative gay scene (Andersson 2009) and of 'hipsters' (Hubbard 2016, > 5.3) at the same time. The cultural and social 'renaissance' of the area has been accompanied by processes of rapid structural changes and gentrification, resulting in the spatial proximity of high-priced refurbished apartments, a lively bar and restaurant scene equipped with advanced consumption areas for cultural distinction in the south, and a residential area to the north that is predominantly defined by large-scale social-housing structures with very few public amenities (Colomb 2007, Hoxton Ward Profile 2013).

Although neighbouring Hoxton, Bethnal Green has largely remained a residential area. The parts directly adjacent to the area of Hoxton are also changing rapidly, for example the rising attraction of Columbia Road Flower Market (a weekly London-wide known flower market) is an important driver of change that has made the area attractive and increasingly expensive. Apart from these recent changes the area is still very much dominated by the demographic shifts that took place from 1950 onwards, when immigrants mainly from Bangladesh moved to Bethnal Green. As the ward profile for Bethnal Green shows, 'Bangladeshis' are with 32% very close to the largest group in the area, while 'White British' people count for 37% of the population (Bethnal Green Ward Profile 2014). This is an important factor, as 'Bangladeshis' are often constructed as a group ('the generalised other') that particularly members of working-class households with British descent hold accountable for the main (negative) changes in the area (Eade and Garbin 2006).

The situation in neighbouring Hoxton ward is quite different. The largest ethnic minority (20%) is 'Black British' with Caribbean or African descent. These demographic differences are influential regarding the general congregational life in the two areas, as 'Bangladeshi' are dominantly non-Christian, whereas a majority of groups belonging to Black minorities are practising Christians. The largest religious group in Bethnal Green are Muslims (34%), followed by Christians (26%) and people with no affiliation (32%).[6] The demographic of the neighbouring ward of Hoxton East and Shoreditch is shaped by Christians as a religious majority (42%), followed by people without religious affiliation (32%) and only 13% Muslims, which is below the London average of 14%.[7] This affects Church life in the two districts, since, beyond a large number of diaspora churches, churches in Hoxton are often well-

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[6] Bethnal Green Ward Profile 2014.

[7] Based on the census 2011 as analysed in Hoxton East and Shoreditch Ward Profile 2015.

frequented by people from 'Black minorities', whereas church congregations are mostly white working class-dominated in the area of Bethnal Green.

Besides Bethnal Green and Hoxton, Shoreditch is a further important point of reference in this study. Formerly a parish and a historic borough of London, Shoreditch today is part of the electoral ward of Hoxton East and Shoreditch. Although none of the church congregations is actually situated in what is known as Shoreditch today, the area plays an important role in this thesis as a spatial reference. Shoreditch is technically the synonym of what many people in London refer to when they actually talk about Hoxton (see also Pratt 2009: 1045). The boundaries are fluent, and yet the spatial references people use highly depends on who one talks to. People who recently moved to the area would rather refer to Shoreditch, whereas people born in the area and institutional bodies such as churches situated here would rather refer to the area as Hoxton and only strategically use the name Shoreditch when they want to refer to the more trendy parts of the area characterised by its night-life and entertainment facilities.

'Shoreditch' has been massively employed since the 1990s by politics and real-estate agents to marketise the area as a creative district, with far-reaching 'success': the area has been named the "coolest place on the planet" by Time Magazine (Pratt 2009: 1047), whereas others labelled its process of change "Shoreditchification", a synonym for unwelcome development in London as a whole that refers to the intersection of the arts and gentrification (Proud 2014).

Today, Shoreditch is known as a huge playground for the night-time-economy, which adds to the change of the area and often creates tensions between night-time users and tenants (Pratt 2009). The drastic transformations are mainly concentrated in the south of Hoxton/Shoreditch, whereas the more northern parts of the district are as poor as they always were: the area remains one of the 20 poorest districts in the UK (GLA 2015). Due to this spatial proximity of trendy areas and socially deprived and stigmatised estates, the churches that are part of this study often refer to Shoreditch as their main area of impact (> 6.2). Shoreditch is also often used by people to reference their social position, both in positive as well as negative ways.

The areas of Kreuzberg and northern parts of Neukölln, both in former West Berlin, are similarly characterised by a close proximity of social deprivation and a new kind of trendiness. The areas that are part of this study are not congruent with the districts' boundaries, but are defining areas for the main narratives and images of the districts. This is particularly true in the case of Neukölln, as 'Neukölln' is a synonym of what most people talk about when

they actually mean Nord-Neukölln[8] (Huning and Schuster 2015, Soederberg 2016). Nord-Neukölln is an old working-class district with the largest coherent and undestroyed Wilhemenian housing structure in Berlin, which has been in a process of rapid transformation, particularly during the past decade.

Before 1990, Nord-Neukölln had a solid economic structure with very little unemployment (Kessinger 2015). The population was predominantly characterised by a mix of working-class households and households of so called 'guest-workers', immigrants working in the industrial sector who weren't expected by the German government to stay permanently. During the 1960s and 1970s Neukölln was the first destination of choice in Berlin by migrants from Turkey and Arabic countries, as the derelict housing structures were more affordable than those in other parts of Berlin and the immigration of foreigners was restricted to certain areas. Whereas most German households tried to move to districts with better maintained housing, the so-called guest-workers and low-income households stayed in Kreuzberg and Neukölln (Hinze 2013).

With the fall of the Wall in 1989, the subsidised economic structure collapsed in large parts, leaving many workers without formal education unemployed. Former 'guest-workers' opened bars, restaurants and cultural institutions, often in abandoned structures. During the 1990s, urban renewal programmes changed the face of many other districts in the city, particularly in the eastern boroughs that formerly belonged to the GDR.

However, at the same time Neukölln became more and more a home for displaced people from other districts, as rents stayed comparatively cheap and the market for tenants was large and characterised by weak demand (98% of housing was rented apartments by that time, Häußermann and Kapphan 2002). In the following years, the district slowly slipped into an image of poverty and crime, with newspapers reporting gang violence and shootings. Continuous high rates of unemployment and social welfare and a lack of childcare and schools, put the district in lowest place in the city-wide rankings.

In the course of the early 2000s, the state and the municipality initiated various urban development programs to work against this situation, but the image of a *Problemkiez* (problem neighbourhood) remained (Huning and Schuster 2015). The main group that was associated with these social problems in the public eye were immigrants and their descendants of Turkish and Arab descent (Sundsbø 2015: 95ff). Today, the district is shaped by ethnic

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[8] The southern part of the district of Neukölln is less populated, characterised by single homes and stretched out to the borders of the city.

diversity with 37% of the population having a migration background,[9] of which a large part is of Turkish descent (approximately 40,000 of 300,000 inhabitants, Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg 2014). 'Muslims' became the most stigmatised outsider group in these districts and the spaces of Neukölln and Kreuzberg are still loaded with this 'religious other' as a generalised other (Bendixsen 2013).[10]

It is only since the growth of Berlin in the years after 2008 that Neukölln started to turn from a district of social ills into a 'desirable place', particularly for students and young people moving into the city from other European regions (Holm 2014). Reasons for the new attractiveness of the area are manifold. On the one hand, the highly desired neighbouring district of Kreuzberg became more and more unaffordable for people with low incomes and Nord-Neukölln's many abandoned structures invited people to try out their own economic projects without taking high risks. On the other hand, it was in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008 and the following years that the neglected housing structures of Neukölln became particularly attractive for investors, as the housing prices were low and the housing conditions poor, calling for renovation and high return expectations accordingly (Krajewski 2015).

However, compared to Shoreditch as described above, the area of Nord-Neukölln is a very residential neighbourhood. The statistical indicators show a large amount of people who live in relative poverty, with continuously rising rents leading to a high pressure of gentrification (Berlin Hyp 2016) and a fast-changing atmosphere due to a growing infrastructure aimed at fulfilling the needs of the new inhabitants of the area (Hentschel 2015: 82).

Kreuzberg, the southern part of the district Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, is a comparatively stable area, with currently the highest rents in the inner city (Berlin Hyp 2016), particularly in the housing structures in the eastern parts, bordering Nord-Neukölln, developed from far below average to far above average, if one compares the city-wide price developments (Holm 2016). However, most parts of the district, particularly in the north-western areas, still belong to the poorest neighbourhoods of the city, with high rates of unemployment and child poverty. The area around Wassertorplatz, an area

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[9] The category 'people with migration background' in the German census includes foreigners, Germans who immigrated to Germany after 1955 and people with at least one parent who immigrated after 1955 (Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg 2014).

[10] The percentage of Muslims living in Neukölln is unknown due to a lack of data. In contrast to the UK, religious belonging beyond evangelical or Catholic affiliation is not part of census data. Approximately 37% of the population of Neukölln are of christian belief (Amt für Statisik Berlin Brandenburg 2014)

"without identity due to its post-war redevelopments" (SenStadt 2011), which also belongs to one of the church congregations (St Lukas) mentioned in this study, has been the area with the most stagnant social indicators in Berlin (SenStadtUm 2015).

Kreuzberg's history has been dominated by many urban myths. It has long been understood as the most alternative district of the city, with a relaxed housing market and laissez-faire politics (Lang 1996). Some truths of this lie in its history before the reunification of Germany, in particular during the 1960s and 1970s when it was known for its squatter scene and resistance towards large-scale redevelopment. This history has been used by the city to marketise Berlin as a particular space of alternative culture (Colomb 2012).

At the same time, the ethnic diversity of the district was growing fast, since it was, similarly to Neukölln, one of the first destinations of people from Turkey and mostly different Arab countries who came to Berlin during the so-called 'guest worker programme' (Gastarbeiter-Programm). Today, around 35% of the population have a migration background, with people of Turkish descent representing the largest group (approximately 30,000 of 250,000 inhabitants in total, Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg 2014). Similarly to the situation in Neukölln, 'Muslim' and 'Turkish' in particular became stigmatised categories for the minority population of the district, with salient social boundaries (Sundsbø 2015: 95ff, Häussermann and Kapphan 2002: 213f).

The squatter movements became a relevant factor in the politics of urban renewal. During the 1960s and 1970s, the mainstream approaches to the destroyed parts of the city of West Berlin had been mass reconstruction, which included the building of large-scale housing developments as a form of modernist urban planning. Public debates in Kreuzberg, as initiated by alternative movements and the early green party, led to new experiments in participation and the renewal of neighbourhoods without mass destruction and displacement, a process that was later termed 'cautious urban renewal' (*behutsame Stadterneuerung*) (Colomb 2012). This history of strong participatory politics has since then been part of everyday life in the district and remained relevant in many local political negotiations. This is also a relevant aspect for churches in the area, as forms of political participation and relatively transparent protest movements against urban changes are often quite vital.

One of the main areas where these processes are still institutionalised in everyday politics is the neighbourhood of 'Graefekiez' (Holm 2011: 223), which is one of the main locations of a church congregation in this study (St Johannes). 'Graefekiez', as of today, is one of the more affluent neighbourhoods of Kreuzberg. Locked in by main streets and an old shipping canal, the area has retained a strong neighbourhood identity and has been

characterised by traffic-calmed roads, large playgrounds and, increasingly, pubs and restaurants. Since the early 2000s, the area has been very attractive to young families and students alike. Rents in this area are now among the highest in the whole of Kreuzberg, making 'Graefekiez' one of the most gentrified areas in the district.

The more contemporary urban changes in the areas of this study can be interpreted as being affected by processes of gentrification in the scholarly sense: they are increasingly under high demand from new people moving into both cities, with all the accompanying negative consequences on the housing market and transformative effects on the local infrastructure. The London housing market has been subject to excessive price increases for a long time, whereas this is a still relatively new development in Berlin. Nevertheless, the social fabric of the areas in question face increasing spatial changes and pressures of displacement, both socially and physically, in terms of a change of local amenities, like local shops and restaurants. The existing literature as well as the narratives that are unfolding in the course of this study give enough reason to prematurely conclude that gentrification has been on its way for a long time in the mentioned areas, although with very different intensities and consequences (Holm 2011, Hamnett and Butler 2013).

## 'Urban Frontiers': making sense of gentrification

This thesis does not claim to research whether gentrification happens in the areas of this study or not, nor is the intention to analyse counter-movements that prevent gentrification from happening. This thesis aims to look at consequences of gentrification as seen through the organisational lens of church congregations,[11] who are also affected by neighbourhood change.

It will be argued that research on gentrification beyond the actual displacement of people promises to reveal different insights into everyday life in gentrifying neighbourhoods. The role neighbourhood organisations play in these settings for the chances of people to encounter others and transgress boundaries is the gap within gentrification literature this thesis aims to address.

The *processes* that lead to a change in inner-city neighbourhoods have been researched extensively since Ruth Glass (1964) first applied the term gentrification to neighbourhood changes leading to displacement of low-income households in inner-city London. Since then, the processes causing gentrification have been framed as an intense "global urban strategy" in times

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[11] How church congregations can be understood as neighbourhood organisations and how they matter in cities, will be discussed in the next chapter (> 3).

of a hegemonic neoliberal globalisation (Smith 2002) driven or supported by state actors and urban policies (Paton and Cooper 2016, Lees 2013), often endorsed by international capitalists and "transnational elites" (Fernandez et al 2016), and increasingly observable on a global scale (Lees et al 2015), although with large regional and local differences (Shin, Lees and Lopez-Morales 2016).

But despite knowledge on *processes* that lead to gentrification, there is surprisingly little variation on knowledge about the *consequences* of these processes and the people that are actually affected by neighbourhood change (Valli 2016). One reason is a fixation on displacement and a lack of methods to trace people who have left a neighbourhood (Helbrecht 2016: 10). Another reason is that it is often unclear whether gentrification-induced displacement in the form of permanent residential mobility actually happens at the scale that earlier research on gentrification suggested (Freeman and Braconi 2004, Hamnett 2003, Freeman, Cassola and Cai 2015).

Hence, a focus on displacement in the form of 'outmigration' (an essential part of the original definition of gentrification) to understand the consequences of gentrification as a dominant driver of urban change and the experiences for those living in gentrifying neighbourhoods seems questionable at the very least (Newman and Wyly 2006, Freeman 2008, Davidson 2010, Sakizlioğlu 2014, Valli 2016). As this thesis puts a focus on the role of neighbourhood organisations in gentrifying settings, it is particularly interested in the consequences gentrification has for the people living in a neighbourhood, since those include the people forming the organisation and benefiting from its work. Hence the focus here is on people who move into an area and their places of contact with those "living through gentrification" (Doucet 2009).

This does not mean that displacement is not happening or less important, but in this thesis displacement is understood as an incremental, often ambiguous and inconsistent, but mostly emotionalised process rather than a measurable result. Gentrification is better understood as an "open concept" (Lagendijk et al 2014: 359f), where neighbourhood 'upgrading' has different roots and creates a variety of effects, threats, potentials and possibilities. As Peter Marcuse already argued over 30 years ago, displacement occurs in different stages and is usually more of a gradual process than a sudden consequence:

> When a family sees the neigborhood around it changing dramatically, when their friends are leaving the neighborhood, when the stores they patronize are liquidating and new stores for other clientele are taking their places, and when changes in public facilities, in transportation patterns, and in support services all clearly are making the area less and less livable, then the pressure of displacement already is severe (Marcuse 1985: 207)

People living in a gentrifying neighbourhood experience different "pressures of displacement" at different times. Whereas some may face the loss of their home, others may feel slightly but increasingly uncomfortable with new people moving into a neighbourhood and suffer from changing public facilities or a different supply in local amenities. Others may welcome changes occurring in an area (e.g. Freeman 2006). Hence, a reasonable definition to work with seems to understand gentrification primarily as "the production of space for progressively more affluent users" (Hackworth 2002: 815).

The production of affluent spaces can lead to increasing segregation of different groups on different scales. Over the last decade, there has been a focus on those assumed to be the drivers of gentrification and the ways the 'new middle-class households' "disaffiliate" from the local (Atkinson 2006) and therewith (re)produce inequalities, i.e. through the maintenance of cultural boundaries in education, leisure activities and patterns of consumption (Butler, Hamnett and Ramsden 2013, Butler 2003, Harris 2012). The resulting effects on socially mixed areas are "social tectonics", where encounters between different groups are rare but "the presence of classed and ethnic 'others' can become central to the formation of middle-class identities" (Jackson and Butler 2015: 2356).

This state of the art of gentrification research cements the idea of even small-scale urban areas or neighbourhoods being separated by more or less clear 'frontiers' between those areas that are already 'gentrified' and those that will soon be gentrified. Cities, then, are "like a patchwork quilt of spaces that are physically proximate but institutionally estranged" (Macleod and Ward 2002: 164). Processes of separation on the micro scale furthers the idea that these frontiers are not only between areas, but also within smaller scales, running through a neighbourhood or through housing estates.

The metaphor of the 'urban frontier' has often been employed to describe these spatial effects of gentrification (Macleod and Ward 2002, Heidkamp and Lucas 2006, Davidson 2008, Douglas 2012, Colomb 2012, Hubbard 2016). As a consequence, its meaning framed the dominant picture of social realities in these neighbourhoods, portrayed in variegating spatial facings such as 'tectonics', 'bunker', 'disaffiliation', 'colonisation' etc. Introduced by Neil Smith (1996), the metaphor of the 'frontier' adequately highlights the spatiality of "where neoliberalism quite literally 'comes to town'" (Leitner, Peck and Sheppard 2007: ix). But it also suggests a separation of non-gentrified spaces from gentrified spaces, and the 'middle classes' from the 'working classes', 'the good' from 'the bad' in a rather essentialising manner (Philips 2004: 18f).

Whereas there is no doubt that gentrification often brutally forces segregation, consists of processes of 'othering' and estrangement of different

groups, this does not cover the whole story of gentrification. Recalling the claim of a composing comparison as outlined earlier in this chapter (> 2.1), this thesis claims that there has been a strong focus on one side of how gentrification affects neighbourhoods, but that this may have produced some blind spots. Strategies that people employ if they try to stay put (Paton 2014) and live through gentrification (Davidson 2009, Shaw and Hagemans 2015), or ways organisations are supportive to reduce the pressures of gentrification for vulnerable groups (Ernst and Doucet 2014), have more rarely been part of gentrification research than those claims that focus on the estrangement of different groups.

This thesis claims that a perspective from within neighbourhood organisations shows that beside the very negative consequences of gentrification, spaces of mutuality exist along the 'frontiers' of gentrification that are able to ameliorate some of the ramifications of urban change. It will be argued that neighbourhood organisations in the form of church congregations can be transmitters between different stages of transformation and translators between different lifeworlds, as they share the ability to link different groups and different habitus in one space – those who are scapegoated as signifiers of change and those who have been dwellers before the main changes occurred. Organisations can be the gateway for individuals to access resources outside their immediate group reach (Small, Jacobs and Massengill 2008: 389f) and therewith become an insightful lookout for different ways to understand neighbourhood change in London and Berlin.

# 2.4 Doing fieldwork

The aim of a composing comparison in a postsecular, gentrifying urban context is the theoretical setting; doing fieldwork is its practical translation. The cases of this study are six church congregations in two different urban contexts. The aim, as detailed in the introduction, is to create knowledge about the practices of these church congregations and their members as well as their interactions with recently gentrifying, postsecular environments. The interest is to comprehend how congregations (i.e. clergy, members and associated fields of action) understand, translate and impact on urban changes.

The methodological setting in an unfortified comparative gesture aims to generate conceptual connections and dislocate some aspects of urban

thinking about gentrifying contexts and common theory-making practices in urban studies. How this works in detail will be the subject of the empirical chapters to follow.

It is in the primary scope of this study to produce descriptions and connections to better understand practices in a particular organisational urban environment and to de-centre some aspects of contemporary urban theory making. Law-like explanations about social behaviour are not the aim. Hence, the appropriate modus of fieldwork is of a qualitative nature with the use of ethnographic methods as a way to make sense of the ways people make sense of their everyday activities (see Herbert 2000).

Traditional approaches claim that ethnographic research should ideally be commenced without specific research questions and a deeper knowledge of the field, in order to generate locally situated questions out of "thick descriptions" of the material (Geertz 1973, Goffman and Lofland 1989). In this thesis I chose a more concentrated approach with a focus on very specific actors (church congregants), in very specific settings (growing churches in gentrifying neighbourhoods) that have been approached with a mixture of undirected curiosity about unknown Christian lifeworlds and a very particular knowledge about their urban contexts. Although ethnography has no unanimous position on the variety of approaches, the procedure of this thesis resembles what others have framed as "focused ethnography" (Knoblauch 2005, Wall 2015), which basically captures the fact that the researcher has some inside or background knowledge of the groups to be studied but uses methods more spontaneously according to the development of the fields and the study.

## Positionality

Beyond this academic classification, the practical doing of fieldwork for this thesis – for me as a white, male, heterosexual European with a middle-class background, who grew up in a Catholic region in West Germany and now lives in one of the 'edgy' Berlin neighbourhoods – did not always have such a clear framing. Hence a few remarks on my own position and some reflections on how this may have affected the collection and interpretation of data seem worth noting at this point.

Undertaking an ethnographic study means that "you have to open yourself up in ways you're not in ordinary life" (Goffman and Lofland 1989: 128). In my case to study church congregations in 'edgy' neighbourhoods meant to observe and live with people whose cultural background was often quite similar to mine and who live in very familiar settings, but were part of rather unfamiliar groups and often built their life on particular exposed values that I did not necessarily share. As an agnostic who grew up in a rural context where

Christianity is culturally present and Christian organisations are a fundamental part of communal life, but where belief is not openly discussed or part of the everyday, practicing Christians and congregational life was more or less unfamiliar to me. Consequently, to be a participant observer in congregational life also meant being the estranged researcher in a home-like setting. In other words, my positionality was in a constant flux between being an insider and an outsider.

This had its effects on the fieldwork. The access to the field was very easy. In the urban contexts of this thesis, churches are semi-public spaces with open doors, literally and symbolically. During services and meeting hours church buildings are usually open. Most of the churches partaking in this study are, as briefly mentioned in the introduction, focused on attracting new members. Welcoming teams at the entrance usually recognise new faces and try to integrate them immediately before or after the service.

The further entrance into the congregations was started by addressing the pastor/vicar. The presentation of the general ideas of the study as well as my enquiries to participate in congregational life were almost always answered in a friendly and open way. Most pastors I approached were happy to take part in research activities and tried to integrate me in most of the everyday as well as extra-curricular activities. What was completely unknown to me when I started this study and always gave these first meetings a theological spin, is that my hometown area (Siegerland, Germany) is as well known in some English Christian circles for being part of the German bible-belt as it is in Germany.

However, deep involvement in the congregations also had its difficulties. Although it was generally easy to access people and get in touch with personally unknown congregants as they were almost always very interested in interviews, some people were suspicious and expressed a certain discomfort about my role. The main concerns were about the anonymity of my work as well as my own unclear Christian standpoint. Whereas it was easy to address the first question and guarantee anonymity, it wasn't always easy to exclude my personal, rather distanced thoughts on faith topics and to distance myself as a researcher from myself as an agnostic.

However, no one felt offended by my presence as a non-believer. This presented itself with a little more difficulty when participating in small groups (e.g. bible readings, sofa groups, splinter groups, etc). The weekly meetings with 10-12 people were either focused on bible readings and personal moments of faith, or about spending time with each other at people's homes. Whereas participation in these groups guaranteed a very deep and privileged insight into the logics of the congregations and group culture, it also exposed me personally in the sense that those groups are based on very honest

discussions about highly personal and often deeply sensitive experiences that are not necessarily related to faith. Whereas I never told people untrue things about my personal positions, I almost always held back my personal critical views about the substance of faith, even when asked directly. What seemed necessary and possible as a research tactic wasn't always easy to sustain in practice, as the people I spent so much time with in 'the field' could and probably would be my friends outside of the field (and some of them became close friends in the aftermath of this study). Not to give honest advice to a friend is not only difficult personally, but can also limit the researcher's commitment and range.

What I experienced in the course of this study was a constant change of position between being an insider and an outsider (Merriam et al 2001). Whereas my proximity with participants in terms of age as much as my class background made it easy to socialise with people in a colloquial manner and gain access to their everyday life, this proximity often vanished in religious reasonings and spiritual prayer settings due to a lack of practical knowledge or personal discomfort.

This had positive and negative effects on the data collection. On the one hand, the insider position made it easy to 'enter the field' and collect data that would have been hard to access otherwise. On the other hand, being an outsider particularly in spiritual and religious questions, enabled me to show more naivety and curiosity towards sensitive religious subjects. At the same time, this closed doors at times, as participants could interpret this curiosity as criticism or scepticism, which ended the conversation with some participants, whereas it led to new and sometimes unrelated topics with others.

## Choosing cases and collecting data

The very beginning of fieldwork was the identification of eligible organisations to work with. The role of religious organisations in the neighbourhoods of this study varies greatly and many different religious organisations are present. The cities are shaped by a growing diversity: mosques, synagogues, Hindu temples, Buddhist centres and a huge variety of established as much as free churches, all of them in various sizes and active on different scales, define the religious landscape of Neukölln, Kreuzberg, Hoxton and Bethnal Green.

During the orientation of what and who to study to gain control of the research interest, the review of literature on the role of religious organisations in neighbourhoods showed clear patterns. Immigrant religious organisations play an important role in the integration of people into a wider scope of society via the building of bonding and bridging social capital. This is true for Muslim

communities (Bertelsmann 2008, Eade and Garbin 2006, Peach and Gale 2003, Muessig and Stichs 2012, Kuppinger 2014), who represent the largest minorities in the areas of this study, as much as for immigrant churches (Ley 2008, Reimer et al 2016, Watson 2009, Knowles 2013).

However, immigrant religious organisations are good in fulfilling this role because they are often inwardly oriented towards their own groups, and less visible and less active in the area they are situated in.[12] As a consequence, their interactions and involvement in general welfare work is by far more difficult to trace than that of established Christian organisations. In the orientation phase of this study I met with several representatives of different religious communities in both research settings, which largely confirmed this. Furthermore, I was presented with open scepticism towards my research in most immigrant religious communities, which, besides language barriers, made it seem difficult to enter the field.

The decision to focus on church congregations was mainly driven by the hope that this would be a better fit with the research interest, but also for pragmatic reasons, as the field of churches presented me with easier access. Three characteristics were important in choosing the cases: the location in an inner-city area that was (academically and publicly) known for its dynamic changes and pressures of displacement; a relatively newly planted or re-started congregation with a growing numbers of members; and a deep involvement in neighbourhood activities. All the congregations that are part of this study are of Protestant/low-church Anglican descent and either belong to the Church of England, the Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands (Evangelical Church in Germany) or are Free Churches, usually within their own denomination.

In the early days of this research I strolled through different neighbourhoods in London and Berlin, visited about 3-5 churches in each neighbourhood and spoke to many pastors/vicars, congregants and church officials. The final decision for the cases present in this study was, apart from the characteristics mentioned above, partly pragmatic. As the plan was to visit three churches in each location a couple of times per week, it was necessary to choose churches that were located in the same boroughs or at least referred their work to neighbourhoods in relative proximity. Also, not every church was as agile from the inside as it presented itself from the outside.

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12 Reasons for this are mainly of structural nature: the lack of public acknowledgement, the historic grounding and deep entanglements of Christian organisations with German and English governments, in short, the deep-rootedness of Christianity and its institutions are among the main reasons for other religious institutions being under-represented in the public spaces of London and Berlin (Soper and Fetzer 2007, Meer 2012)

The actual fieldwork in the congregations took place between April 2013 and October 2014. I spent half of the time in London and Berlin respectively. The applied methods in this thesis follow a well-practiced repertoire of ethnographic studies to understand people and their lives as well as institutionalised social actors (Taylor 2002, Herbert 2000).

During the fieldwork I conducted in-depth interviews that lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Among the interviewees are clergy, active members of the congregations, church officials such as bishops or people working in the church administration, and local politicians and care workers. I participated in the everyday life of six congregations (three in London and three in Berlin) on weekends and during the week, including private celebrations and bible readings and a variety of welfare work organised by the congregations. I took extensive field notes mostly written after meetings/occasions or during religious ceremonies with a smartphone, and followed and partook in the congregations' digital communication via email-newsletters, Facebook and Instagram. Further material that is part of the study are numerous church visits outside of the six core case studies for comparative reasons, documents related to the churches or church/religion-related policy documents. In each context, I have been an active member of all six congregations for at least six months.

The main data corpus for the analysis comprises 106 interviews (54 in London, 52 in Berlin) I conducted in and around the congregations. The interviews were held in German and English and have been fully transcribed by me personally. The process of full transcription was the first part of the analysis, in which connections and boundaries, similarities and differences were identified and mapped in mind maps. In a second step, the material (transcripts, field notes, church documents) was coded, organised and analysed with MaxQDA, a well-established programme to organise large amounts of qualitative data (see Saldana 2009). The process of coding the data proceeded in multiple, primarily inductive steps: after a first cycle of descriptive and deductive auto-coding along key terms referring to the theoretical settings of the thesis, concrete geographical locations and social projects of the congregations, the data has been reviewed in two to three further cycles (depending on the relevance of codes in the first cycle) to create clusters and identify common themes and narratives as a last step. The final analyses, comparison and discussion of different data samples was then organised on this second or third level of coding.

The names of the churches and the interviews have been fully anonymised. Beyond the cities and areas of study, all churches and involved persons are referred to by an alias given by me, applying to the research ethics and code of conduct of King's College London and the 'Ethic-Kodex' of

the German Sociological Association. If people are quoted directly, they are referenced by a number that only identifies the setting (IPLxx for London and IPBxx for Berlin, IP = interview participant) and an alias, that refers to their position in the field in terms of gender and, if necessary, ethnicity. More information of their position in the research will be mentioned only as far as necessary for an understanding of the case they are part of.

# 3 Church and city

Before engaging more closely with the empirical material, this chapter aims to discuss more generally why and how churches actually matter in cities. It is argued that the churches' interactions with urban spaces in general and their role in urban policies enables and limits the everyday practices of church congregations as relevant neighbourhood organisations. This shows how churches are related to the broad social development of the areas of this study in London and Berlin. The second section of this chapter proposes a way to theoretically frame church congregations as neighbourhood organisations and productive settings of boundary work and mutual encounters of difference. It will be argued that churches, for the sake of this study, can best be understood as fields of power in the sense developed in Pierre Bourdieu's writings, which are embedded in and related to various other fields in urban sites. This finally prepares the theoretical grounds for the empirical chapters to follow.

## 3.1 Churches as neighbourhood organisations

The history of religious organisations and urban spaces is deeply intertwined. Until the formation of the secular European welfare state in the course of the 1800s, Christian organisations were the primary providers of social welfare and the main hubs for community formation. They represented a central pillar of the triad of urban public life consisting of the market place, town hall and church. The throne and the altar, regional powers and the power of the church, were each unthinkable without the other (Mumford 1961). With the beginning of industrialisation urban life in most of the large European cities exploded in every direction: industries settled down, millions of people moved to cities to work, and the main physical structure of cities like Berlin and London was being built. People moving to cities from rural regions belonged to denominations and the high demand for church spaces led to a vast growth in religious congregations and the building of new churches (Herden 1996). However, at the same time, churches started to lose their role as the primary social institution of the slowly industrialising societies. The unfolding of the social welfare state went hand in hand with the legal separation of state and

church as well as the establishment of different cultural anchors for the formation of community (Weber 1922).

This cursory shortcut through the last two centuries of history serves as an essential reminder of how churches as institutional bodies and local groups understand, communicate and impact the urban in general. In line with the rapid growth of urban areas during times of industrialisation, protestant Christianity developed a particular picture and narrative about the urban that is still prevalent today. "Social gospel", or "evangelical sociology" is thematically a predecessor of the Chicago School of urban sociology (Lindner 2004: 217) and in the large industrial agglomerations of North American cities, protestant social reformists viewed the urban as a densely populated place that, in its inner-cities, produced territories full of social disorder and crime (Wietschorke 2012). The city, in this reading, was primarily a social space where churches critiqued contemporary culture and simultaneously started to practice mission and evangelise. Christian social morality became more and more the antipode of the social disorders of modern urban life and therewith churches reformulated their own role as saviours of the urban ill (ibid.). During this period of rapid urbanisation and the beginnings of secularisation, Christian activities, mission and the 'healing' of social disorders in the city started to become one – firstly in North America and then, as these ideas travelled across the Atlantic, in Europe and in Germany and the UK in particular (Wietschorke 2012).

## Churches and urban policies

The historical and recent relations of established churches with urban development in London and Berlin is an important context in which to understand the practices of the congregations that are at the heart of this thesis. The involvement in policies of the urban is part of the institutional search for a place in secularising societies and simultaneously frames the practices of local congregations. The ways established state churches are involved in urban issues are quite different in the UK and in Germany, as are their perspectives on urban spaces. Today, both the Church of England and the Evangelical Church of Germany have a stance on most social issues in cities. Their way of expressing their perspectives is often in the form of working papers, press releases or opinion pieces in newspapers. In the past 30 years, four reports and programmes are particularly important if we are to understand their attitudes.

In "Faith in the City", published in 1985 (ACCUPA 1985), the Church of England published its first relevant report on Cities in the UK. In this extensive and influential report, the "Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas - ACCUPA" analysed the social conditions in British cities and

announced "A Call for Action by Church and Nation" (ibid.). The inner-cities in England were, by that time, characterised by disinvestment in social and physical infrastructures, increasing poverty and ongoing segregation of social groups (Flint 2010). London was known as the poorhouse and the economic centre of the country by that time (Imrie, Lees and Raco 2009: 6). Hence segregation was the main concern of the report: it harshly criticised the structural elements of deepened inequality and urban decay in inner cities, and accused the ruling Thatcher government of worsening this situation because its priorities lay not in cities for the people, but for profit (ACCUPA 1985: 3 f).

This straight-forward critique attracted a great deal of huge attention from the public. The ruling Conservative Party and members of the Thatcher government accused the Church of England of being misled, deeply Marxist and irresponsible (Dinham 2008). But the Church of England saw this open conflict with the government as a success, as it was now able to underline the role of the Church of England as an indispensable institution for offering the solution to these problems. The report concluded with 38 recommendations directed at the Church of England on how to foster institutional change and better address needs in urban areas, such as the identification of urban priority areas to better concentrate the churches' resources (ACCUPA 1985: 361ff). In the best tradition of the 'social gospel', the Church of England promoted its role as a moral institution with the mission to heal urban ills.

Further recommendations addressed to the government called for a revision of politics in the fields of housing, job creation and welfare provision. Besides the large amount of attention drawn to the Church of England and the fostering of local church communities, the most important concrete outcome of Faith in the City was the founding of the Church Urban Fund in 1987. The fund was created as a link between the critique on national urban policies and local church communities. Primarily designed to help local congregations set up projects to fight poverty, the Church Urban Fund provided clergy and their congregations with research on poverty, advice in the creation of projects, and funding to start social action (CuF 2013). Although the fund has very limited resources (3.8m GBP in 2014), its impact on local congregations has often been valued as highly important, as many churches are rarely able to start projects without additional funding from external resources. The creation and continuation of the fund is the most important legacy of Faith in the City.

The Church of England presented its continuing interest in urban issues by publishing a new report 20 years after Faith in the City. "Faithful Cities", published in 2006, promises to transfer the urban question for the Church into the new century and maintain its role as a critical commentator of urban issues (Archbishop's Council 2006). Although Faithful Cities critically remarks

that UK cities still have to deal with growing social exclusion and that "concerns about work-life balance" and "the politics of consumption and identity" must be taken more seriously by political actors, the report has a much less confrontational tone (Archbishops Council 2006: 12ff). Instead of criticising structural inequalities and current politics regarding the problems inner-cities in the UK have to face in this period, which would have been easy, Faithful Cities generally accepts existing logics of urban regeneration and emphasises the need to add the dimension of faith to these developments. Thus 20 years after the first report on urban issues the Church of England stepped back from its role of centrally critiquing the government and instead sought to increase its strength by filling societal niches with its spiritual offerings (Dinham 2008) (this reading becomes remarkably clear when comparing the subtitles of the two reports: from "a call for action by Church and Nation" to "a call for Celebration, Vision and Justice").

Although this dismissed the Church of England from its role as a critical contributor on contemporary urban grievances for some observers (Dinham 2008), one could also interpret this as a strategic tactic, since faith-based organisations were generally much more involved in central urban issues and much more integrated into welfare work by government programmes in 2006 than they had been 20 years before (Williams, Cloke and Thomas 2012). The role of FBOs in general and church congregations in inner-cities in particular became more central as the voluntary sector as such became more important in healing urban decay (Dierckx, Vranken, Kerstens 2009). This is reflected in the urban renewal programmes initiated by the New Labour government in the late 1990s. The New Deal for Communities (NDC, 2001-2010) and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, both launched in the early 2000s, focused on area-based urban renewal and followed a strategy of people-based regeneration, where the public, the private and the third sector were engaged to build alliances for the common good (DETR 2000).

The foundation of these programmes is the Urban White Paper, in which the government aimed for close alliances between local bodies and community organisations in order "to consult widely before drawing up Community Strategies" (DETR 2000). On the one hand, these programmes were intended to make life in the inner-cities more attractive, particularly to the middle classes, and hence make cities centres for knowledge economies (Colomb 2007). Yet, on the other hand, this conglomerate of urban renewal programmes strongly emphasised a communitarian perspective, in which community equalled a place-based gathering of people with shared values (Furbey and Macey 2005). Faith communities thus became an integral part of local government strategies, as they were seen as a "point of entry into involving the local community" and "a pragmatic approach" to gain access to

"some of the hardest to reach groups" (DETR 1997: 149, in Furbey and Macey 2005: 98).

This turn towards the promotion of faith communities puts church congregations in the midst of some of the most recent urban policies to alleviate poverty. What may provide churches with more political legitimation on the local level is equally problematic at the larger scale from at least two perspectives: on the one hand, faith communities in these accounts are framed as gatherings of people that deliver unquestionably positive services to the wider 'community' in a neighbourhood, the city, and the nation. On the other hand, this echoes the romantic notion of 'community' as understood in these policy programmes of urban renewal: the term 'community' is not understood in a congruent sense, but almost always implies strong social cohesion within a localised group of people, despite their factual internal incoherence (see Amin 2002: 971f). This idealistic and territorialised construction of 'communities' is considered highly problematic, particularly in neighbourhoods and cities that are characterised by increasing diversity rather than by imagined homogeneity (Rose 1996).

The territorialisation of urban policies has been part of a policy package enforced and financed by the European Union to support cities and regions in the transformation and regeneration of inner-city areas. Very similar area-based policies were introduced in Germany in 1999 with the launch of the programme "Neighbourhoods with Special Developments Needs – the Social City". Although different in its internal structure, the programme followed very similar objectives: to strengthen social coherence in neighbourhoods and to foster a sense of responsibility for the common good through the promotion of self-help initiatives and civil-society actors (SenStadtUm 2014: 8f).

The programme is organised slightly differently in the different federate states of Germany, but always represents a cooperation between the European Union, federal state ministers and the federate state (Bund-Länder-Programm). In Berlin, the central part of the programme is "Neighborhood Management (NM)". This programme serves to identify disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city to "promote social cohesion through involving residents in decision-making processes affecting their local neighborhood" (SenStadtUm 2015).

In each of the 36 neighbourhoods of Berlin in which the programme is active, the Neighbourhood Management consists of an office with professional staff to organise the programme and a neighbourhood council. The neighbourhood council is the heart of Neighbourhood Management. Its voluntary members are elected by the people living in the neighbourhood and thus ought to represent the local demography. The council decides the

funding of projects. Civil society organisations as well as housing organisations, local businesses, neighbourhood libraries and the like are approved to apply for funding. Religious groups and faith-based organisations can apply for project-related funding, but local faith groups in particular are not understood as an important counterpart for transmitting the programme to the local population as they have been in UK neighbourhood policies. Congregations in Berlin are a much less politically desirable partner for local politics than in London. The main reason is a much more religion-sceptical post-socialist history in the eastern part of the city that belonged to the GDR mixed with a political climate that is defined by strong secular values more than in other parts of Germany (Oestreicher 1993, Pickel 2013)

Apart from the local congregations, faith-based organisations in Berlin are strongly involved in the social well-being of neighbourhoods. The Social Welfare Organisation of the Protestant Church – Diakonie – as well as the German Caritas Associations operate day nurseries, old people's homes, and similar welfare-related programmes. They are an important part of the social infrastructure of neighbourhoods. Many of these programmes operate in partnership with local congregations; thus they are often indirectly interrelated, as members of neighbourhood congregations volunteer in FBOs and staff sometimes works for FBOs and congregations alike. The involvement of religious groups in neighbourhood activities is thus a lot more incidental and yet often deeper rooted in the social history of the neighbourhoods than is the case in the UK and London respectively. This is also reflected in the relatively quiet way the state churches engage with policies on urban regeneration. The social welfare organisations of the state churches (particularly the Social Welfare Organization of the Protestant Church - Diakonie) are, however, concerned about their involvement in urban issues in general, as their publications show.

A 2007 report focuses on the ways churches could become more closely involved with urban issues, local policies and the ways congregations can contribute to poverty alleviation in deprived neighbourhoods (Diakonie 2007). The Evangelical Church in Germany focused on similar topics with a working paper published in the same year. It seems worth mentioning that this is the only considerable commentary on urban issues to date. The paper titled "God in the City" (EKD 2007) focuses on perspectives of neighbourhood churches in the city. It interprets the current situation in German cities in a rather unspecific way as a proof of a slow resurgence of religion and deduces certain needs for the church from this finding. The report concludes that, as the churches had to deal with declining resources, it should start their search for new sources of income, focus more on networked groups than on the old parochial system and the church as an institution should have a concept of

how to address the city as a whole (EKD 2007: 61 ff). Although some general criticism of urban policies and cultural trends in urban societies forms part of these policy-related papers, they are oriented purely towards internal developments in the church and avoid commenting on the current political situation or problems concerning the wider public or extrinsic players, let alone the situation in particular urban environments (ibid).

A more practice-oriented initiative was started in 2012 by an ecumenical network of churches and the Federal Ministry for Transport, Building and Urban Development (since 2013 Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety). The network "The Church takes place in the City" (Kirche findet Stadt) creates and documents best-practice projects linking neighbourhood churches, Christian welfare organisations and other actors in neighbourhoods to create common projects together with local politics (Potz 2014). This fairly young initiative is mainly rooted in the churches' need to change the way they link their work to neighbourhoods in times of decreasing church membership. To date, there have been no results shared on how these new projects have developed in the neighbourhoods. But this initiative by the state churches received some attention in political arenas, as the federal state in its yearly report on urban development now interprets local congregations as "key actors in urban development"; "their strength is their strong commitment to the neighbourhood, its proximity to the residents and their needs" (Deutscher Bundestag 2013: 131).

To sum up, the various levels of involvement of the churches in national and local urban issues in the UK and in Germany paint a very diverse picture: whereas the Church of England has been involved politically and discussed urban issues from the church to the people and political actors for a long time, the Evangelical Church of Germany seems rather more occupied with internal reflections on how to deal with the changes in the society surrounding their institutional environment. Although this is no proof of the ways local congregations are concretely involved in their neighbourhoods, it shows how urban issues are discussed and how the larger institutions translate urban perceptions of the church and ideas of urban worlds brought forward by the churches. Whereas faith-based organisations are much more integrated into the German welfare system than those in the UK, the Church of England is much more keen to get involved in political issues surrounding the future of cities and structural inequality. To interpret this further, churches in the UK have for a long time held a very rigid idea of the urban as a place requiring churches to heal social ills, whereas the Evangelical Church in Germany has been relatively silent about their role in urban spaces, particularly in the recent past. These attitudes of the established churches on the national level have

strong impacts on the self-image of local congregations in London and Berlin, as will become clear in the empirical chapters that follow (> 4.1).[13]

## The role of organisations in cities

Urban change and processes of gentrification are, setting aside their global character, inherently related to small-scale local dynamics (Blokland 2009). Local dynamics, it is argued in this thesis, can best be understood through the perspective of neighbourhood organisations and the ways they shape and are shaped by urban changes. This follows claims against 'neighbourhoods' as a level of analysis. As several studies show (i.e. Lupton 2003), the statistical unit of a neighbourhood is not necessarily congruent with people's lifeworlds, as social relations are not bound to a neighbourhood, nor are practices determined by spatial categories. This does not deny the possibility of accumulative effects of disadvantage in a neighbourhood, which many studies have shown (e.g. Sampson 2012). But a focus on the neighbourhood-level inevitably fails to take settings into account, where crucial interactions between people with different lifeworlds, with a different habitus, can occur (Allard and Small 2013: 9).

Instead of researching neighbourhoods, it is argued that a focus on the organisational realm *within* neighbourhoods promises a more subtle way of understanding the ways social mix works in everyday life. Organisations are generally understood as settings where people concretely engage in the local arena. From a conceptional perspective, organisations are the intermediaries between the individual and the neighbourhood, a "medium through which systemic processes reach the street corner…and they are settings in which neighbourhood social integration is produced in interaction" (McQuarrie & Marwell 2009: 257). Organisations foster negotiations about the everyday and the crossing of individual life paths. As an interface, they partner local experiences and perceptions with extra-local institutional environments such as politics on the level of the city or nationally (Allard and Small 2013, Marwell and McQuarrie 2013). Neighbourhood organisations are not only central to understanding how people are affected by neighbourhood changes and displacement, but also how to get through it and stay put.

Neighbourhood organisations are not new to the study of cities. Organisations have mainly been studied in either a micro perspective of social

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[13] The development of church congregations between growth of individual congregations and shrinkage in terms of church membership is part of the discussion of empirical material in chapter 4.

integration or in a macro perspective of structural questions involving urban spaces. The social-integrationist paradigm reaches back to the early days of the Chicago School. Organisations were understood as central to integrating people into the fast-growing and industrialising urban societies of North America in the early 20th century. Neighbourhoods, were understood as the natural habitat of ethnic groups, stemming from competition between different ethnicities in the city.

Within this socio-ecological perspective, cultural differences were understood as territorially fixed in a neighbourhood and the forms of social organisation were mainly congruent with the population's composition (Park 1915, Tonkiss 2005). Following this theoretical position, different organisational forms such as ethnic or religious organisations would only emerge in neighbourhoods where a certain ethnicity or religious group was represented (Park 1915, Burgess 1925, Olivera 2015).

What remains unclear in this paradigm is how organisations are produced and in what ways they are socially productive. However, this purely functional view of organisations for micro-level integration has been dominant in recent studies on the urban disadvantaged and thus very influential for urban policy makers (Blokland 2003, Tonkiss 2005).

This is mainly because of their assumed function as spaces of accumulative social capital as understood by Robert Putnam (1995). Putnam's social capital is grounded in the Chicago School. He argued, that a decline in membership of voluntary organisations equals a decline of social integration into society as a whole (ibid.). The underlying assumption is that civic engagement results per se in social integration, by which a more connected society with benefits for less privileged groups is hoped for.

Since the early 2000s these assumptions have been reflected in urban policies in Europe as a basis to create policies that sought to strengthen social capital in neighbourhoods that were not doing well on a statistical level (e.g. the above-mentioned EU-wide neighbourhood renewal programmes). The political hope of such programmes was that the promotion of civic engagement (in organisations) in these neighbourhoods would create ties among different neighbourhood groups and thereby help to cross social boundaries and improve the statistical indicators for the alleviation of poverty (Blokland/Savage 2008).[14] Whenever political actors and urban policies class church congregations as important neighbourhood organisations, they do so in the sense of this social-integrationist paradigm (> 6).

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[14] This affects church congregations in London in particular, as they gain a lot of visibility though such programmes and have the chance to connect with other institutions (> 6).

Perspectives from urban political economy, on the contrary, see organisations primarily as products of wider institutional arrangements in societies. They are "determined by either the needs of class conflict or the needs of capital accumulation" (McQuarrie & Marwell 2009: 254). In a merely functional manner, urban political economy views organisations as dominated by institutional logics outside the organisation itself and its local embeddedness.

This systemic view of domination is also problematic, as it fails to understand and thus fails to recognise that organisations are locally embedded and systemically connected at the same time (Vaughan 2008). This shows that organisations are reflected in urban studies, but have a rather subsidiary role in the two main paradigms (integrationist approaches in the Chicagoan heritage and urban political economy, in the broadest sense).

Organisational studies, in contrast, view organisations as dynamic and actively produced on the meso-level (DiMaggio 1998). Organisations are understood as parts of a wider institutional field, as they are embedded in institutional environments that reach beyond local specificities. But they also provide spaces that stimulate localised social contexts built from interpersonal interactions within them.

Their involvement in larger institutional environments create and foster relations between the micro- and the macro-level. The impact of organisational practices is always two-way: they impact the macro-level of the larger institutional arrangements as much as the relations on the micro-level. Through these relations organisations function as brokers of resources between organisations and people. However, those relations are shaped and sometimes dominated by power and a certain 'mode of authority', as practices in organisational realms are shaped by the larger institutional environments they are embedded in. This is particularly important in the context of this study, as the denominational belonging of church congregations is often loaded with ethical and spiritual authority that stems from cultural traditions of centuries-old religious institutions.

The "organisational duality" between systemic and individual accounts is the starting point for scrutinising relational urban processes: organisations "are active producers of both themselves and other societal elements via their interactions with the organisational, institutional, and geographic settings in which they operate" (Marwell and McQuarrie 2013: 131). This duality is an important characteristic of organisations in a local arena that makes it a subtle way of looking at how boundaries between people are crossed and installed under the impact of rapid neighbourhood changes and the ways they contribute to increased links between the people and the wider economic as well as political processes (Marwell 2008: 24 ff). The forms of organisations

fulfilling this role in neighbourhoods are various. Schools and childcare organisations, pubs, sports clubs and other leisure-oriented activities, as well as church congregations, take over important roles as mediators in gentrification processes.


## Church congregations as neighbourhood organisations

Church congregations are neighbourhood organisations in this sense. They are often compared to voluntary organisations, since most of their members work voluntarily and only a minority of staff are paid (Cnaan and Curtis 2013). But they are also different to other voluntary organisations, particularly regarding their institutional involvement. Local churches usually belong to a national and/or international church community which links them to a larger net of political actors from civic institutions from the global to the national and the local level. Simultaneously, congregations belong to a larger institutional field of Christian churches (e.g. The Church of England or the EKD-Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands), which itself is framed by public perceptions about religious actors in general and institutional values in particular. They are further characterised by close political as well as cultural relations on a national and local level. The conduit of transmission between the wider field of the church on the national level and the people in a congregation is the local organisation as such.

There are further significant differences that distinguish church congregations from secular voluntary organisations (Harris 1998). Most importantly, the hierarchies and the role of paid employees is very different. Any leader of a church has a significantly different role from that of a leader of a comparable secular organisation. Beyond their organisational role, their occupation is bestowed with authority linked to their religious role as a spiritual leader in the congregation. More than in other organisations, pastors are crucial actors for the relation between the congregation and its wider organisational environment. Whereas for lay people, the congregation is a place that needs to be protected against external influences, pastors often have to be focused on both, to serve a parish and lead the congregation as well as to fulfil organisational demands on the extra-local level at the same time. As a consequence, power struggles between clergy and lay people are much more common in congregations then they are in similar secular organisations (Harris 1998: 609).

The 'natural' habitat to study congregations has for a long time been congregational studies, a subfield of religious studies. This strand of research has been particularly active in North America and the UK. But, as Woodhead et al (2004) show, most of the work since the 1970s has either been

conducted from an "intrinsic" or an "extrinsic" point of view. Congregations in this sense have usually been portrayed as given and static entities. Besides very few examples, to which I will refer more extensively in the empirical chapters, studies that frame congregations as neighbourhood organisations conceptually are rare.

This study aims to understand church congregations beyond their role as organisations to promote Christian faith, as places that are made for people to meet others and to become engaged in local issues. As the next section shows, church congregations in their role as neighbourhood organisations are places where cultural boundaries are not only maintained, but questioned and crossed. Encounters with others, with people that are not necessarily part of tight homogenous friendship communities, is 'compulsory' in church congregations, as the meeting of different people in churches is not by accident as in public spaces, but curated by a mutual engagement. Hence, church congregations as neighbourhood organisations can function as "micropublics" that enhance "moments of cultural destabilisation, offering individuals the chance to break out of fixed relations and fixed notions, and through this, to learn to become different through new patterns of social integration" (Amin 2002: 970).

## 3.2 Churches as fields of boundary work

This sub-chapter aims to develop an elaborate theoretical vocabulary that makes it easier to access the functioning of church congregations on the micro-level, but that is not the church's own. This helps us better understand church congregations as 'micropublics' and fields of boundary work. It also helps develop an order for the empirical material. To develop a theoretical concept at this point of the thesis should also reveal a better understanding of 'doing church' as a particular form of urban practice.

The theorisation of the working of organisations in the ways described above has recently been explored convincingly by others with field theory as developed in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (Savage 2011, Rodgers 2013, Vaughan 2008, Emirbayer and Johnson 2008). Scholars from urban studies have also become increasingly engaged with field-theory in the Bourdieusian sense to elaborate more nuanced studies about the relation between physical and social space (Watt 2008, Hanquinet, Savage and Callier 2012, Savage 2011).

'Field' in a general sense refers to a domain in which activities occur; it is a metaphor for a social space and the negotiation of relations. The basic theoretical idea of a field is that its boundaries are definable and that practices within these boundaries follow certain rules and logics that define the relations between the different actors belonging to the field as well as their individual positions (Hailers and Mangez 2015: 6f). Field theory in this sense doesn't necessarily equal the formalised boundaries of an organisation. A field first and foremost represents a construct to help sort the observed world into a separate layer and make the struggles that occur in and in between fields more visible.

What may sound tautological at first is at the very heart of relational thinking: real power struggles that are happening in the field create its boundaries. They are not pre-given, but rather the result of empirical investigations (Rehbein and Saalmann 2009: 99ff). Importantly for the field of urban studies, field theory points out that it is social fields that matter concretely and that the struggles over positions cannot necessarily be marked in the physical urban landscape itself. This is a straightforward critique of Chicago School thinking, where physical spaces were understood as deterministic to the social. In contrast, field theory offers a way to understand "physical space as the concretisation of social space" (Hanqinet et al 2012: 513).

## Field theory

To understand field-theory in the light of practices of church congregations in settings of urban change, three basic characteristics about fields are relevant: (1) the substance of a field, (2) the logics of the organisation of fields and (3) the ways they change. The following paragraphs will briefly discuss each characteristic and introduce some of the basic Bourdeusian vocabularies.

(1) A field is "a relatively autonomous domain of activity that responds to rules of functioning" (Hilgers and Mangez 2015: 6). Fields don't exist in isolation; they are relational in the sense that they are dependent on other fields; fields structure fields and are structured by fields. A field is a social space, where actors follow field-specific rules. A very common metaphor compares fields to games. Players are those who have the knowledge about the basic rules that need to be followed to keep the game going. The game ends where other rules apply. Correspondingly the boundaries of a field end where the strengths of a field stop having an effect. Similarly to a game, actors occupy different positions in fields. A field in this sense is a "network…of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97).

Within the scope of the analyses of a field are questions relating to how the positions in a field evolve, how they relate to each other and what it takes to hold or change a certain position, i.e. how movement and dynamics in a field occur.

The field of religion represents a more or less autonomous field in the above-mentioned sense. But it also consists of sub-fields and is part of a larger environment of fields, which it relationally depends upon. Those other fields may be defined by organisational boundaries like a church congregation, or they may be a lot more abstract, for example by the field of urban politics in the UK or the field of housing in Berlin. Doing church as an urban practice means that its activities are structured by and structuring its various field relationships. In Bourdieu's relational thinking, a stringent use of concepts is less important than the creative use of theory. Accordingly, a 'field' can be taken as a metaphor for the general understanding of societies as differentiated by the social spaces of power struggles (Rehbein and Saalmann 2009: 99ff). Power struggles occur on fields where those involved know about the rules and seek certain goals.

(2) The organisation of a field at a certain time is the result of a history of struggles between different positions (Thomson 2012). Fields are social spaces and are generally structured by conditions of possibility, which Bourdieu summarises as *habitus*. The participation of actors in the field follow, on the one hand, presuppositions that are an integral part of people's practices; they are unquestioned self-evident relations (*doxa* is Bourdieu's term, Koller 2009). People participate in a game/field and play by the rules because they have learned to do so, having incorporated the basic rules. But, the social world is, as stated above, defined by power struggles on various levels. Which is why, on the other hand, the organisation of a field is also the result of the volume and the structure of available resources. This is what defines the position an actor is able to take in a specific field (Hailers and Mangez 2015: 10ff). Whereas the *doxa* directs an actor in a certain position, the available resources, the *capitals* at play, are the crucial currencies for changes in the form of position-takings.

Resources are understood as capitals; they can be invested and exchanged. Field structures must be interpreted as the result of successful strategies to use accumulated capital to occupy desirable positions in a field accordingly. Beyond the well-known forms of social, symbolic and economic capital, field-specific capitals are decisive for the structural order of a field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 98ff). Considering the field of a church congregation, spiritual or religious capital may be an important resource to change one's position in a field, e.g. to become more present in church

activities and gain new resources. How capitals work in this sense, and the ways field-specific capitals relate to other forms of capital, will be explored further below.

(3) The organisation of a field also defines the dynamics occurring inside the field. Bourdieu's sociological project is centred on the reproduction of social structures. The absence of sociocultural change has often been criticised by others (Dillon 2001, Hallett 2003, Savage and Silva 2013). Considering the concepts of *habitus* and *capital* alone, this judgement seems reasonable, as both terms are by tendency deterministic to social structures (Hardy 2012). But as recent discussions show, change has been a decisive part of the basic theoretical vocabulary, although it may not have been central in Bourdieu's research topics (Hilgers and Mangez 2015, Hardy 2012). As the core of this thesis is about changing urban spaces as well as the changes in church congregations, the theoretical grounding of socio-structural change is seemingly an important characteristic of social theory at this point.

In field theory, social space is a hierarchical space and fields consist of dominant and dominated positions (Hilgers and Mangez 2015). Actors take over positions due to their habitual practices, following their pathways, doing what they are supposed to according to their incorporated history of social relations, their *habitus* (Hardy 2012: 127f). In this sense, *habitus* and *fields* are ideally matched' they correspond. But characteristics of fields are changing constantly on every possible level, be it the language within a field, the occurrence of new actors or new unknown positions. When structural change occurs, a mismatch between *habitus* and field, between the cognitive and the objective structure results. Actors don't necessarily realise changes and their maladjustment to the field they belong to. This relationship between change and the "nature of habitus" is what Bourdieu captures with the technical term *hysteresis*:

> The presence of the past in this kind of false anticipation of the future performed by the *habitus* is, paradoxically, most clearly seen when the sense of the probable future is belied and when dispositions ill-adjusted to the objective chances because of a hysteresis effect are negatively sanctioned because the environment they actually encounter is too different from the one to which they are objectively adjusted (Bourdieu 1990: 62ff)

The *hysteresis* is the locus of sociocultural change, because the maladjustment of individual actors as well as groups can be the source of an adaptation as well as a revolt. The habitual reaction to change may vary from freezing in maladjustment to strong conflicts between individuals or groups

(Sunderland 2009). This theoretical model of change can explain why some fields are seemingly resistant to changing environments and why individual actors or groups of actors are sometimes far ahead of the structure and therewith become innovators and transform a field (Hailers and Mangez 2015). Founders of new churches, ministers who 'plant' a new congregation may be considered as such innovators in the field of churches. Their ability to create change within institutional boundaries highly affects how local congregations impact sociocultural changes in the immediate environment.

In line with the focus on the reproduction of social structures, Bourdieu was mainly concerned with the ways people with high volumes of (general or field-related) capitals profit from structural changes, as their *habitus* makes it more likely to realise and react to changing environments. In this logic of reproduction, established actors are always much more likely to succeed in preserving established orders. But the reordering of fields takes place due to alliances between positions that are grounded in a homology of positions, and those alliances can be formed between different social positions (Hilgers and Mangez 2015: 13f).

As stated above, fields are hierarchically structured social spaces with dominated and dominant positions. A given field structure is the relative order between those different positions in a field. External or internal changes apply new rules to a field, which may result in new alliances. Alliances between two dominated positions are much more likely to consolidate a field. Imagining for example economic cartels or party politics, it seems very likely that those who best apply their dominance to new alliances with other dominating actors do so to conserve a given order.

However, alliances may also be installed between dominated actors who are interested in transforming a structure. This applies not only to the domination within a field, but also to the domination by external factors. An actor dominant in one field may be dominated by external changes in another. This external domination is the central precondition for an alliance with the dominated in their own field, which is crucial for the transformation of a field (Hilgers and Mangez 2015: 13f).

Imagining a church congregation as the field or sub-field of religion and declining church memberships as the external change, this change may be seen as an external structural change in the more general field of urban change, which is closely related to the field of churches. This change may put a church minister in a dominated position in relation to the external changes, but within the church the actor remains in a dominant position due to his exposed role as a leading figure. The threat the church congregation faces due to declining church memberships may create a stronger alliance between the church minister and congregants. This can be the basis for both

consolidation and transformation. Hence, such external changes can lead to new alliances as well as boundaries within the field in question and, conversely, the field-internal changes are likely to form a strong bases for influencing neighbouring fields.

In sum, field theory is a theoretically sound way to understand church congregations as fields of power within other related fields. It allows the researcher to scrutinise the order of fields through the position of actors in the field and analyse the position changes of individuals and boundary changes within and between fields. It further sheds light on field relations and how external changes can influence and change field structures. This basic vocabulary helps us understand the contemporary relations between churches and inner-city neighbourhoods characterised by rapid changes and pressures of gentrification.

## Church congregations and the field of religion

Field theory as developed by Bourdieu in the course of his many writings is far from a closed theoretical concept and not without contradictions. Important critiques focus on the structural ambivalences of fields, as it remains unclear whether fields are more defined by external structures or the rules within them and if fields outside of power struggles exist at all (Rehbein and Salmon 2009: 102).

Another fundamental critique concerns the scale of a field. In Bourdieu's ouevre this ranges from very concrete fields such as the artistic field to very general fields of power (Bourdieu 2007: 87f, 1998: 83f). This conceptual openness (or lack of clarity) leads, on the one hand, to a focus on the substances of fields as defined by the range of their impact. But it also leads to a huge variety of work that is not only focused on one field of social activities but in the overlap of fields with other fields and their embeddedness in similar as well as very different fields (Townley 2014, Rey 2007).

These shortcomings are also present in the field of religion. Writings on religions are quite limited in Bourdieu's studies and his understanding of how societies work. The basic understanding is that religions in the modern secular world generally decline, but still play an important role as morally authoritative institutions that influence economic as well as political fields (Verter 2003, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 95). Bourdieu demonstrates "how institutional religion seeks to monopolise the religious field by imposing on the laity an 'orthodox' worldview and by denouncing any alternative worldviews" (Rey 2007: 57).

From the perspective of contemporary urban studies, Bourdieu's reference points to religion are difficult, as he mainly referred to French Catholicism as observed in the 1970s and the Kabyle people in rural Algeria. His understanding of religion, accordingly, was primarily characterised by authoritative hierarchies between laypeople and clergy (Bourdieu 2007: 150f), where the only religiously productive actors were religious professionals, for example ministers and pastors (Engler 2003, Verter 2003). The members of a congregation were given no productive role in the formation and changes of the religious field, nor was the religious field itself connected or influential to its surrounding fields (McKinnon et al 2011). This view is shortsighted, as it limits the position of lay people in the religious field as predetermined and static and furthermore contradicts Bourdieu's own writings on the basics of a field (Verter 2003).

Accordingly, Bourdieu's model of the religious field seems too limited in the understanding of the working of religion in societies and congregational life of contemporary postindustrial societies (Furseth 2009). In the context of this study, which focuses on congregants and church-related fields, the religious field as thought of in Bourdieu's original account seems only partially helpful in framing the empirical fields of this study, which should be the primary aim of applying theory to data.

However, the religious field as framed by Bourdieu is important in the further unfolding of this study as an abstract field with concrete sub-fields as the core fields of interest. As should be clear from the theoretical discussion above, organisational boundaries and field boundaries are not necessarily congruent. Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) argue that field theory applied to organisational studies can result in both a perspective on organisations in fields and on organisations as fields. This is rather a conscious decision about the construction of the areas of research than an either/or question.

In this study both framings of organisations are relevant: organisations (e.g. church congregations) as embedded in and impacted by their surrounding fields (as fields structure fields and are structured by fields) as well as organisations as a field. Church congregations are, more than other organisations, strongly defined by their organisational boundaries and the strengths of the field may be congruent with the formal boundaries of the organisation, but church congregations are also highly influenced by external fields and impact related fields.


## Five empirical fields

The organisational fields relating to religious organisations and urban change are divided into various fields that are connected by their forming

participants and institutions (see Verter 2003, Gamsu 2016: 2924). Five religious fields of activity are relevant to sort the empirical material of this study:

*(1) Church congregations*. As the aim of this study is to show how church congregations as organisations in urban areas contribute to and moderate urban change, the central sub-field is the congregation itself. Taking a single organisation as a field is helpful to understanding the structural powers that dominate sub-fields as well as to order the cultural ability of actors and institutions to change a field (Emirbayer and Johnson 2008: 22ff). Religious organisations in particular are often sub-fields of their own, as the logics of practice and the capital structure participants or institutions need to maintain or enhance positions can differ from those employed in other similar organisations. Church congregations in general are quite unique organisations, as local congregations often maintain a well-attuned subcultural way of doing church and organising their community (Cimino 2013). This is the field where struggles about the dominance of and relations between forms of cultural, spiritual, social and economic capital take place on the most obvious and concrete level.

*(2) Denominations.* Congregations are, however, doing church in similar ways as they are part of denominations and networks of churches. Hence, they are part of and influenced by denominational fields with their own logics and capital structures. This might be an established church such as the Church of England or the Evangelical Church in Germany, or belonging to a smaller but highly influential network like the New York-based Redeemer City to City Church, or an internationally operating megachurch like Hillsong, Saddleback or Vineyard. Local Congregations are often attracted and strongly influenced by a variety of denominational backgrounds and other church networks. This influences the way of doing church in the local arena and translates concepts of a wider denominational descent to a local setting.

*(3) Churches in local urban environments (churches in London/Berlin).* The third field that is influenced by churches and influential to both of the subfields – the church congregations and the denominations – is the urban context churches are situated in. The unique historical and contemporary structures of churches in London and Berlin are an influential and yet more abstract field. Within this field the local power games between churches and position-takings are most clearly articulated, as actors (particularly the clergy) and organisations (e.g. different denominations) are often in an open competition about 'bums on pews'. This competitiveness is influential for the congregations since it directs their programmatic ways of doing church as well as their relations to their denominations. As these power-plays between church congregations occur beyond denominational boundaries, it seems to

make sense to articulate a separate field of churches in their urban environment.

*(4) Religion.* Directly related to this field is the wider field of religion in the two cities. Both the more contextual field of churches in the city as well as the field of religions in the city are legitimate fields of power struggles between different religious actors and institutions and between different political, cultural, economic actors and organisations and religious actors. From a historical perspective, the religious field is the field where the legitimacy of religions in secularising environments is contested and fought over. Analogously to Bourdieu's concept of the religious field exemplified above, it is a field that surges for authoritative influence inside its own sub-fields as it aims to monopolise a worldview. In secular times, however, it is also generally declining with pockets of steady growth only in certain contexts. Hence, however abstract this field, it is clearly definable and as a theoretical construct the most important field to situate the struggles of churches to survive in urban gentrifying contexts.

*(5) Urban change/gentrification.* The most abstract field is the field of urban change and gentrification. Similarly to other fields, gentrification consists of relationships, practices and historical traces, where the value of cultural capital is of particular interest (Ley 2003). However, as others have argued, gentrification can also more broadly be understood as a field of general cultural opposition (Hanquinet et al 2012: 510). This field is similar to what Bourdieu framed as the general field of power, as it structurally influences the other four fields mentioned above. However, the field of urban change is strongly influenced at the local level by the related sub-fields, local church congregations in particular. The historical constellations of actors and institutions and the structure of capitals in and between those more abstract fields of urban change and religion vary greatly from context to context and this is one reason that explains the different outcomes of religious vitality in London and Berlin. What that looks like exactly in the local settings in this research will be central in the empirical chapters that follow.

## Forms of capitals and boundaries

Conceptually, fields are shells with activities occurring inside and across their borders. They set the frame and as a whole produce rules for practices occurring inside and among them. But the term 'field' doesn't capture what actually moves inside the shell and it doesn't help to understand how different positions and hierarchies in fields actually come into the world. For a nuanced understanding of the internal and external dynamics of fields, the movable interior of fields needs greater theoretical reflection in advance of the empirical

chapters. As shown above, the order and dynamics of fields and their (changing) relations to other fields are regulated by the structure and volume of actors' resources. Resources put actors in positions and enable or disable position-takings. Resources appear in the social spaces as different forms of capitals, again a central pillar of Bourdieu's work (Rehbein and Saalmann 2009).

*Capital* conceptually captures all resources that are valuable in social relations and their transformations. The value of a form of capital is not the same in each field. In two different fields a different value may apply to the same resource and a different structure of capitals may be required to evaluate or change a position or to enter a field (e.g. to become an accepted member of a congregation). Two main forms of capital can be distinguished:[15] economic capital and symbolic capital (Moore 2012: 98ff). The first appears in a general and one-dimensional way, but the latter can take on various forms, e.g. cultural capital, social capital, religious and spiritual capital, literary or residential capital (Bourdieu 1986, Verter 2003, Dirksmeier 2010). Capital is generally convertible. Most forms of capital are able to be exchanged or transferred into most other forms of capital.

The main difference between economic and symbolic capital lies in the process of conversion. Economic capital can instrumentally be exchanged in one's self-interest, and this is usually done in a more or less transparent way. For example, it is generally acknowledged that money can buy goods and services and that a greater amount of money will buy a greater amount of goods and services. Economic capital in such a mercantile sense has no intrinsic value. In contrast, although forms of symbolic capital can also be exchanged directly, they usually deny this very function and proclaim to have an intrinsic value instead. Following Bourdieu, this important characteristic unites the various forms of symbolic capital and carries a symbolic violence, as the misrecognition of its structural function establishes hierarchies of discrimination between the holders of different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1977). Therefore, the unequally distributed structure and volume of capitals lead to hierarchies and social boundaries, without recognition and transparency (Moore 2012: 100f). "Symbolic capital is any property when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception which

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[15] It should be noted that the distinction and sorting of capitals is not stringent in Bourdieu's work. In The Forms of Capital (1986), he distinguishes economic, cultural and social capital as the main forms of capital, and barely mentions symbol capital. In Logic of Practice (1990) symbolic capital is the main opposition to economic capital, as exemplified in this work. For the sake of my argument and the overall narrative, I refer to Moore's (2012) interpretation of Bourdieu's work, which I also find the most convincing and coherent distinction.

cause them to know it and to recognise it, to give it value" (Bourdieu 1998: 47).

What does this concept of capitals help to explain in the course of this research? It firstly shows that practices have an instrumental character, as the possession and dispossession of symbolic capital directly creates social or cultural advantage or disadvantage (Bourdieu 1977: 80f). This very basic mechanism of capitals is of great analytical value for the fields in this research, as it helps to trace field dynamics, as I will show further on.

But a second general mechanism of capitals needs further reflection. As the main idea behind Bourdieu's social theory relates to mechanisms of social reproduction, capitals understood in the above way makes them homologous to economic capital, as the deployment of capital leads to a reproduction of social structures. Holders of dominant positions attain and retain these positions by legitimising their own cultural tastes as superior. This imperative of social reproduction is a central matter of critique, as it shows a high potential for the economic determinism of social structures (Rehbein and Saalmann 2009: 139). Some argued, that Bourdieu's perspective on the French culture is the main aspect why mechanisms for social change simply don't occur (ibid.).

However far such an argument centred on ideas of a national culture reaches, the core of the critique against the automatic reproduction of social structures seems valuable regarding studies from other contexts. Studies in a North American context point out that people and groups in dominant positions are not necessarily working exclusively on the reproduction of their status, but that symbolic and cultural boundaries are often much more permeable and that field-specific cultural capitals, for example certain tastes and morals, may also bridge social boundaries (Lamont 1992, Lamont and Molnar 2002).

Hence (social) boundaries are a sensible conceptual add-on to the study of capitals in fields, as boundaries more clearly emphasise the relational character of social structures than a perspective on volume and forms of capitals in a strictly Bourdieusian sense. The study of boundaries sets a stronger focus on the dynamic and relational production of symbolic distinctions and social forms, whereas capital is a way to describe the concrete resources that are mobilised to install, re-work, cross, or break down these boundaries. Symbolic and social boundaries have different attributes, however:

> Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorise objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality....Social boundaries are objectified forms of social

differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources and social opportunities. (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 168)

It is important to note that symbolic boundaries become social boundaries (e.g. boundaries between social classes) once mutually agreed upon, i.e. as soon as the understanding of certain practices reaches similar levels of interpretation. However, symbolic boundaries can, in analogy to symbolic capital, appear in various forms, for instance moral, cultural and socio-economic boundaries (Lamont 1992: 4). For the study of the related fields as mentioned above, capitals and boundaries are understood in this thesis as an inseparable pair of tools for investigation. How they appear in the fields that are relevant in this study will be explored further in the next section.


## Boundaries at work: capitals at play in church congregations

Capitals and boundaries may appear in a general sense as well as in a field-specific sense. Similarly to capitals, which have different values in different fields, certain boundaries have different effects in different fields. So what are the relevant capitals at work regarding church congregations and their related fields? General forms of capital that also apply to the study of church congregations are social and cultural capital. Both forms of capital are mainly symbolic in the sense that within the field in question, the possession of social capital or certain forms of cultural capital are commonly acknowledged and valued (Bourdieu 1998: 47).

*Social capital* has been defined very differently over time, but remaining with Bourdieu, it captures "the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu 1986: 21). Social capital doesn't only mean the connections one can materialise, but also the potential resources an actor may be able to mobilise due to his membership in a certain group, which can be institutionalised by a certain family name, a school, a party or a religious group (ibid.). Social capital is often discussed as more valuable than other forms of capital, as its reproduction as well as its appropriation demands a great effort of sociability. But compared to certain forms of cultural capital, it is possible for actors to gain social capital through labour. The employment of social capital in these symbolic forms leads to forms of symbolic boundaries that are likely to become social boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002).

*Cultural capital* is more subtle and appears in a variety of different states that are deeply connected and determined by one another. In its *objectified* state, cultural capital appears as cultural goods such as books, pictures,

phones or clothes (Bourdieu 1986: 17). Cultural capital also exists in an *embodied* state, which is similar to but not entirely the same as a *habitual* state of cultural capital. In the embodied state, cultural capital contains the incorporated (cultural) principles of a field, which include subtle "principles of consciousness in predispositions and propensities and in physical features such as body language, stances intonation and lifestyle choices" (Moore 2012: 102f).

The formations of an actor's *habitus* is closely linked with the embodied state of cultural capital, although it has no direct material expression and only shows itself in the realisation of practices that show the habitual attitudes and dispositions. As mentioned above, *habitus* is the place where the 'rules of the game' that apply to a field are registered. Its compliance is seemingly effortless for those who possess the right capitals. The same is true for cultural capital in its most acknowledged form, as *institutionalised* cultural capital. Institutionalised cultural capital mainly appears in the form of commonly acknowledged and legally guaranteed qualifications such as academic education (Bourdieu 1986: 20). It should be noted that all three states of cultural capital (embodied, institutionalised and objectified) often coincide in one habitual expression.

Social capital and cultural capital are the very general forms of capital that matter to a variety of expressions in every field of research, also in the fields relevant to this study. But as an important addition to those capitals mentioned above, *field-specific capitals* are relevant to an understanding of the dynamics within and beyond fields and the resources that count in position-takings within these fields.

The field-specific capital in Bourdieu's religious field is religious capital. This is conceptually linked to social capital and only poorly related to other forms of capital. But as claimed above, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the religious field is poor and problematic, as the only actors who possess legitimate positions in his view are religious professionals employed by the church (above all priests).

Religious capital in a Bourdieusian sense appears in the form of "religious symbolic systems (myths and ideologies)…and religious competences (mastery of specific practices and bodies of knowledge)", and it can only be accumulated within a very narrow religious system but is of no value outside the religious field (Verter 2003: 157).[16] This fails to recognise the power of the laity and other people who stand outside the church but still influence the

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16 Furthermore, religious capital only exists to monopolise the church as the possessor of religious capital, as only "authorised producers and distributors of the sacred" (i.e. priests) are eligible to supply religious capital (ibid.)

religious field. Thus the crucial question Bourdieu does not theorise within his perspective on religious fields and religious capital, is "how religious habits might affect social dynamics" beyond the institutionalised religious field and within the laity (ibid.). Accordingly, understanding religious capital in the narrow sense as initially described by Bourdieu does not help reveal any links with other fields religious people might participate in and who might be influenced by religious or other affiliated forms of capital. Religious capital, then, does not seem an appropriate way of theorising the resources at stake in the above-mentioned fields of interest.

As a contrast to religious capital, Verter conceptualises spiritual dispositions as a form of cultural capital and not social capital: "spiritual knowledge, competencies, and preferences may be understood as valuable assets in the economy of symbolic goods" (Verter 2003: 152). This is different to the way Bourdieu's religious capital works: "If religious capital is conceived *a la* Bourdieu as something that is produced and accumulated within a hierocratic institutional framework, spiritual capital may be regarded as a more widely diffused commodity, governed by more complex patterns of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption" (p. 158).

Hence, *spiritual capital* is more sensitive for the theorisation of the practices of the various actors involved in congregational life and associated fields. Like cultural capital it exists in three forms: embodied spiritual capital is the "knowledge abilities, tastes and credentials an individual has amassed in the field of religion" (Verter 2003: 159) or the field of churches. In the objectified form, it can appear in the form of particular valuable religious objects or ritual vestments, etc. The institutionalised form of spiritual capital is similar to Bourdieu's religious capital, hence it comprises strongly limited goods and qualifications only selected groups can attain (ibid.).

For the fields of this study, spiritual capital represents a very valuable disposition for congregants and pastors alike. Christian tastes that define a congregation are often a crucial factor for new congregants; small groups and prayer gatherings are often organised around a specific depth of biblical knowledge and override other more general categorisations such as age, gender or ethnicity when it comes to the arrangement of new groups; the ways religious content is connected to more worldly messages of local engagement and political mobilisation is decisive in how messages are received and whether these messages motivate people to engage in mutual actions or not. In short: spiritual capital is a very basic form of cultural capital around which life in churches is organised and which is easily transferable into social capital.

How do boundaries relate to these forms of capital? As briefly outlined above, Bourdieu's theoretical focus on social reproduction cannot explain the changing and subversion of hierarchies that occurs in fields. Particularly in position-takings and expressions of change, the concept of capital as a metaphor of resources makes it hard to trace active constructions of relational differences between actors in a field. *Capital* is a strong term to describe and analyse given orders in a field. But it contains some serious deficits tracing the consequences of their employment. In the overall theoretical account, it holds the analysis of field and habitus together, but it seems less than satisfactory in the analyses of dynamic changes in and between various fields and in describing the sharp distinctions actors actively make.

Here, boundaries put more vitality into the changes occurring in the empirical material and, even more important, place an emphasis on the very nature of distinctions. At the heart of boundaries lies "the criteria that people use to define and discriminate between worthy and less worthy persons" (Lamont 1992: 1f). These criteria are what boundaries are made of. They are best described as lines that people draw to categorise people, be it in the form of verbal constructions or otherwise performed signals to express a difference between oneself and others, between "us and them" (Wimmer 2008).

Capitals are mobilised to draw these fine lines. Boundaries are "by-products of basic social processes that are shaped by the cultural resources (capital, *S.S.*) that people have at their disposal and by the structural situations they live in" (Lamont 1992: 2). Boundaries are not necessarily permanent, nor are they static, but a product of permanent boundary work that occurs in social situations. Boundaries can be very present and politically salient for individuals as well as for groups, as the concept expresses deep structural inequalities such as ethnic and gender and sexual boundaries (Wimmer 2008). But the institutionalisation and normalisation of social boundaries in social situations mostly occurs in a much more profane and everyday sense of cultural distinctions (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 186f). It is, then, at the heart of an empirical investigation to scrutinise where, how and why boundaries are activated, maintained, bridged or crossed and what the consequences are for the field of study and its closely related fields.

The conceptual tools of fields, capitals and boundaries will help in the empirical chapters that follow. The capitals exemplified above, including spiritual capital, are expected resources that fuel the boundary work in church congregations and its related fields.

## Empirical results

The theoretical basis of this thesis, as exemplified in this chapter, is a tool to organise the empirical material and to help visualise and categorise the dependencies and interactions between the different fields of study that are relevant to the research questions (churches, denominations, churches in their urban environment, religion, urban change and gentrification). It also puts in place a vocabulary to analyse organisational strategies and the actors' practices, their motives and consequences.

This organisational perspective is a way to observe processes of urban change and the territorial restructuring of the city. The empirical chapters that follow form a consecutive story of the ways church and gentrification cross paths in contemporary London and Berlin. However, for analytical clarity each chapter discusses different dimensions of this crossing. The following chapters are structured along the lines of three key arguments:

Firstly, it is argued in chapter 4 that, similarly to other cultural phenomena, the presence of church congregations in inner-city neighbourhoods is a product of gentrification. The restructuring of urban spaces and processes of gentrification are the ground on which churches build their strategies to survive in secularising environments. The claiming and appropriation of urban spaces (both symbolically and physically) in inner-city neighbourhoods are essential practices of growing church congregations and they are based on close interactions with processes of gentrification that lead to new ways of 'doing church' The ability of church congregations to adapt to their constantly changing environments is rooted in their praise of the current urban fabric and the spatial strategies of church-planting. It is therefore argued that the territorial reorganisation of the inner-city areas in London and Berlin is far from being a merely secular process.

Whereas chapter 4 concentrates on the ways organisational actors in the different fields of activity perceive and translate urban changes into their practices, chapter 5 zooms further into congregational life to discuss reasons for the growth of church congregations in inner-cities. It is argued that the participation of particular groups in church activities can be read as evidence of the desire of the so-called 'gentrifiers' to belong to 'local communities' and as an expression of solidarity with the diverse surroundings they are part of. This desire, it is further argued, is interpreted as an act of "home-making" (Eade 2012) in urban environments, in which the same people express feelings of increasing disconnectedness and isolation. Church congregations, seen as places of social diversity and local rootedness, are one place for people to (re-)connect with society at large and make the city their home. As will be argued, this partially contradicts prominent findings in studies on gentrification that are based on the principal of segregation and

disaffiliation from local structures (Atkinson 2006). This shows that practices of church growth reveal social realities in 'urban frontiers' that have been missing from most urban studies. However, the effects of these practices of home-making can be manifold and, depending on the congregation's focus, fluctuate between an intensification of negative gentrification pressures and mutual encounters that have positive effects, as they may lead to the reevaluation and crossing of boundaries.

Thirdly, chapter 6 argues that this atmosphere of mutual encounters in growing church congregations is the field for mobilising and empowering people for local as well as city-wide and national political issues. This is also the area where the vitality of church congregations makes the strongest contribution to positive outcomes of neighbourhood change. This shows how church congregations as neighbourhood organisations produce urban spaces of mutuality. The local social engagement of church communities addresses urban needs in times of rapid change and is part of what many others describe as the growing presence of faith-based organisations in welfare systems in general. Beyond the activities themselves, this represents an important way for gentrifiers to connect with the local world, but also for long-standing residents affected by change to connect with wider urban issues and gain access to resources they would not have otherwise.

# 4 Claiming urban spaces

How do church congregations interact with inner-city urban environments in times of gentrification and ongoing secularisation? How do they understand, process and narrate the changes in the urban fabric and therewith impact the present and the future of inner cities?

The changes accompanying gentrification in London and Berlin can be reviewed without referring to church congregations or other religious groups. However, an organisational perspective from within church congregations dislocates the perspective on well-known as well as less known processes, as an "abiding spirituality" in urban spaces may shift the interpretation of everyday routines (Kong 2010: 765). The thesis claims that urban frontiers – sketched in chapter 2 as spaces in between the different stages of gentrification and resistance to change — are mirrored and negotiated inside organisational realms. It is argued that a view from within congregations reveals a more complete picture of the realities in gentrifying neighbourhoods.

The three empirical chapters that follow (chapters 4, 5 and 6) form a consecutive story of the ways church and gentrification collide in contemporary London and Berlin.[17] In this chapter it is argued that the claiming of urban spaces is the basis of organisational strategies that church congregations and their denominational structures employ and with which they adapt to current changes in secularising urban contexts. This is also the ground on which they produce and shape urban spaces. The strategies that are employed by religious actors on various levels of activity (from city-wide assessments on the state of Christianity to more concrete appeals on the individual level), emphasise their (intended) relevance in contemporary secular urban culture. The setting in place of strategies to claim spaces in the inner-cities often connects religious aspects with the praise of the current urban fabric and an adjustment of theological alignment (> 4.1).

This has led to the growth of churches in London and in Berlin, both in terms of the number of congregations and the number of members belonging to individual congregations. Growth occurs particularly in those places where congregations manage to translate their ways of doing church in accordance with local particularities. Additionally, the practice of church-planting is the most concrete form of strategic space claiming, as will be shown in the

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[17] Unless referenced otherwise, data (information, dates, relations, opinions) presented in the following three chapters are solely based on data that have been gathered during fieldwork and analysed as described in chapter 2.

second section of this chapter, as it is often perceived as an act of 'colonisation' of neighbourhoods', as younger, so-called network churches invade urban areas to suit (new) target groups and re-invent ways of doing church (> 4.2). Finally, these new ways of doing church, often conducted by free churches, have an impact on the more established national churches, as they start to adapt and integrate successful practices (> 4.3).

# 4.1 Praising the urban fabric

The changes in urban spaces that have taken place over the past decades, as described in chapter 2, have had a severe impact on the interactions between church congregations and their surrounding urban areas. Generally, congregations are closely entangled with their immediate surroundings. They are defined by their territorial belonging, as a parish – the smallest local unit of an established church, bound by its geographical area: "every member of the population lives in a parish and has, as a consequence, the right to be married in the parish church and to be ministered by the incumbent of the parish. Conversely, the incumbent has the duty of ministering to the population of the parish" (Church of England Glossary 2016). The traditional system of spatial organisation serving everyone in its boundaries descends from a time when the majority of a population belonged to the Christian faith, people's mobility was limited and the neighbourhood was usually congruent with its inhabitants' lifeworld.

But as the changes in urban areas, characterised by gentrification and ongoing secularisation, continued to diminish the once dominant role of church congregations, the relations between churches and their surrounding areas also started to become a central question in the organisational reorganisation and adaptation of church congregations in London and Berlin. Since then, the aspiration to serve every person or group in a given territory has often conflicted with the simultaneously pressing need to work in a more resource-efficient and focused way. Therefore, the presence of church congregations in gentrifying urban spaces is very much defined by these (internal and external) conflicts over the relation to their surrounding spaces. Whereas this leads to a form of resignation in some denominations, for others a strong emphasis on the praise of the 'urban fabric' is the way out of declining relevance. This often results in a synergetic alliance between

growing inner-city areas and growing congregations, which, it is argued, is the basis of the survival of churches in gentrifying places like London and Berlin. This will be the focus of the next two sections of this chapter.

## Cultural boundaries in Berlin

The practices of singular congregations are influenced by the more general interactions between denominational actors and the contexts of urban change. Hence, extra-local factors such as processes of gentrification and secularisation are crucial in understanding the practices and routines of organisations at both large and small (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Generally, the extra-local conditions for Christian organisations in both London and Berlin may be characterised as being formed by continuing secularisation. The most peculiar manifestation of this is the decreasing number of people belonging to traditional forms of Christianity (Knippenberg 2015).

This puts the various denominations in both cities under a certain pressure to change, which has thus far had very different results in practice. Berlin, situated in the former region of East Germany, is embedded in the most secularised region of Europe, with more than 77% of the population not belonging to any religious denomination (Knippenberg 2015). Practices of "forced secularity" (Wohlrab-Sahr 2011) through anti-religious politics in the GDR had a sustained impact on denominational belongings, particularly in the eastern parts of Berlin, whereas churches in some western boroughs continued to play a significant role throughout this time. But the people living in the more alternative parts of the western districts of the city, like Kreuzberg, have also always been known to be more sceptical towards traditional forms of Christianity compared to the rest of the country. Local evidence of this secularity is available in the form of the public discussions flaring up annually around the wording for 'Christmas Markets'. The core of this regular dispute is whether it is in line with anti-discriminatory politics to name the year-end market a Christmas market or whether it's legally necessary to name it a winter market, in order to avoid discriminating against anyone in public spaces (Gennies 2013). Strong secularising environments have often been translated into a certain kind of hostility and a lack of understanding in the general public by denominational actors in the city.

For the denominational fields as well as the more general field of religion in Berlin, strong expressions of the secular are perceived as barriers between the

generations, as Gerhard Comenius, head of the Ecumenical Council Berlin,[18] states:

> We as Christians, we find ourselves in an increasingly secularising environment. Increasingly. Berlin simply isn't the heartland of religiosity, it's as simple as that. And that is a different situation to Cologne for example, where you'll find the cathedral in the middle, and the cathedral is catholic… and after the cathedral, there is a huge empty space, figuratively speaking. This creates a certain milieu, and the culture of a city! But Berlin, as the whole of east Germany, is fundamentally different. Here the people are much less religious…what's missing is the passing on to the next generations. This just doesn't work anymore. 30 years ago it was plausible to state, 'I am a religious person'. And you didn't have to explain yourself. Today, not to believe is the plausible attitude. (IPB14, 09.2013, Gerard Comenius)

The awareness of Christianity being a cultural boundary that needs to be actively crossed in Berlin and is not part of a mainstream culture – which is different to most other regions in Germany – often translates into a feeling of disenchantment most of the pastors and church members in this study expressed. Beyond a general 'praise of the urban', which will become more clear below, particular actors within the denominational field in Berlin also understand contemporary urbanity as a threat towards their position in society more generally. This awareness is translated into the fields of church congregations as a general stance towards the city's perceived mainstream.

One major sign of a decreasing public value is the shrinking number of church memberships:[19] today, roughly one third of the population of Berlin belongs to a Christian denomination, with 17% being members of the Evangelical Church of Germany (and 9% being members of the Catholic Church respectively).[20] Every year, the Evangelical Church loses 2-3% of its members. As opposed to the situation in the UK, the shrinking membership has a direct impact on the financial resources of the church. Whereas for the majority of the parish churches this is mostly perceived in a resigned way, free churches, and particularly those belonging to international denominations

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[18] The Ecumenical Council is an important partner for local politics, as their mission is to form a united voice of the different Christian churches in the city.

[19] Church membership in Germany doesn't reveal much about the actual viability of a church congregation. In stark contrast to the church member system of the UK, where people have to actively join the electoral roll of the church, people in Germany have to actively declare their leave of the church.

[20] As of 2015, this equals close to 600,000 members in the Evangelical Church and around half of this in the Catholic church. Numbers are for October 2015, and are provided by the EKBO (2016). They are not officially published.

outside of Germany, interpret this state of Christianity as an organisational challenge and emblematic of the need to show a greater presence in one of the most secularised urban areas of the world, as Lucas Vaughan, church planter and pastor of the Berlin-based branch of the Australian mega-church Hillsong,[21] BerlinUnited, phrases it:

> So it kind of stood to me that Berlin was a city that wasn't just the way it is now, I felt like it would change…So I could see a need for community and I could see a need for people finding common purpose and getting over the depression… failed relationships I felt are just very common here, that seemed to be just part of the landscape…And you know, everyone was saying the negative things. And I was like, no, I can see church here, I can see people, I can see people coming and living a dynamic faith in this city. So that is what got me here. (IPB17, 09.2013, Lucas Vaughan)

Consequently, from an organisational point of view, the environment of ongoing secularisation in Berlin impacts the 'Christian market' in two directions: churches belonging to the traditional denominations, e.g. the Evangelical Church of Germany and the German Catholic Church, are constantly challenged to make organisational reforms, leading to the merging and sometimes closure of congregations, as reported by the vice-bishop of the Evangelical Church in Berlin[22] (IPB26,10.2013). Simultaneously, newly established free churches invent new ways of doing church very easily, as will be shown in more detail in the next section (> 4.2). From a comparative point of view, free churches invest a lot more in renewed ways of doing church and hence are able to take over new positions in the field of churches in Berlin (as is also the case in London). Their appraisal of urban spaces often echoes the perspective of healing social ills, a view of social transformation that has been popular in social theology since the beginning of modern urban life in the early 20th century (Lindner 2004: 217). In contrast, most church congregations belonging to the national denominations understand ongoing secularisation as a threat that leads to a form of organisational faint.

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[21] Hillsong is a mega-church based in Sydney, Australia, that is dedicated to pentecostalism and started expanding into other urban centres in the mid-2000s (Connell 2005).

[22] The denomination for the evangelical churches in Berlin that are part of the Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands - EKD), is known as the "Evangelical Church in Berlin, Brandenburg and Silesian Upper Lusatia" (Evangelische Kirche Berlin-Brandenburg und schlesische Oberlausitz - EKBO). Hence the denomination is not only responsible for the City of Berlin, but also for shrinking rural areas in Brandenburg.

## Advertising churches in growing London

Despite decreasing memberships and the perception of secularisation as a threat of shrinkage, Christianity (still) is a mainstream cultural phenomenon in Germany as well as in the UK. Although only a minority of people might practice Christianity, a majority understands and often approves what this minority does and often shares the values that churches stand for (Davie 2007, Pickel 2013). Thus Christianity can also be described as a "vicarious religion" (Davie 2007: 127f) in London and Berlin, with the promotion of core values that are sustained by a majority. This can be crucial for the acceptance of local church actions, as it gives denominational practices a certain legitimacy in secularising urban environments.

However, for the churches in London, there are slightly different challenges to those articulated in Berlin. Whereas the members on the electoral roll of the Church of England as well as Sunday attendances are continuously decreasing in the UK as a whole (Bruce 2013a), the picture of decreasing membership is a more ambivalent topic in the inner-city areas of London. Recent reports[23] by the Church of England show that both the number of people being enrolled as well as church attendance were growing slowly, albeit steadily in the years 2001-2010 in the London Diocese (Jackson and Alan 2010). Whereas the Church of England reports a growth on the electoral roll by 2-3% per year, the actual Sunday attendance grew by less than 1%. However, the London Diocese regularly uses these figures to publicly advertise the growing (relevance of the) church. As has been shown by others, the significance of these figures is questionable, as many churches don't provide reliable figures (Jackson and Alan 2010), and the net growth of London's population as a whole has been substantially higher than church

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[23] These measurements of church membership are entirely different to those in Germany and barely comparable. The numbers show the different picture regarding the growth and shrinkage of churches in their own national systems, rather than a comparative measure. However, the different self-presentation of the churches also reveals their different stand towards secularising tendencies of the society they are part of. The electoral roll in churches belonging to the Church of England counts the people who are enrolled in a parish to take part in church elections. Although this should be considered a strong commitment towards the Church of England, it doesn't express the actual commitment of people to the community. In contrast, Sunday attendance figures show the number of people actually attending the church.

growth, which indicates that the London Diocese overall might well be experiencing shrinkage rather than growth (Bruce 2013b).[24]

In whatever way these figures are interpreted, this is an important context for the positioning of the Church of England in the field of churches in London, compared to the churches in Berlin, since the London Diocese as the central organisational body for churches in London strategically highlights these vaguely positive developments to the city's public in public reports and accompanying events. The launch of a "Capital Vision 2020" in 2013 was followed by public announcements such as video advertisements on public transport that the London Diocese planned to establish one hundred faith communities to "enable new initiatives to fight poverty, inequality and injustice in London" (Church of England 2016). With a huge public effort, the Church of England communicated its public role and represented the church in general as having a growing impact on London's society, announcing a more open attitude towards the society at large (Brown 2014).

> We are continuing to build a church for London that is Confident, Compassionate and Creative. These three words have emerged from nearly 2,000 conversations over the last 18 months and they inform our Capital Vision 2020. As a Diocese we have reflected on the times we live in, listening and responding by identifying areas where we must be more purposeful and more imaginative. (Bishop of London, Launch Letter 2013)

This positive selling of a caring national church is now transforming the ways many London parishes communicate their vision to their congregations and also the ways they are involved in working with their immediate environments; Capital Vision 2020 also focuses on the negative outcomes of rapid urban transformations. Furthermore, the Church of England as the national and largest denomination in the city demonstrates an openness towards new church congregations and church plants and therewith opens up many ways of altering current processes of change in the inner cities. This openness results in an organisational adaptation which in many contexts is the reason why the Church of England is still present in the form of parish churches locally. The ways established church structures adapt to changes often depends on the ways free churches invent of doing church while responding to changes more innovatively than larger structures are able to.

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[24] The numbers are more complicated if one accounts for other denominations. With the growth of the city, London also became more diverse, particularly during the 1990s and 2000s (Peach 2002). This had a stark effect on denominational belonging. Pentecostal churches, Catholic congregations and Methodist churches have also changed and partially grown in accordance with the population growth in the country and the city. However, for the focus of this work on evangelical church congregations, these developments are not the focus of this study.

The processes of adaptation of the churches to local changes will be more closely reviewed in the third sub-chapter (> 4.3).

## Church growth and gentrification

As outlined above, an increasing interaction with contemporary developments in urban spaces is particularly characteristic of newly found congregations. The congregations that have been studied in the course of this thesis fall roughly into two categories: traditional parish churches and network churches. Traditional parish churches in London and Berlin belong to the regional chapters of mainline national denominations, namely the Church of England (CofE) and the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD).[25] The characteristics of the two are structurally different: parish churches usually own facilities and are historically rooted in the area they are situated in; they serve in their own territorially organised parish – often a point of contention, as outlined in the beginning of the chapter. The members of their parish churches are from diverse ethnic and social backgrounds (representing the mix of the parishes) and are predominantly practicing Christians. However, the congregations are often mixed in terms of the members' spiritual capital, which can create social boundaries in the everyday practices of congregational life. Parish churches in the UK and in Germany are furthermore democratically organised, with elected councils representing the legislative power of the church and a pastor who is the spiritual leader, but simultaneously accountable to the church councils.

Network churches, in comparison, are less participative in their core structure and are often led by one or a few persons. Their way of doing church is usually more focused on a single group and hence their congregations are more homogenous than parish church congregations. They don't often own facilities, but instead meet in rented spaces, which may be a church space or, as is the case in Berlin, deliberately chosen spaces that are unrelated to any church history and have a non-religious use during the week, in order to attract people who are for some reason not used or not willing to visit church buildings.

Network churches also have a different relation to the social space surrounding their immediate environment, as they are often new to an area. They are more focused on the growth of their core congregation than attracting different Christian groups. This is particularly apparent in their strong focus on the topic of a religious interpretation of 'the urban' and 'urban life' in

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[25] The regional denominations are the London Diocese and the Evangelical Church in Berlin, Brandenburg and Silesian Upper Lusatia.

general and the related focus of their theological approaches. Here, the symbiosis of urban change and congregational development is much more vivid than in the established churches.

The congregations that are part of this study do, however, share important characteristics. Most meaningfully, despite the overall trends of shrinkage all the congregations have grown. An essential part of the congregations' own narratives is that their work "matters increasingly" locally and that they are "here to make a difference" (IPL07, 11.2013, Felix Graham). This has been identified as the unifying entrepreneurial spirit of the congregations taking part in this study (> 4.2). All the congregations are more or less locally embedded in gentrifying contexts and show certain, though different, commitments to their local areas (with a varying understanding of the local). Furthermore, all of the congregations that are part of this study have recently undergone a certain kind of (re)start. The network churches in this study have been founded by various denominations during the past decade, ranging from internationally active networks such as Vineyard and Redeemer City to City Network to the branches of recently globally active so-called mega churches from the US (Saddleback) and Australia (Hillsong). The parish churches researched in London also belong to a church-planting network, which is instead locally organised and focused on a Christian revitalisation of the eastern boroughs of London. The parish churches researched in Berlin were recently started with new pastors.

In this inner-city environment of growing churches, the newly planted churches in particular are more focused on the current urban fabric by addressing new groups at the urban edges discussed above. The framing of their work is usually more oriented towards particular groups than particular areas; and it is often directly responding to people and groups moving into an area. Church-planting in the way that free churches are founded in the inner-cities is a relatively young phenomena. Their unique feature compared to the more regular establishment of churches in times of growing Christianity, is that the newer plants view the changes in the city as an opportunity for the church despite overall shrinkage, as reported above, and this shapes their way of doing church and interacting with the local. The bedrock of this practice is mostly based on the belief that the diminution of Christianity in the western hemispheres is not primarily based on people's disinterest in religion, but more on the alienating ancientness practiced in parish churches. Kirche für Berlin is a representative case of the network churches in London and Berlin and was one of the first of its kind in Germany. Benjamin Marks, pastor of this Berlin-based free church, frames their target areas very clearly:

> We are absolutely focused locally. But not on one neighbourhood, and that
> is the difference to other churches. Our target areas are more Mitte,
> Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg. These are the
> neighbourhoods that are often described as the cluster of creative
> neighbourhoods (Kreativquartiere). And this is something you just don't
> have to think about, that is just evident, when you look at the people.
> (IPB07, 08.2013, Benjamin Marks)

The congregation Kirche für Berlin, founded by two young pastors in 2005 with only 10 members, has grown to over 600 members over the past 10 years and now runs three services in different locations across the targeted inner-city boroughs. The church considers itself as local in the sense that it approaches a specific group of people, namely "creatives", who they expect to move to their areas of activity (> 5.1). An important characteristic of every church plant in this study has been a strong overlap of the founders' habitus with the habitus of the people they are aiming to approach.

> When we came to Berlin, we first needed to understand the characters of
> the different boroughs. Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte, these were our target
> districts: two boroughs in the heart of Berlin, that had just started to thrive
> and that were discussed in the news every couple of weeks. For us – just
> like for all the other thousands of searchers of happiness – these boroughs
> became a home. (Benjamin Marks in "Centre Church", Keller 2015)

Church-planting as realised in the inner-city boroughs of London and Berlin heavily relies on a strong idea about a certain trendiness of an area, a way to celebrate urbanity and urban lifestyles and to build up a congregation accordingly.

The target group here has been framed as people who "search for happiness". In the mid-2000s, the city of Berlin struggled with population shrinkage and a dubious image of a fallow economy. In this period, local authorities engineered an image of Berlin as particularly attractive for the then-popular "creative class" (Colomb 2012b: 222 ff). This has been actively echoed by the Kirche für Berlin, increasing in line with the attractiveness of the inner-city districts as a place for people coming to Berlin from other parts of Germany. The focus on arts was inscribed in the goals from the beginning, as the church's office is also used part of the time as a gallery, providing space to support local artists and members of the congregation.

On the one hand, such a unity of urban change related to gentrification and church growth perfectly resonates with the way institutional theory understands the link between the local and organisational change: "they (the local environments) penetrate the organization (sic), creating lenses through which actors view the world and the very categories of structure, action and

thought" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 13). As illustrated at Kirche für Berlin, the praise of a current urban fabric is their basis for a new way of doing church. Among the people moving into the areas in question, which in urban studies literature are mainly associated with gentrifying groups and are not necessarily primarily interested in taking part in local communal life (artists, students, middle-class families, hipsters, see for example Karsten 2014, Butler and Lees 2006, Zukin 2016), one finds a significant number of people partaking in congregational life. In this case, the trendiness of 'urban frontiers' does not obstruct church growth, but rather is a necessary condition for it. Before discussing this conglomerate of church, 'creatives' and home-making practices in the next chapter (> 5), the practice of church-planting as a way of claiming spaces shall first be considered more explicitly.

## 4.2 Church-planting and the 'colonisation of neighbourhoods'

The interaction between contemporary urban change and vital Christian congregations is most vivid in the current church-planting activities in the inner-cities of London and Berlin. Church-planting, which principally means the founding of a congregation, is far from a new practice. In times of fast-growing cities during the 19th and early 20th centuries churches grew equally fast. Hundreds of new congregations were founded and churches built by their so-called 'mother-churches', often with huge financial support from private funders and administrative facilitation by local states (Herden 1996).

From an organisational perspective, the expansion of churches into new territories within cities is far from new to established national churches. But the difference between church-planting practices back then and expansionary churches today is that church-planting in western agglomerations used to be a necessary step in meeting the growing demands of people migrating into cities, of whom the majority were of Christian belief, but today, in a time of continual secularisation, church-planting yields a new way of doing church in the gentrifying city, one that impacts the lived spaces of neighbourhoods. The practice of founding new churches in inner-city areas varies from church plant to church plant, and is manifold, as are the church traditions they are found in. However, the church plants in this study are characterised by some joint conceptual intentions that connect them in a distinct way to the areas they are found in: firstly, church plants are placing a strong focus on the contemporary

urban fabric as a place of vital belief, and support this with biblical rationales, creating close linkages between the urban and Christian belief and spiritualities. Secondly, most of the church plants primarily target people with a middle-class background, which goes hand in hand with the creation of links between global ideas about urban spaces and the local specificities of an area . Thirdly, church plants rely on a certain entrepreneurial spirit, linking a start-up mentality with doing church (> 6.2). These distinct characteristics are part of the church plant's strategic positioning in the field of churches in London and Berlin respectively.

However, the effect this has on the fields of churches in London and Berlin is twofold. Whereas church congregations enviously suspect a 'colonisation of neighbourhoods' by fundamental Christians, for actors in the denominational field this also offers new perspectives for collaborations (> 6.2) and for adaptation to the current changes (> 4.3).

## Believing in the contemporary urban

As has been argued in the previous section, the praise of the urban fabric is a central element in reflecting, narrating and reproducing current changes in cities from a congregational perspective. But the ways church plants are related to contemporary urbanity are equally influenced by local and global connections. However, the local (city-wide or neighbourhood-related) changes are not always in the centre of linking faith and 'the urban'; it is rather a mixing of global connections and local connectedness and the passages in between that is characteristic for most of the church plants.

A privileging of a global understanding of urbanity is particularly reflected in church plants that are related to influential international networks such as the Redeemer City to City network. Based in New York City, Redeemer has helped plant around 400 churches in 50 cities around the globe since its foundation in 2001. The success of this network is particularly related to its pastor, Timothy Keller, who is a well-known public figure in the US as well as in European church circles. His success is mainly built on his authorship of bestselling books such as "The Reason for God" (2008), which aims to address sceptics of Christian belief and puts "modern urban cultures" at the centre of his preachings. Keller's books on cities, Christianity and church-planting are particularly influential among young pastors in urban surroundings. Key to Keller's particular success among Christian circles in metropolitan areas across the globe is the network's focus on why cities matter for Christians and therewith a focus on how pastors translate doing church into contemporary urban environments.

The basis for these translations are the network's church-planting manuals, courses for church-planters, and an online shop with sermons focusing on urban topics and annual network meetings. In their materials, Christian reasonings for urban life are central elements.

> What does it mean to bless the city? Here's what it means. Follow Jesus. We're told in Revelation 21 that Jesus will live on the center square of the city of God. *He is going to live downtown*. Did you know that? The Lamb will be on the main street that leads to the throne of God. Jesus has built this new city for us to live in...Are you ready to join Jesus' work in the cities of the world? (Keller 2013: 19f, sic)

> Cities increasingly influence our global culture and affect the way we do ministry. With a positive approach toward our culture, we learn to affirm that cities are wonderful, strategic, and underserved places for gospel ministry (Redeemer City to City 2016)

The whole work of the network is based on local experiences of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, whose success story is grounded on its rapid growth in the 1990s in Manhattan and its way of doing church for the "young professionals and artists who do not fit the prototypical evangelical mould" (Luo 2006: 1). This model has since been influential to pastors around the globe hoping to "create similarly effective churches in cosmopolitan cities like New York" (ibid.).

For young pastors aiming to plant a church in areas of cities that have experienced undergone drastic change – such as Hoxton and Nord-Neukölln or Kreuzberg 10 years ago – Redeemer  seemingly offers a more promising and contemporary model to do church and learn from than local denominations would. Kirche für Berlin was one of the first churches found in this network. Since its foundation in 2005, its congregation has grown at a steady pace, and they have also planted congregations in other German cities as well as in other boroughs of Berlin and become leading figures in the European chapter of the City to City network.

> A very decisive claim for our work and the network we are part of, is that the similarities in the everyday work of a Pastor are much bigger between East London, Williamsburg in Brooklyn, or Mitte and Kreuzberg, as they are with a congregation I find in Oranienburg, some 60km out of Berlin. That is the essential idea of the Global City. And that is what we realised in our network. I have a lot more in common with the pastors in East London, because we share the same urban references. (IPB07, 08.2013, Benjamin Marks)

The pastors' role models in every sense are places in the world where similar urban challenges await the church-planter, places with the same 'urban

references'; the simultaneity of local embeddedness and global connectedness is of particular importance for the picture that the urban-focused congregation propagates. The topics brought forward in these global networks and the ways they mix narratives of urban life and Christianity in their everyday congregational life spans a global space of metropolitan Christianity and goes hand in hand with global narratives about contemporary urbanity in the city centres of the Global North. The global mobility of church practices and travelling ideas surrounding the contemporary urban affect the way congregations do church and the ways they are connected to the local particularities they live and meet in.

> …the people that are coming to us in the first place, are 80-90% the same biographies that you find in a inner-city place like this, it's people who recently moved into the city. So in our congregation, it is the same as in the neighbourhood on the other side of the road: if you meet a real Berliner, then that's an outstanding incident. Yeah, and that's how it is in the Kirche für Berlin. (IPB07, 08.2013, Benjamin Marks)

For church plants doing church in the inner-city is synonymous with doing church for those groups that are part of the urban changes described above. Recalling the character of the 'urban frontiers' as exemplified previously (> 2.3) – those areas at the borders of the hotspots of gentrification, where a certain pressure of gentrification characterises the local atmosphere – church plants may be markers of the quality of places in neighbourhoods that are necessary for encounters of different people sharing one location (Ernst and Doucet 2014, Amin 2002). At the same time, the viable church plants in inner-city areas resemble just another exclusive club where outsiders are unwelcome and the "rhythms of gentrification" (Kern 2016) are reproduced and social boundaries reinforced.

The 'urban references' – between global ambitions and local commitments – church plants in London and Berlin share have led to close relations between the young congregations of the churches in the two cities. A close learning environment with personal mentorships, based on regular meetings between London and Berlin and mutual preaching exchanges, exists between Kirche für Berlin and Mercy Church Hackney, a congregation based in the area of Hoxton and Shoreditch in East London.

Mercy Church was founded 10 years ago as a spin-off of a large conservative church based in the heart of the City of London, known as a congregation mainly comprising people working at banks and law firms. The main impetus behind planting the church, according to its vicar Angus, was to create a congregation for those people who couldn't afford to live in the costly

inner-city areas of London and were moving further 'out' to East London instead. Hence, a church for people whose professions and lifestyles do not resonate with the habitus of those living and working as lawyers and bankers in the heart of the financial hub of Europe (Angus Inglis, IPL02, 11.2013).

For the founding of the congregation and its way of doing church, the Redeemer Network has been of particular importance. When asked about the urban features the churches in the network have in common, Angus describes the neighbourhood profiles as the most distinct similarities that make their working and learning together in the network significant.

> I think that probably neighbourhoods that are historically been very poor... and as a consequence housing has either been very cheap or there have been opportunities to squat. And as a consequence artists and creatives have moved into them, and gentrification is becoming to happen along with that. So typically rents rise, the infrastructure improves, and the edge moves elsewhere. So, ahm, I mean that's happened in London with Shoreditch, Hoxton and Dalston, and now things are moving a bit further out, as Dalston gets more and more expensive. So I think that would typically be the profile: older, poorer neighbourhood, younger creatives moves in and the process of gentrification begins. So they're neighbourhoods in transition, I think that's the way of describing our common areas. (IPL02, 11.2013, Angus Inglis).

The description of the area's profile resembles a textbook description of gentrification. But despite focusing on young newcomers to the borough as a main motivation, the planting of the church has similarly been stimulated by a certain sensitivity towards local missionary goals:

> When we began Mercy Church Hackney 10 years ago, we asked the question is there a recently arrived people group within Hackney, who aren't in churches in very large numbers who we might be in position to connect with ... So that was, that was the genesis of it. Really about mission and complementing the work that the churches are already doing. Suppose typically more established churches minister to a particular demographic and they do that well very often and if a neighbourhood changes rapidly it is quite difficult for the older churches to change direction. And it is very difficult to do it quickly. So I think it was, for us it was to say what can we do to complement the existing missions already going on in Hackney. Ahm, so our church was very different to most of the Anglican parish churches in London, and in Hackney.  (IPL02, 11.2013, Angus Inglis)

The narratives of Kirche für Berlin and Mercy Church Hackney about their local rootedness are typical of what most of the stories told by other network churches reveal about their urban settings in the course of this research. Their founding narratives are often based on a praise of the contemporary urban fabric, the acknowledgement of the status quo of urban change between the

growth of trendy areas and a dissociation from the more established parts of national churches. The translation and adaptation of a globalised experience of doing 'urban mission' in inner-city areas characterised by a pressure of gentrification is a further defining feature of contemporary church-planting activities.

This urban constellation that produces the church plants as particular social settings is characterised by a mixture of global connectedness and local embeddedness, one that is far from being just a product of either the local history of social relations or global disconnectedness. These networked church congregations are products of interrelated mobilities and stabilities, and as an organisational realm and field in the Bourdieusian sense, they correspond with a certain habitus, one that has been described by others as grounded in a form of "elective belonging": "in a mobile, global environment, location in fixed physical space may be of increasing relative significance in the generation of social distinction" (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst 2005: 12). Global and local, mobility and fixity, are no antagonisms. The production of settings of social distinction, as it is a part of different ways of doing church, may just as easily result in the cultivation of a sense of place instead of the formation of social boundaries (Engelke 2010). Characterised in this way, church plants may be a nucleus for the making of local places as social settings, where a variety of church goers may feel connected and which function as a locality for the crossing of cultural boundaries. How these social spaces are created through church practices and what the effect of these settings on the local level is will receive further critical examination in the next chapter (> 5).

## The 'colonisation of neighbourhoods'
Church-planting does not only produce spaces that have the potential to become spaces of encounter. From a more critical perspective, church-planting is a religious mission, initiated by powerful stakeholders, often multinational church companies, almost always financed by international partnerships with wealthy church communities that are predominantly based in the US. The most extreme networked form of church plants in this sense are those founded by the so-called mega-churches, such as the Australian-based Hillsong or Saddleback of California. These mega-churches are already well-established in London. Their recent efforts to found churches in Berlin follows the goal to do mission in an "atheist environment bordering eastern Europe" (IPB19, Gabi Uebach), as the proximity to former socialist countries is equated with a proximity to secularity.

However, those church plants are usually founded as pure network churches that meet in very central places in the inner-cities and only have occasional connections to specific areas in the city. But although they are not always directly involved in local activities, their presence among the churches in London and Berlin has a prominent influence on how the more established actors react to church plants in general in the two cities. Parish churches, which are concerned with the religious vitality of their neighbourhoods, fear the 'colonisation' of their parishes by different religious traditions and congregations with less openness than they propagate for themselves. In other words, if cities are considered a religious market, parish churches fear competition from younger and often more agile church plants.

The church plants in this study are well aware of these tensions and their strategies to start church-planting are adapted accordingly. Starting with a small group of people, church plants usually first initiate regular meetings that are not necessarily related to a particular area, but rather around a joint Christian tradition. Only then, after several months or in some cases years, the congregations slowly grow and establish links with an area and other congregations.[26]

Mercy Church, the first church plant in the area of Hoxton and Shoreditch, established its founding strategy on a mixture of place sensitivity and a decisive implementation of its congregational plans. The congregation's first home, when they started in 2005, was one of the oldest and most central churches in Hackney. They initially rented the building from the local parish church, which was experiencing both a diminishing membership and theological stagnation by that time. The location of the building at a crossing in the middle of Shoreditch, on the junction between the City of London and the boroughs further east, was one of the busiest parts of the area, with many people strolling by during day and night, and with night-clubs and start-ups from the tech-industry just next door.

> When we were brainstorming what sort of space do we want to meet in, we decided that we wanted something that was, because of the demographic, we wanted something that was actually architecturally significant, but had a spiritual ambiance. So we, if we'd have to met in a school or a community centre we would, that was not our first choice. Now there are very kind of few spaces like that, that are also available within our geographical area. (IPL02, 11.2013, Angus Inglis)

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[26] In their own language, this is the very basis of church-planting. A church leader, or gardener, plants a seed in fertile ground. This is nourished by the people joining in, and by the good news, the gospel.

For Mercy Church, the choice of this location in Shoreditch was significant and formative for the identity of the congregation. Congregants described the building as shabby, with an atmosphere that was uniquely spiritual. For many 'young professionals' that I interviewed, this was the main reason they initially went to the church. Many knew the building long before, as it is one of the area's iconic landmarks. It was also due to the atmosphere of this building paired with the specific demographic profile of the congregation that seduced a reporter of the arts-related VICE-Magazine to write the headline "Hipster Christians are saving London" (Uddin 2012) (> 5.1).

This presence in trendy areas is the basis for tensions between church plants and the more established parish churches. On the one hand, churches like Mercy Church Hackney and Kirche für Berlin attract the same demographics that parish churches miss in their non-white congregations with a disproportionate number of old people. On the other hand, parish churches look on church plants with a certain envy, as they don't have to take care of their own buildings and are generally much more flexible in creating new ways of actually organising their week of doing church.

> So I think there was a sense of, there was a perception of (our mother-church) was kind of colonising Hackney. Maybe that is a good way putting it. Which wasn't the intent at all, but there was quite a degree of, you know, the local clergy were very kind of difficult, I guess. So there was a degree of hostility. … And I think it was a certain degree of threat, you know, I think, you know, it's difficult doing ministry in Hackney is difficult. A lot of the Anglican clergy have buildings that are crumbling and just have to put a huge amount of effort in keeping the building up as well as doing mission. So I think, you know, the perception that a new group is coming in, and colonise Hackney. And they understandably find it difficult. You know, in the years that followed, we all worked quite hard to get to know each other. They realised that life hadn't change very much because we were there, and that we wanted to be supportive, and you know to work alongside people rather than against them. (IPL02, 11.2013, Angus Inglis)

The hostility that has been perceived by the founder and other members of Mercy Church is caused by their status of newness and difference from what the parish churches are offering. Most of the more established churches in the area of Hoxton and Shoreditch have been active in one way or another, but are far from vital in their ways of doing church. For people from the denomination as well as other church plants, decreasing numbers on Sundays, uninspired services and lazy clergy characterised the churches in Hoxton in 2005. Misunderstandings between the congregations and a missing denominational strategy that could control the processes, caused a rather dubious environment for all the churches in the area.

Church-planting, however, is not always motivated by the idea of serving the church's own peer groups and offering a new cultural activity. Depending on the denomination, doing mission work in 'abandoned' areas is an essential part of the idea of founding a church. It is an activity that claims a space for a particular idea, one that has been identified with certain cultural aspects and, above all, a need for the presence of Christian activities.

> So we realised that we would have to do something different, that it would be like an overseas missionary. In the sense that if you feel called to go to Timbuktu, you would go there and you would live there. And you wouldn't do anything in terms of evangelising or doing church. You would live there, get involved, learn the language probably for a couple of years and learn the culture. And so we said, well, that is what we would need to do here. Because we are white, educated, middle-class couple, coming into an area where probably an awful lot of white middle class well-intentioned had come in the past. (IPL05, 11.2013, Adam Knott)

In the case of church-planter Adam Knott, as presented in the quote above, church-planting in an inner-city area like Hoxton seemingly demands the colonial tactics of 'overseas missionary'. Despite the actual impact such a view has on the activity of churches, this quote reveals two further characteristics of church-planting activities that are crucial to understanding the phenomena: the *assumed* cultural barrier between the initial planters and the people living in an area is often almost inviolable – not only in terms of people's beliefs, but particularly in terms of class-affiliation and an (essentialised) 'local culture'. In the case of church-planter Adam, his reference to Timbuktu – not only metaphorically to a place 'in the middle of nowhere', but also to the most iconic place of *Islamic* history in West Africa (Kane 2016) – creates a huge gap between his own social position, in this case that of a white lawyer with a decent income in his 50s working in the City of London, and the people the church aims to reach: "working-class people who are not used to reading the bible" (IPL05). This reference, secondly, refers to and actively reproduces the stigma of Hoxton and East London more generally, as being home to an uneducated working-class culture.

The gap between church-planters and people in the area they move to is a further driver for tensions between established churches and younger congregations. Over time, parish churches particularly in London are adopting the strategies of the plants (> 4.3), but since the early days of church-planting 10-15 years ago, parish church congregations belonging to the national churches have had a rather critical view, perceiving the churches as competition in the local market, and furthermore understanding the ideology behind church-planting as a form of a 'Christian colonisation of a neighbourhood'.

The diverse practices of church-planting in London as well as in Berlin are crucial in understanding the current state of church congregations in inner-city areas. Firstly, church plants represent the ways doing church and gentrification closely interact and how this adjusts church congregations to contemporary urban cultures. Secondly, the tension this creates with parish churches is an expression of how new role models for possible future religious acting in inner-cities is being created through explorative but strategic practices of church plants. As the vicar from Mercy Church Hackney pointed out, new congregations operate in environments that have been well covered by parish churches before, but for the parish churches, "it is quite difficult to change direction, and it is very difficult to do it quickly" (IPL02, 11.2013, Angus Inglis). The founding of new congregations is less motivated by a lack of congregational activities on the local Christian 'market' than by the lack of locally adapted congregations.

So parish churches as the local representatives of denominational fields of established national churches have found themselves in a new situation over the past 10 to 15 years. On the one hand, they are busy understanding the changing urban landscapes surrounding them and keeping up with their business as usual. At the same time they are being confronted with new congregations, often led by young pastors who perform their doing of church with a start-up mentality. The response of parish churches and the more established denominational structures are manifold. How they understand and change their role at the edges of the urban and how they try to adapt to the changing circumstances will be discussed in the following section.

# 4.3 Adapting to spatial changes

The vitality of church congregations in gentrifying areas of London and Berlin is not limited to young church plants mixing up traditional ways of doing church, as the previous sections have shown. Parish churches and their associated denominational structures are also learning to adapt to changes and strategically adopt successful strategies from other  (religious) actors within their fields. Those processes of adaptation are crucial to understanding the variety of interactions between church congregations and urban spaces, which is the basis of how urban spaces are being produced by congregations (> 5, 6). A crucial element in detecting these processes is the scrutiny of the

ways the more institutionalised practices respond to the changes in their immediate and wider surroundings (Hackworth and Gullikson 2013: 87f).

Organisational studies have claimed that changes in local environments likely lead to the replacement of one organisation by another (DiMaggio 1998: 15). In particular, organisations belonging to larger organisational bodies are expected to be too inert and inflexible to adapt. In this evolutionary sense one would expect the traditional parish church system to be slowly replaced by the smaller, more agile networked structures of church organisations. But instead of vanishing, large structures have also been able to adapt. As the organisational culture of adaptation shows, topics and directives often diffuse through the institutional environments of denominations until they reach the ground level of an organisation. This may well be a way to track processes of adaptation inside larger organisations (DiMaggio 1998: 18, McQuarrie and Marwell 2009: 259f).

The effect that continuing secularisation and gentrification have on churches highly depends on the ways those processes are translated in the denominational environments and how this trickles down to the congregational fields. Taking a closer look at the established denominations in the areas of Neukölln and Kreuzberg, Hoxton and Bethnal Green, secularisation is performed and perceived in very different ways. How change in general is interpreted, processed and results in actions, varies greatly from field to field and from locality to locality. Within the different fields of denominations and their institutional arrangements – — particularly in Berlin – — secularisation is often processed by the established churches primarily through the numbers of people willing to be (tax-paying) members of the church. Although institutionalised knowledge indicates that the shrinking popularity of church activities on Sunday mornings does not necessarily correlate with decreasing belief in general, it signals first and foremost a loss of institutional commitment to a centuries-old institutional culture (Pickel 2013, Goodhew 2013).

However, the fixation on numbers is understandable, as this is also a way to create legitimacy for actions in a secularising society or to bemoan the loss of the very same. But what is getting lost on the way is a better understanding of the varying qualities of secularisation and possible responses, as the comparisons in this sub-chapter will show. The following sections focus on ways the London Diocese and the Evangelical Church in Berlin have learnt to adapt to changes in the gentrifying inner-city areas and therewith (re)claim spaces in central localities that have hardly been known for the presence of churches in the past.

## 'Adopting' church-planting in London

> I feel like I am picking up ten years worth of hurt. And some of that is quite
> right. You want to slap people and say get over it, you know, stop it, we are
> where we are and now move on. But no one has done the consultation
> properly. And consultation doesn't mean, that difficult vicar in Parish A will
> be able to stop mission initiative. Because some people say, oh I don't
> want them on my patch. Well, tough, they are going to come in. But at least
> they have had a chance to talk it through, they are not surprised, they know
> why. So it is a proper process. And I think that is what often hasn't
> happened. Equally, church plants as by their own nature, are entrepreneurs,
> they have got energy, they don't want to be tied down by lots of process.
> So I understand that but I think we have to get the balance right. (IPL41,
> 06.2014, Pamela Sanders, Archdeacon of Hackney)

The relations between the different organisational forms of doing church are shaped by competition. However, the relations between local parish churches and network churches, as well as between the denominational fields and network churches, differ significantly in London and Berlin. In both contexts, the main reasons for suspicions and hostilities rest on the one hand in a fear that network churches and church plants are a direct competitor particularly for the favour of younger people in their 20s and 30s, a group parish churches are particularly eager to relate to. On the other hand, parish churches often complained in the course of this research that their responsibility to do church for a particular area and not a particular group made it a competition under unequal conditions, as network churches don't have the same public obligations as parish churches do, but at the same time profit from their social engagement as it puts churches in general in a more positive light in the field of religion. Whereas some local parish churches in Kreuzberg and Neukölln recently started to cooperate with free and diaspora churches by renting out church spaces, the denominational field either ignores free churches all together, or dismisses them for reasons of theological difference.[27]

Although actors within the denominational structures acknowledged the growing leverage of church plants, key actors within the London Diocese have also been rather reserved towards newer developments for a long time.

> Church plants have been a very important thing in the East End recently.
> And have been for a number of years. I think what we were aware of,
> myself and the bishop, is that they had caused quite a lot of tension...
> Some of that is inevitable and that is always going to happen, that is part of
> change, it is part of all sort of things. But I think that my view would be that

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[27] In Berlin this sceptical view of younger congregations outside the established churches has occurred as a topic in the interviews with church officials on the level of the church districts, as well as on the level of parish churches.

> nothing had been done very strategically. It had been done very
> opportunistically. Which I think is part of it, that is important. You take
> opportunities when you can. And I think there will be some church plants
> where I have a question mark in my mind about why and why there, and
> what need are they fulfilling. (IPL41, 06.2014, Pamela Sanders)

Pamela Sanders is the Archdeacon of Hackney in the London Diocese and responsible for the organisational links between the denomination and the parish churches in the borough. Her role is to facilitate communication between the parishes of the area and to lead changes when necessary – inversely to the role of the Dean in the Church District of Berlin City Centre described below. Church plants, as she describes, have not been part of the diocesan strategy for a long time. However, they do sometimes go ahead with the backing of the church authorities, as the common practice of the London Diocese has been to maintain a rather informal understanding between the bishop and church-planters. So the opportunistic method of church-planters in the early days of church-planting in East London was to consult the bishop and ask for his blessing to do something good in the name of Christianity.

> Oh, we got the bishop's blessing, so everyone knows about it, so bless
> him, and let's start it. And suddenly everyone is getting angry and annoyed.
> Who is this guy, what is going on? Why the church there and not there?
> And they are meeting in someone else's parish… etc. All really bad
> communication. (IPL41, 06.2014, Pamela Sanders)

The root of anger and annoyance in the more established parish churches in Hackney is related to a lack of communication on the denominational level. But the real problems are more structural. On the one hand, leaders of parish churches are particularly concerned with attracting people in their 20s and 30s to their congregations. Often referred to in congregations as 'the young urban professionals', congregations hope that these groups will bring more diversity in terms of age as well as in terms of their social and cultural capital. Network churches are focusing on the same groups, which makes it a direct competition. Parish churches, on the other hand, also express strong territorial claims. The planting of churches in an existing parish is thus often perceived as an assault on a congregation's autonomy and its established relationships in the local area.

> I am naturally quite uncomfortable when we look at church-planting which
> has to do with, where we are not reaching young people in their 20s or
> where we are not reaching a particular community of some sort, there we
> need to bring a church plant in. Because the danger of that is that we
> homogenise. Say where is the church for the 20s and 30s or for the
> creatives or whatever it is. So there is something for me about how we

keep that tension so that we not suck all of that out of a parish church.
(IPL41, 06.2014, Pamela Sanders)

The conflict-laden relations between new developments in doing church and the practices of established institutions were an important catalyst for the way denominational actors in London started to learn and adapt to the urban changes in the area as a consequence: firstly, as a lesson from the early days, today the London Diocese integrates church plants into their denominational structures. In contrast to a rather indifferent perspective on church plants in Berlin, the London Diocese reformed their institutional ways of dealing with church-planting and gradually incorporated it within its denominational reach. Mercy Church in Hoxton, which was planted by a Church of England church, became a Church of England church itself relatively early on. For London Diocese, this was strategically important not only to control the way church plants did church (once integrated, they had to follow Church of England guidelines) but also to integrate them into formal channels of communication inside the deanery structure. This made it easier for the diocese to control unwanted developments on the one hand, and simultaneously benefit from new inputs on the other.

For the congregation of the church plant, the integration into the established church system means less autonomy in the way of doing church, and simultaneously gives the church a different level of acknowledgement on the local level and new channels of cooperation for local social issues with other congregations (> 6.2). However, financially, church plants only benefit secondarily from this step, as they still have to provide their own funding, although they profit from cheaper rents of church facilities, be it for regular services or, as in the case of Mercy Church, for the rent of a vicarage, which makes it significantly easier for the church to stay in a central location despite ongoing gentrification.

This 'adoption' of network churches by the London Diocese was an initial step taken to integrate new ways of doing church into the denominational structures as an adaptation to changes in the immediate urban surroundings. However, the integration of church-planting has been taken further since the recent launch of 'Capital Vision', which involves the diocesan strategy of planting one hundred congregations in London by 2020 (> 4.1). This next step fully embraced and incorporated church-planting as an organisational strategy in central London. One important part of this strategy was to 'implant' congregations into parish church congregations, as a further way of habituating new ways of doing church into the denominational field.

> And I think as well the title church-planting is quite an unhealthy title. Because I think people in London have got a model for what that means. And what that means is Holy Trinity Brompton bringing 30 people and putting them somewhere and taking over the church. (IPL41, 06.2014, Pamela Sanders)

The church of Holy Trinity Brompton[28] (HTB) is a thriving, economically potential conservative Church of England church, situated in the more affluent western parts of London, and counts over 4,000 regular attendees on their Sunday services and runs several 'Alpha Courses', a course on the substance of Christianity the church initiated particularly for sceptics and those new to the Christian faith (Stanford 2012). The church is very active in planting congregations in London, but its model of church-planting is different to network churches linked to international church-planting networks, e.g. those within the Redeemer City to City network, who focus on one demographic or occupational group.

The church-planting model of HTB is based on sending a curate to a more or less dying congregation. Together with a number of people, who then form the basis of a new congregation, the initial group 'renews' or 'restarts' the church from within. This practice has been known within the London Diocese since the late 1980s, and since the mid-2000s particularly in East London. However, often perceived as a 'take-over' or 'colonisation', it has not been a much-appreciated practice at the level of local parishes, as Pamela Sanders, the Archdeacon of Hackney suggests.

But despite its lack of popularity, for the denominational field of the London Diocese the 're-start' of congregations together with Holy Trinity Brompton has become a rewarding strategy to adapt to local changes. Within the areas of Hoxton, Shoreditch and Bethnal Green, many regular parish churches are not doing well, for a number of reasons that reach from uninspired clergy to a lack of financial opportunities and the more structural reasons discussed above (> 3.1). The London Diocese, from within its own structures and with its own resources, is often unable to change much in these congregations, except by bringing in new pastors and hoping that the situation will change. The teaming up with a resource-rich and organisationally innovative church, which is the basis of several developments in Hoxton and Bethnal Green, was understood as an opportunity that not only affects growing congregations, but also their surrounding environments.[29]

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[28] As HTB itself is not a case in this study and a church known in the UK for its particular approaches, it is referred to by its original name. However, if people are quoted, I refer to them only by an alias as described in chapter 2.

[29] The congregations of St Mary in Hoxton and St Markus in Bethnal Green are two of the cases under review in this research.

## Stagnation in Nord-Neukölln

In contrast to the London Diocese, the established church structures in Berlin are less agile in their reaction to current developments. The denominational fields in Nord-Neukölln and Kreuzberg belong to two different church districts[30] that operate as completely independent organisational structures. Together with eight other church districts of Berlin, they form the Berlin Diocese, which is part of the larger field of the territorial church Evangelical Churches in Berlin. Nord-Neukölln is part of the Evangelical Church District of Neukölln (Evangelischer Kirchenkreis Neukölln). The church district exceeds the legal district boundaries of Neukölln and reaches from the urban fringes at the gentrification frontier in Nord-Neukölln to its rural outskirts in Königs Wusterhausen to the south, a region that is legally beyond the boundaries of Berlin and part of the region of Brandenburg. The church district comprises 32 parishes in total, which span from strongly welfare-oriented parishes in the northern parts with more than 7,000 members to rural parishes focusing on rather traditional forms of Sunday services and which are comprised of six merged congregations with less than 50 members each.[31]

Kreuzberg, on the contrary, belongs to a church district that comprises the most densely populated inner-city boroughs of Berlin. Beside Kreuzberg, the areas of Mitte, Tiergarten, Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg together form the Evangelical Church District of Berlin City Centre (Evangelischer Kirchenkreis Stadtmitte). This church district is mainly formed by areas belonging to the most popular inner-city areas, with growing populations including young people moving into the city, particularly after 1990 – many of them are situated in the former east – and that since then have been at the centre of attention in city-wide politics as well as cultural elites (Colomb 2012b).

This profile is almost the opposite of what the borough of Neukölln experienced until the mid-2000s. Whereas the denominational structures in the area of Kreuzberg were shaped by constant change and the congregations are used to dynamic demographical developments, Nord-Neukölln stagnated in all these circumstances at a very low level for a long time (Kessinger 2015).

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[30] The term church district (Kirchenkreis in German) represents the next level of denominational structure above the individual congregations. The equivalent structure inside the London Diocese is the deanery.

[31] Numbers are for October 2015, and are provided by the EKBO (2016). They are not officially published, but part of the empirical material that was collected during this research.

The Church District's perspective, as its dean Uta Jäger explains, is focused on the structural changes related to secularisation:

> The most crucial difficulty is that we generally think in parochial structures, which means area-covering. So we have congregations that still follow the ambition to be there for everyone in the parish. But that just doesn't work anymore, like it did 50 or 100 years ago. Because the people are not any longer majoritarian protestant. We are way below 30% in Neukölln…for the people working in the congregations this results in a feeling of being a minority, but this does not correspond with the claim that we have as a public church, to be present for everyone. (IPB32, 02.2014, Uta Jäger)

Uta Jäger's strategy in Neukölln is to uphold the church's public mission to serve everyone, and not only those being baptised and expressing their belonging to Christianity in the form of weekly participation. In her opinion, the evangelical church has a duty to serve people in need inside and outside the church. As much as she acknowledges the changes happening in Nord-Neukölln, asking "how can we integrate the students that are coming more and more to our district", she puts the focus of her work on the topics that shaped the image of Nord-Neukölln for decades:

> That is our melange, so to speak: poverty, foreigners, and interculturality.
> That's the three things that are obvious here. (IPB32, 02.2014, Uta Jäger)

This perspective is reflected in the ways the congregations work and do church: in Nord-Neukölln, "most of the congregations are focused on deaconal work, homeless shelter and food banks". With this profile, the congregations in Nord-Neukölln take over a significant role for poorer households in the area. This is mirrored in their very active welfare projects, which are based on a huge amount of people working as volunteers. The largest congregation in the area regularly serves more than 300 people per week with food and clothes, runs a cafe and organises more than 100 volunteers (IPB30, 01.2014, Andreas Otto).

However, as became clear during regular church visits on Sundays and in interviews with the pastors of the evangelical churches in Nord-Neukölln, congregational life is rather poor. None of the congregations reported any significant changes or particular concepts related to the area's changes. The viability of the different congregations is quite strong, but relies primarily on volunteers and individual pastors who are engaged in welfare work. In most of the churches in the area of Nord-Neukölln, this results in a shrinkage not only in numbers, but in the quality of and intellectual engagement in church services, as the director of congregational development puts it, explaining that she avoids loan words and church terminology during Sunday morning

services, as she is afraid that no one will be able to follow her (IPB34, 02.2014, Frauke Ebermann).

## Public performances and merging congregations in Kreuzberg

In the neighbouring area of Kreuzberg actors in the denominational field perceive the current changes in a very similar way. However, this has had a very different effect and led to much more proactive adaptational strategies. As stated above, the Church District of Berlin City Centre is characterised by congregations in the middle of the city that are much more used to rapidly changing environments . One particular signpost of this is the relatively steady church growth in many of its areas. The reasons for this growth are attributed to the dynamics of change in the former eastern parts of Berlin: congregations in the boroughs that formerly belonged to the GDR (areas of Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte in particular) recorded a significantly slower decrease in members during the period of population growth and gentrification during the 1990s and 2000s as well as a significant growth in numbers of visitors on Sundays and enquiries for the baptism of young children in the past 10 years. Overall, the sociological profiles of those districts are in part very different, and, as a consequence, the denominational structures are more or less well practiced in reacting to changes, as Anselm Gailing, the districts dean, states:

> Most of the households in our district are single-households, and 80% of the population is exchanged every five years. That shows what is going on sociologically and this is what the church congregations have to adapt to. They have to adapt to the fact, that the people choose their congregation by the offerings they make, and not to the area where they should belong to. No one in the Church District of Berlin City Centre cares about that anymore. But the whole church reforms are still focused on this functional responsibility. (IPB28, 01.2014, Anselm Gailing)

The way the Dean represents his church district in this interview section is also partially motivated by the desire to represent his organisation in a more progressive way. The playing with numbers,[32] which are far from the social reality in most of the areas the dean is responsible for, puts the district's congregation in a more metropolitan light, one that is characterised by young and well-educated people, rather than by poorer households with Turkish backgrounds. This becomes even clearer when he compares the social situation in his district with the one in Manhattan, New York, which Anselm

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[32] For instance, the number of single-households is actually around 50% in most of the district's areas (Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg 2014). Furthermore, two neighbourhoods among the areas of the Church District belong to the five socially most deprived neighbourhoods in the whole of Berlin (SenGeSoz 2014: 29).

Gailing understands as the primary role model for future reforms in the Evangelical Church in Berlin (IPB28, 01.2014, Anselm Gailing).

However, in terms of adaptation to changing environments, the practices the dean has initiated are relevant to an understanding of some recent fundamental congregational changes in the inner-city districts of Berlin. Since taking over the role as the district's dean in 2009, Anselm Gailing has been eager to restructure its ways of doing church and focuses his practices on a mix of heightened visibility of the church in public spaces and a realignment of the Protestant way of doing church. Exaggerations and aggravations, in this case, can also be interpreted as a clearer illustration of the real problems the dean as the person organisationally in charge aims to communicate to justify certain practices of the evangelical churches in his area. The most controversial and yet publicly effective action he introduced is a yearly procession on Good Friday, when a mixture of public intellectuals, politicians, congregants and priests carry a large wooden cross together through the centre of the city of Berlin. A practice that might not be uncommon in Spanish or Italian cities on Easter appears slightly unusual to observers in a strongly secularised context like Berlin.

Nevertheless, with this performance the church district is successful in bringing the church back into public discussions and creating encounters between the church and politics, and between the church and the wider public, which are rather unusual in Berlin. Good Friday on Easter 2014 gives an insight into these "postsecular rapprochements" (Cloke 2015) initiated by the church:

> At 10.30am, approximately 1000 people gather in the Berlin Cathedral next to Alexanderplatz. They jointly leave the building after a short introductory prayer by the Dean and the procession starts. In front of the Cathedral, the Dean together with the Bishop and three other pastors go to a huge green, wooden cross—it is 3 meters tall, weighs about 50kilograms and they start carrying it upright. On the first few hundred meters, they are being followed by dozens of photographers and cameras from local TV-stations. The procession follows one of the main roads towards Alexanderplatz, which is closed by the police for this occasion. At Alexanderplatz, where the main landmark of the former GDR, the TV-Tower (Fernsehturm), is situated, one also finds the Marien Church. It is the oldest existing church in the city, and symbolises the founding of the city in the 13th century. The annual topic of the procession is church and politics. At this first of seven stations, Petra Pau, member of the leftist party "Die Linke" and vice-president of the German Parliament, reminds the listeners in a critical statement, how people in this oldest church of the city celebrated and welcomed the takeover of Adolf Hitler, and that the church in general was more in favour of this then it tried to support resistance groups that were active on the other side of the road. Followed by the first reading of the passion, the procession continues to further historically relevant stations, where politicians from the former GDR, who are mostly strong atheists—which

they don't miss to express in their statements—comment critically on the role of the church in Berlin's history (Excerpt of field-diary Berlin, April 18 2014)

The procession resulted in nationwide press coverage as well as a deepened interest in the dean's himself. But Anselm Gailing's drive for public attention is not only related to politics or a new public image for the church. It is more a vehicle to actively disturb people's comforts in the secularised city:

> The public staging of religion is not just efficacious, but it brings us the discussion that we need… with the procession on Good Friday, we disturb the people drinking their coffee in the sunshine on Gendarmenmarkt by carrying a huge cross over the square and listening to the Passion. That's it. That is enough for some attention and for a break through what is taken for granted in this city on this special day, which is everything that is not Christian. We deliberately organised the procession to cross some main streets in the centre. And if the traffic has to stop due to the 2000 people crossing the street, then you get very interesting reactions. (IPB28, 01.2014, Anselm Gailing)

With these efforts to bring religion back into the public sphere in the midst of a secularising environment such as East Berlin, the Church District of Berlin City Centre sets a good example of the practices that John Eade describes as the "stubborn refusal of religion to disappear from the public stage" (Eade 2011: 284, in Bielo 2013: 303). Furthermore this practice of disturbing the everyday secular and the integration of secular politics into church activities is the opposite of a gesture of ingratiation; it rather embodies the very core of Christianity, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and presents it to the city's public. So the main distinction of this process of adaptation is that it is less an adaptation and more a public demonstration of the foundations of belief – this practice has been observed before, but in those instances as a suburban practice related to diaspora churches (Garbin 2012) rather than a practice in the centre of a secular city in the Global North.

Beyond a focus on public performances and an orientation on city-wide impacts, the church district focuses its capacities on the reorganisation of ways of doing church locally. These practices are, again, less concentrated on the secularised outside, and more on the substance of belief and a rather realistic view of the futures of the congregations.

> So among the congregations that we find here in the area, one-third is quite vital. And they succeed translating the gospel. One-third is stuck in traditions and one-third has already gone out. They are dead. But due to our church-systems, we are obtaining them. But they are actually dead. The crucial task is to find an expression and a linguistic form, to give substance to the gospel. And if one is not able to do that, then a

sociological study or other experiments or inter-religious efforts just won't help, as long as one don't know one's own identity, and as long as one don't know what the gospel means today and what it means for me, then all this is pointless. (IPB28, 01.2014, Anselm Gailing)

On the practical level, the claim of finding 'the right way' to translate an important  substance of Christian reasoning in a more contemporary way, is, beyond other practices, to directly influence the ways church congregations do church. From the dean's perspective, this way of doing church should be centred around "one's own identity", which, in this case, equals being able to translate the gospel – the essential books of the New Testament that narrate the life of Jesus – and therewith make Christian belief more relevant for the life of people today. Theologically, many movements within the church would claim this as the most relevant task. However, as has also been shown in the case of the Church District of Neukölln, it is rarely openly communicated or practiced. There are concerns that a focus on the substance of Christian belief would repel people from the church rather than attract them to it.

However, these concerns do not exist in the Church District of Berlin City Centre, which is eager to turn its congregations inside out, to show its centre to the world outside the church. A strategic way to achieve this is the positioning of like-minded pastors in the congregations. Although it is not a decision a dean is able to make on his own, as the parishes are democratically organised and independent organisations, his organisational power makes it possible for him to motivate like-minded candidates and put people into such privileged positions that their election by the church councils is very likely. This is a long-term but very central way to diffuse denominational aspirations of new ways of doing church from the field of denominations into the field of congregations, and it's a method evident  in the course of this research in parish church congregations in Berlin as well as in London.

The congregation of St Johannes in Kreuzberg's Graefekiez neighbourhood is one of the church congregations through which denominational ways of adaptation have been translated locally into the Church District of Berlin City Centre. The pastor of St Johannes, Gabriel, now in his early 40s, started his posting in 2010, a year after the area's dean came to Berlin. It is his first post in the city. As an openly homosexual priest who belongs to a Lutheran tradition – and making both central pillars of his work – he fits the dean's profile in mixing a liberal view on society in general with a focus on the translation of the substance of belief.

Taken as a whole, the parish church of St Johannes, by the time of 2010, was in a difficult state, having had a recent history of year-long controversies with pastors who didn't fit into the congregation or who for one reason or the other left the congregation after a short time of service, as Anita Kerner, a

representative of the parochial church council (Gemeindekirchenrat), reports (IPB42, 03.2014, Anita Kerner). At the same time, the congregation as well as its neighbouring congregations had to deal with diminishing church memberships. Besides the symbolic effect this has had, shrinking numbers remain a serious problem the denominational field in particular has had to cope with, as decreasing members have resulted in scarce financial resources for the congregations. In terms of structural reforms, unlike many areas in London, church closures and the selling and re-use of church buildings is not that common in Berlin. In such a starkly secularising environment the Evangelical Church in Berlin is eager to restrict church buildings to their foreseen purpose for as long as possible (IPB26, 10.2013, Erika Junghans). Therefore, a far more frequently practiced way of adapting the structures of the church to changing environments is the merging of two or more congregations into one parish that comprises multiple locations in close proximity to each other. This was the approach the congregation of St Johannes was forced to take.[33]

Whereas in the field of the denomination the merging of different congregations is a strategy to keep churches alive, on the level of the congregations this is often felt as a loss and related to fears of giving up the comfort of established structures and relationships. As became clear during research in the case of St Johannes, the merging of their congregation with the two neighbouring congregations of St Andreas and St Lukas had dominated congregational life for many years and caused unrest on many levels.

However, the congregation of St Johannes was in a comfortable position, with high numbers of members. This put it in a more stable situation with much less to lose than the other congregations, where fears of closure dominated the process. Within this rather unstable moment, the new pastor, Gabriel Reinhard, joined St Johannes with a plan to change some fundamentals of the congregation's culture.

> There was some displeasure in 2010, as the new pastor came who now
> wanted to do things a little differently. My predecessor was very very calm.
> He wore the classic black cassock, and stuck to a spoken liturgy. And then
> this Pastor Reinhard arrives, and he sings and he wears a white cassock.
> For many congregants that was rather shocking. But together with the
> church council we decided, that this is what we want, we want to reach the

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[33] Within the territorial church of Evangelical Churches in Berlin, the distribution of the main resources, the church taxes collected by the state, is calculated according to the numbers of church members. In the inner-city, a congregation can employ one pastor per 3,000 church members. Once the number of congregants sinks way below these numbers, church districts usually start to arrange the merging of congregations, in order to keep the individual congregations running.

people in the neighbourhood, we want to become an open congregation, we want to become hospitable… A few older people left the congregation, but well, we cannot reach everyone…our approach was like, Sunday 10am, black cassock, spoken liturgy, long sermon? That is what you will find in 90% of the evangelical congregations. But we wanted to set a different impulse. (IPB29, 01.2014, Gabriel Reinhard)

The different impulses the pastor initiated in the congregation were focused on structural changes as well as theological direction. However, the changes in religious content in particular were perceived as a strong provocation by many congregants, as one chairperson from the parish church council stated:

Well, he is very firm on liturgy, and he really tries to exhaust the rules of the evangelical church. And that displeased many. People complained that it's too Catholic. The PCC had to put him in his place when he started to use incense! That's not cool! But then, interestingly, all the younger people in the congregation, who just recently arrived, they said, finally no black coat! They thought that was great, because it's bright and related to friendliness. They didn't care about all the theological implications, they just cared about the friendliness and the way he (the pastor) makes them feel to belong during the service. That was quite surprising for me. (IPB42, 03.2014, Anita Kerner)

In contrast to the traditional imprint of Berlin as a united church, the pastor as well as the dean of the Church District belongs to a Lutheran tradition, which places a much stronger focus on (sung) liturgy and the configuration of sacred and hospitable spaces (> 5.2). But the embodiment of a very festive celebration during the service, with the deployment of colours and incense, symbolises for many older congregants exactly the opposite of the Protestant united tradition they have felt dedicated to for decades. Particularly in Kreuzberg, which is shaped by leftist politics and where evangelical churches are strongly dedicated to a sober and less festive way of celebrating, the change in the way of doing church on Sunday mornings was felt by many as a radical shift. For some it has been so dramatic that as an immediate consequence a group of older congregants – mostly people who grew up in the congregation and have considered it their home for more than 60 years – refused to talk to the new pastor as a form of protest. However, they have remained active members.

With the new pastor the congregation also initiated significant structural changes. Beside some minor spatial changes, the most important structural change was the decision to employ a youth minister and offer a weekly service for children. This is a direct adaptation of the changes happening in the immediate environment of the church.

Since 2005, this neighbourhood started to thrive again. Many young adults move here and start to go freelance, with little businesses and even small manufactories…They are mostly young academics with families. That's why the rents are rising. To the disadvantage of the old-established Kreuzberger people, who can't really afford that. And what's really obvious, is that this neighbourhood here, the Graefekiez, is developing in a completely different way from those neighbourhoods on the other side of the elevated railway. (IPB29, 01.2014, Gabriel Reinhard)

The mix of structural adaptations and the focus on the central elements of Christian belief is, in the case of St Johannes, apparently a successful way to change direction in a time of organisational struggle. The congregation and congregational life has grown fast over the past few years and now counts 70-90 regular attendees during Sunday services and has established several groups during the week – from prayer gatherings to relationship courses for newlywed couples. Similar to the public appearance during the procession on Good Friday, this is more the result of a mixture of adaptation and a focus on the organisation's core, and less an ingratiation to its secular surroundings. This gives some proof to the claim that being part of a church congregation seems to be relevant for the people in the area and that its spiritual grounding is a reason for its attractiveness.[34]

As described in the quote above, the immediate area surrounding the church is characterised by ongoing gentrification, which the pastor defines as the moving-in of groups who would be identified as gentrifying households in urban studies. Their moving into the area is one reason for the changing local amenities as well as an increasing pressure of displacement on "old-established Kreuzberger people". Particularly after 2008, the feel of the area has changed significantly, with more than 130 restaurants, shops and bars, which often stay open until late at night and increase local problems of noise and pollution (Helbrecht et al 2016), and an ongoing trend of rents rising way above the borough's average (Holm 2011, 2016). The church congregation profits from this situation, as most of the people demanding their services and engaging in the congregation moved into the area recently.

For the majority of the comparatively diverse congregation of St Johannes, the merging with St Lukas and St Andreas has been a sidelined topic since the arrival of the new pastor. It occupied the church council and led to many conflicts in the two congregations that were to merge with St Johannes. However, many of the new congregants arrived in St Johannes when the process was already underway. Congregational life can be, as this case portrays, simultaneously directed by two different paces accompanied by

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[34] How this relates to the spatial changes and to Christianity will be discussed more intensively in chapter 5

different personal sorrows and different organisational upheavals. Whereas the core of the congregation, as I will show further in chapter 5, is viable, the organisational background remains shaky and rather unstable.

The merging of congregations is not much of a straightforward space-making strategy in the sense that it claims or produces new spaces in the areas they have been situated in for decades. However, it is a strategy to maintain presence in a neighbourhood that is changing radically and to prevent congregations from vanishing and church buildings from closing. This sub-chapter discussed a variety of practices that serve as strategies for the denominational structures as well as individual church congregations to adapt to change in urban spaces. This is based, on the one hand, on a form of institutional mimicry. The successful activities surrounding church-planting have raised the local clergy's awareness of new practices that are being adopted by the London Diocese and integrated in the parish church system in the form of restarts and church grafts. These efforts to strengthen congregations and rebuild their fundaments is essentially different to how, on the other hand, the Church Districts in Berlin understand and react to their surrounding circumstances. Both church districts Neukölln and City Centre dismiss younger congregations as religiously inadequate or too fundamentalist. Characteristic to all processes related to an adaptation to and closer interaction with the changes occurring in inner-cities of London and Berlin is their embodiment of the very core of Christianity. By putting an emphasis on the values of Christian reasoning, the discussed processes of adaptation can be seen as a confident change of course rather than an ingratiation.

To sum up, this chapter discussed how the claiming of urban spaces by denominational as well as congregational actors constitutes new ways of doing church in gentrifying inner-city areas of London and Berlin. Those new ways are essentially expressed by praising the existing urban fabric and an accentuation of the foundations of Christian belief. The resulting effect is, on the one hand, an increasing presence of church plants that represent younger congregations geographically next to the more established church structures; these congregations engage new people in their congregational life and make church life attractive to formerly estranged groups. On the other hand, established churches adapt to the spatial changes that are taking place. The effect of both is that faith communities are growing in the midst of 'urban

frontiers', in areas where the hotspots of gentrification spread the pressure of change to the less 'trendy' areas.

# 5 Home-making in the gentrifying city

The focus of this chapter is on the social and cultural qualities of the places that have resulted from the religious community's embrace of secular spaces. Whereas the previous chapter showed how various ways of claiming spaces in the gentrifying inner-city areas of London and Berlin praise the urban fabric, this chapter asks how isolated or integrated these church practices are in the social and cultural realms of the areas they are situated in. The crucial question that will be discussed in the unfolding of this chapter is whether newly built and revitalised congregations function as "sacred archipelagos" that "continue to exist in a relatively autonomous and undetermined relationship with other spheres" (Wilford 2010: 342) or are rather "postsecular rapprochements" that simultaneously become a source of new spaces for counter-narratives to the current state of political neoliberalism in the city (Williams, Cloke and Thomas 2012: 1494), and of changing theological values (Cloke and Beaumont 2013: 20).

Whereas the previous chapter put a focus on the denominational fields, this chapter zooms further into the congregations and addresses the connections between the urban spaces in question and everyday congregational life. This chapter sheds light on the places that are being produced by new ways of doing church in gentrifying neighbourhoods. The metaphor of "home-making" (Eade 2012, Walsh 2011) is a useful bracket for the three sections of this chapter, as it captures the practices of congregants and church people in creating an atmosphere of feeling at home and comfortable in an urban environment that is otherwise dominated by rapid change and increasing mobility and solitude (Tonkiss 2003).

This chapter argues that growing congregations reveal a side of gentrification that is often overlooked in current urban research. It is argued, firstly (> 5.1), that people commonly associated with gentrification also desire spaces for communal activities and belonging, instead of assuming that people who are seen as the booster of gentrification are only interested in "padding the bunker" and living a life estranged from the local (Atkinson 2006, Uitermark et al 2007), as has often been claimed. Church congregations, being defined by their eagerness to form 'community' to some extent, create places for a communal life that many people in inner-city areas search for – independently of their dwelling status as a long-time resident or a newcomer. The second section (> 5.2) focuses on the creation and maintenance of hospitable spaces as the foundation on which encounters occur. Slogans such as 'hipster Christianity' are expressions of the changing ways of doing

church in order to attract new groups to an old tradition – and they find their theoretical counterpart in the presence of and politics for the 'creative classes' that have been identified in gentrification research as one of the starting points of the spatial restructuring of inner-city areas. The last section of this chapter (> 5.3) will briefly discuss the connections between gentrification, 'hipster Christianity' and the 'creative class'. It will be argued, that the social figure of the 'hipster', although not a congruently used term in social theory, helps to reveal the apparent need of communal sites for people to encounter 'others' (like-minded and different people) in gentrifying urban spaces.

# 5.1 Desire for belonging

The growth of church congregations in London and Berlin is an effect of gentrification – and churches vice versa have an impact on the urban spaces they are situated in. Beyond organisational strategies to claim spaces, as referred to in the previous chapter, a crucial link between church growth and gentrification lies in the *habitus* of the people who are part of both processes: its 'users'. Everyday church life thus tells about what and who gentrification is composed of. This subchapter takes a closer look at the 'why' of the attractiveness of church congregations, as this reveals aspects of people's practices in gentrifying areas as well as the state of these areas that research on gentrification does not usually focus on.

Church life in the congregations of this study is characterised by an ambition to grow congregation numbers and a focus on ways to integrate new target groups, to make them feel at home. Established churches as much as church plants try to recruit primarily those groups that are underrepresented in their congregations. New target groups are also mostly congruent with new demographic groups moving into an area the congregations are situated or newly founded in. Established but re-started parish churches, such as those run by Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) in London, aim to become 'healthy churches' (> 4.3), realising that their congregations are missing those new demographic groups that are just moving into an area. Newly founded church plants often consist of younger demographics from their early days and specifically aim for 'young professionals', 'artists' and people they associate with members of the 'creative classes', terms very frequently used by church plants and established churches alike (> 4.2).

Popular terminologies for demographic or cultural groups such as 'young professionals', 'creatives', 'artists' and 'hipsters' are strongly related to what has been discussed as the 'new middle classes' in urban studies. What defines these so-called 'new middle classes' is not only their *relative* wealth in terms of economic capital and the occupation of certain positions in white-collar jobs mostly related to knowledge-based economies (Bell 1979), but that they are also seen as possessing high amounts of cultural and social capital (Ley 1994). The appearance of 'new middle classes' in city centres creates new synergies between middle-class identities and urban geography (Ley 1994, May 1996, Hamnett 2003). Because preferences for certain aesthetics, distinctive consumption patterns and a search for 'authenticity' (Zukin 2009, 2015) make gentrification an economically driven process originating from cultural factors expressed/set in place by the 'new middle classes', they lead to new patterns of local segregation between established long-term residents and newcomers (Butler 2003) (> 5.3).

These forms of segregation are an expression of strong local boundaries between different social groups that are simultaneously struggles between established and newcomers over the meaning of territories (Watt 2008). However, what has rarely been at the centre of academic attention is that struggles over space are also expressions of people "dwelling in place" as a form of "elective belonging",[35] which stems from a strong desire for belonging that may result in cultural engagement on the local level as well as being a practice of active boundary work (Savage 2010: 130ff). Hence, as it is argued in the following section, a desire for belonging is likely to be a starting point for the crossing of cultural boundaries.

## More than a congregation: "I was super lonely and I googled, Christian, Artist and London"

The desire for belonging captures a very general psychological mechanism that people experience (Bridge 2007). But this desire becomes particularly salient in moments of social change, since belonging to social groups and the growth of social bonds creates self-esteem and confidence in rather unstable personal moments (May 2013). To settle down socially in a new city or a new neighbourhood characterised by a super-diverse population and ongoing

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[35] The term originates in a study on "Globalisation and Belonging" (Savage et al 2005). In line with Bourdieu's sociology of fields, the authors argue that "belonging should be seen neither in existential terms, nor as discursively constructed, but as a socially constructed, embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate given their social trajectory and their position in other fields." (ibid: 12).

demographic changes is very likely to be experienced as a situation of change and often as a situation of struggle by newcomers to large cities.

Katie, now in her early 30s, is a very active member of the congregation of Mercy Church Hackney, the first church plant in Hoxton founded 10 years ago (> 4.2). Her way into the congregation is closely linked to her relocation to London, which she describes as a rather rough experience. Growing up in a Christian household in rural parts of the US, she moved from Los Angeles (where she lived for a couple of years, working as an artist) to Hackney in 2009 to complete a Masters Programme in Fine Arts. During her first months in London, she felt rather intimidated by the city and the people she encountered.

> Like it was so much change, and my life was really disrupted due to this. I didn't expect it to be as hard as it was. British people are just not very friendly. Like it is really hard to make friends here. And people are really really nice, but they don't necessarily invite you out for a drink. You know, they just don't. I found that very difficult when I first arrived. So when I was super lonely and I googled, 'Christian', 'Artist' and 'London', and I thought maybe there is some kind of Christian artist network in London that I can go to. (IPL16, 12.2013, Katie Butler)

Katie's loneliness is not only due to a maladjustment to a new place; her experience of loneliness in a new large city is what has been described as a general paradoxical effect of large agglomerations, which for many causes anonymity due to a dense and heterogeneous population (Tonkiss 2003, Strhan 2013). However, what Katie was apparently looking for was a place to combine her interests in arts with her faith in order to reconnect with society. Her search on Google brought her to Mercy Church Hackney, which openly advertises the congregation's focus on the arts. Katie's first impression of the congregation was not only as open and welcoming (> 5.2), but also as a moment of "coming home", and being part of the congregation of Mercy Church Hackney quickly became the centre of her life.

> I almost feel like I need to get other things in my life so that it is less important. … Which is a good thing, but sometimes I do think I should make more friends with people who are not Christians. So it is a bit weird having friends who are only Christians. Although they are good people. I actually can't believe that I would still be in London. It is a bit of a hard city this one. I don't think that I would still be here if it wasn't for that community. (IPL16, 12.2013, Katie Butler)

The main activity of the congregation of approximately 150 people is the gatherings for the Sunday Service, a more or less regular Church of England service, but one that strongly focuses on experimental forms of music and a sermon which most other congregants describe as an "intellectual

engagement with God". But what defines the congregation as a "community of good friends" are the pub trips after the service and the more informal gatherings during the week with "like-minded people" (IPL16, 12.2013, Katie Butler). This is the basis of Katie's support network in London, which helps her survive in moments of despair, a situation she faced when she was unemployed for a few months.

> I am an immigrant, I can't get any benefits and I had enough money saved from my previous job to last me two months. And I was unemployed for three months. So I had a really horrible month. That was like the worst month of my life. But the Church paid my rent. And Jadon (the congregation's worship pastor) was always making me dinner. I learned how to bake a super good bread out of almost nothing… And so that, like if I didn't have that community at the church, I don't know what I would have done. Like I just don't know. The church did take care of me. (IPL16, 12.2013, Katie Butler)

Yasmine recently moved to Hoxton from the south of England and was introduced to Mercy Church Hackney through university friends. She is a 26-year-old student. Her experiences and expectations of the congregation are very similar to Katie's. The "intimate community" is the most crucial aspect for her at Mercy Church Hackney:

> One of the biggest things is the community. In other churches people are not too always very friendly and welcoming. At Mercy Church people all have something in common beyond being Christian, that makes it quite a friendly environment. And people really care for each other. It is a very intimate community. (IPL12, 12.2013, Yasmine Brown)

The crucial element for Katie and Yasmine of being part of the congregation is that it functions as a 'circle of friends', particularly because people share more than their faith; they "all have something in common beyond being Christian". Feelings of coming home are not solely triggered by the satisfaction of the desire to find a place to engage in an intimate, comfortable community. For most of the congregants in this study it is equally important that the congregations are made 'for friends'. The ambition to be part of a congregation doesn't solely stem from the wish to be a member of a worshipping  community, but more from the desire to belong in general.

As in Katie's case, some of the church congregations in this study function as a sort of "service hub" (Ley 2008) for people moving into the city, providing the environment for a first point of contact with like-minded people. As other studies showed, the more ethnically homogenous church congregations are, the better they provide people with bonding social capital (ibid., McRoberts 2003) as well as political agency (Ehrkamp and Nagel 2012). But belonging for

congregants in this study means more than just hanging out with like-minded people; it also includes a search for connections with people who are different and more locally embedded, as the next sections will show. This further relates to the ability of churches to provide 'hospitable spaces' for newcomers and long-term residents alike, where the crossing of social boundaries becomes more likely (Ehrkamp and Nagel 2014, > 5.2).

## Perceiving difference: "I thought that the church is a place for socially deprived people"

The intimacy of a homogeneous congregation like Mercy Church Hackney also means being more or less part of a demographically exclusive club. The congregation of Kirche für Kreuzberg in Berlin has a similar demographic setup. Consisting of around 80-100 members, it is mostly composed of people between the ages 20-30, most of whom have moved to Berlin in the past 3-5 years.

Rudolf, a 27-year-old social-science student and fairly new to the young congregation in Kreuzberg, appreciates the very 'intimate community', but he is equally critical about its homogeneity and a lack of connections with what he takes to be crucial aspects of the area of Kreuzberg.

> So at the beginning I always thought that Kirche für Kreuzberg means that it is a congregation for Kreuzberg, that tries to reach Kreuzberger *(people living in the neighbourhood)*. Kreuzberg directly made me think of homeless people, like at *Kotti*. And I always thought that the congregation cares about it. And during the first weeks I talked to the pastor and told him that I was missing the people living on the street, you know. I thought they were part of the idea. Then he replied: 'No, we are a congregation for friends. Like for your friends'. And that was interesting to me, I didn't see it that way. That was a little weird in the beginning. (IPB50, 06.2014, Rudolf Klein)

Growing up as a Christian in a small city in the west of Germany, Rudolf moved to Berlin for a job and decided to settle down in Kreuzberg in order to be close to the Project Kirche für Kreuzberg, which friends recommended to him. Thinking about Kreuzberg, Rudolf initially compares the neighbourhood with *Kotti,* an abbreviation for Kottbusser Tor, an area in the borough that is well-known for its large-scale social housing projects built in the 1970s, drug dealing and high crime rates. As a trained social worker, Kreuzberg for him represents not only the cool and crowded neighbourhood that it may be for others, but simultaneously a place filled with poverty that demands personal engagement in social projects. To him, this is what a congregation should care about, it should be a place to help people cross boundaries.

> But we are a congregation full of people who still search for their own identity. I think that is crass, we are a congregation of newcomers except for one or two people …The congregation just attracts those hipster-like people. You know, people who are a typically young Berlin crowd. (IPB50, 06.2014, Rudolf Klein)

Despite his critical reflection, Rudolf is a member of the congregation exactly because of this questing profile in between a "hipster-like", slightly self-doubting atmosphere and a substantial contribution to the social needs in the surrounding urban area of what he understands as being at the heart of living in Kreuzberg as a Christian. When he moved to Berlin in 2013, the congregation was the place where he found practical support, people who helped him find a flat and start his life in a new city – a basic function of "immigrant churches" (Ley 2008). But what is equally important for Rudolf and what he defines as the root of his confidence in being engaged in the neighbourhood, to do social work and to make friends in the congregation, is the way faith is lived at Kirche für Kreuzberg.

> I know many congregations, as I've lived in many other places before. But this congregation has a very specific way to translate Christian topics. It is not shallow. It's not like 'this is Jesus and he died for you, now go on and do this or don't do that'. It is much more related to everyday life, with a more personal background. I feel like in this congregation one can find different answers to the questions one just has. And it is challenging, because you actually have to think about it. It is not shallow as in 'You're failing in doing this and that'. (IPB50, 06.2014, Rudolf Klein)

The focus on a strong faith mixed with an intellectual engagement and the very basics of belief leads Rudolf through the ambiguity of his congregation, meandering between a lifestyle enclave and individual ambitions to partake in crossing social boundaries. Others in the congregation summarise this as a place to live an 'authentic faith' (> 5.3).


## Encountering difference: serving the local community

As Rudolf's case indicates, the desire for belonging outstrips pure self-fulfilment or quick solutions for personal, mostly temporal difficulties one experiences in times of change.  Although some church plants are more inward-oriented as they claim to form congregations as 'circle of friends', congregants in these congregations still have an eye on what is happening in their surrounding urban areas. Furthermore, for most congregants it is an essential part of their Christian identity to be engaged in local social issues.

So it is for Ruth, a junior policy advisor for a member of the UK parliament in her mid-20s. She recently joined the congregation of St Markus in the

neighbourhood of Bethnal Green, a congregation that has been re-started by a team connected to Holy Trinity Brompton. As she newly moved into the area in East London, she was looking for a new place to worship. But, similar to Rudolf, beyond practicing her faith, it was equally important to her to find a place that resonates with her political work which is related to housing in London, and "reflects local demographics".

> So I am actually quite straightforward with these things. I just approached people (in the church) and asked them how their church is like and what they liked about it. And I was very impressed by people's answers! I am surely not aware of everything that might have happened in the past, but I was quite impressed that there was this unity and this diversity. … I think I just felt quite free to be myself there. Because I didn't feel like I had to fit into a certain mould, but interestingly maybe I also just fit the mould, that is also quite possible. Maybe I am just not quite aware of it. Because I think there probably is a St Markus type which is loved, fun, is a little bit weird, but very serious about God … So knowing there are people working with prostitutes, there are people befriending older people... That kind of what the church as a whole values has been really important to me. (IPL48, 07.2014, Ruth Griffin)

What unites church plants such as those described above and growing parish churches that have been re-started recently is a change in their ways of doing church and linking a seriousness in practicing faith (which often lies at and sometimes crosses the boundary of religious fundamentalism) with more progressive positions on social issues. One way this materialises is the engagement of these congregations with social issues in concrete social projects at the urban edges of London and Berlin (> 6). But a far more subtle change lies in the way these congregations promote inner-congregational diversity through enabling and moderating encounters with difference.

In the quote above Ruth summarises this as unity in diversity and ambitions for social engagement in the local area, combined with being "very serious about God". These factors combined are crucial characteristics for many new congregants (who simultaneously happen to be new residents) in young and re-started congregations as it represents an embodiment of their home-making practices, a way to substantiate one's own notions of dwelling in place and to "claim local affiliation" (Savage 2010: 116). "Believing in belonging" (Day 2011), the interdependency of personal belief, 'community' and friendships, is enriched with an ethical shift towards the very local space and the people who have resided in these areas a long time.

> I think we were caught by the idea of serving the local community. We've lived in Hackney for many years. My dad lived in Hackney when he was in the UK. So I know the borough really well. And it is a borough that we love and that we are really passionate about the people and the communities

and the diversity. It feels very much like a home for us. And having the opportunity to worship in a place we call home was just important for us by that time. You know, it is just another community. (IPL43, 07.2014, Paul Abulu)

Paul, whose parents migrated from Nigeria to Hackney, is a busy and successful musician in his early 30s. During his career, he lived in different cities across Europe and West Africa and decided to come back to his home borough of Hackney to settle down with his wife a couple of years ago. Both were members of a large church in the City of London before they recently became members of the congregation of St Mary Hoxton after moving into the area. Their story of choosing their congregations according to the area they want to live in reveals how deeply the desire for belonging to a place is intertwined with the desire to be confronted with different ways of living as much as certain cultural diversity.

> I mean when we were younger, the idea was worshipping with people who are part of our creative and cultural community, was very important and very significant. And I think for us it is just time to engage with another community. And a geographical one and kind of serving people who have much less than we. You know, we are young and affluent, with lots of cash, relatively. And we are relatively affluent, we are highly educated and well connected and we've got a strong social sense for networks. And that's not the case for the majority of people who live around us. Even though, you know there are tons of yuppies like us, but to be honest, the majority work here, but live elsewhere. Because it is quite expensive. So being able to just worship in this amazing community and see if there is anything we can offer to the people as well, was great. And also, when we moved, everybody said to us, oh it would be great to be in a smaller church. Where you can serve and where you are really able to help people. And we thought, we are going to be most impacted by the context rather than us impacting the context. We are two people who don't really know. We are going to the church because the people of the community are going to transform us and we need some of that transformation in that stage of our life. (IPL43, 07.2014, Paul Abulu)

Paul and his wife were rather hesitant about entering a new congregation in the beginning. Their comfort in their old congregation among their creative peers was high – which is exactly what pushed them to a different church in the end. In the quote above, Paul does not refer to 'this amazing community' as a place to help others, the people who live a different life to him, long-term residents mostly living in one of the nearby social housing estates. He is not overly idealistic that his and his wife's presence has a massive impact on the new congregation, because he is "young and affluent with lots of cash". He rather hopes that it makes a difference for him, that it will transform him and

his wife: "And just to make friends with people who live there as we quite like them." (IPL43, 07.2014, Paul Abulu)

To encounter people that are different from oneself is an important part of making a home for many congregants. It is the basis for 'dwelling in place' and materialising one's desire for belonging to a neighbourhood. The acquaintances and friendships that result from such conscious encounters are the possible starting points for crossing boundaries and bridging different experiences in neighbourhoods.

Hand in hand with the creation of these starting points for bridging social boundaries goes the intensification of cultural boundaries, a process of 'othering' in a spatial sense. As stated in the quote above, Paul has a very definite idea about his social position in relation to the people he encounters in the 'new community'. In comparison to the 'geographical community' he has entered in Hoxton, he describes himself as 'relatively affluent', 'highly educated' and 'well connected'. Conversely, this is what the original congregation, made up of the local people of Hoxton, lack. However, such a process of 'othering' does not necessarily lead to exclusion and stigmatisation, but is rather a way to become aware of the relationship between the self and others, as an imperative to act on ethical grounds (Barnett 2005: 7f).

> Sebastian: You said it probably brings you much more change in your life than you would be able to bring to the congregation. How would you describe the changes that happen?
>
> Paul: It moves you out of the space, where you and all of your mates are the most important thing in the world….you are surprised every day, by the kind of how wonderfully different people are from you. And the richness comes from other people's lives. If it is someone who has lived a life which for 70 years has been utterly different from my short few years, it's just an amazing creation! (IPL43, 07.2014, Paul Abulu)

For Paul the conscious decision to move to a new congregation brings with it the chance to meet people that are 'utterly different' and helps him undergo his own transformation. This is based on relevant places that make these opportunities happen, such as hospitable spaces created in churches, which are the focus of the next section of this chapter (> 5.2).

# 5.2 Hospitable spaces

The 'desire for belonging' discussed in the previous section is based on a decisive openness towards social diversity. Strong "claims of local affiliation" (Savage 2010: 116) by newcomers are potential bridges across boundaries with people who are different. But these prospective "ways of relating" (Barnett 2005:5f) need spaces to materialise, hospitable spaces. Spaces of hospitableness, it is argued in this section, can become "micro-publics of cultural encounters" (Amin 2002: 967), which are a necessary condition for people to acknowledge otherness and overcome long-established boundaries between 'them' and 'others'. Different forms of the "politics of connectivity" (Amin 2004: 40f) are grounded in a hospitality that is lived in many church congregations and it is a particularly salient and enhanced home-making practice in the growing church congregations of the inner-cities of London and Berlin. This section is about the creation and inherent characteristics of these hospitable spaces.

Hospitality, a term often used in reference to catering amenities, captures more generally in social theory the mundane practices of relating hosts and guests (Bell 2007: 15f). More specifically and as understood in this section, hospitality refers to "a *proposition* of closer physical or social proximity and can therefore be thought of as an attempt to overcome or at least temper the effects of difference" (Lugosi 2009: 399). However, hospitality in spaces is not a universal category; it does not apply to everyone in a space at all times. As a relational characteristic of space, hospitality is produced and enacted in different ways and its perceptions are highly selective.

Churches are, in theory, conducted by hospitality, as it is a central pillar of Christian theology (Yong 2008). But particularly in church spaces hospitality is not unconditional, as it implies the respect and protection of the boundaries of the church (Ehrkamp and Nagel 2014). This is an essential constraint regarding church spaces, as social proximity is limited to people who visit churches and for one reason or another identify with the things that are happening inside a church.

Hence, the religiosity of church spaces limits the range of users as well as its uses. This makes churches – particularly due to increasing secularisation – exclusive spaces in the sense that they are only considered as being able to host those parts of the population of an area that are for one reason or another sympathetic with practiced Christianity and willing to *become* guests. Within these boundaries, hospitality in church spaces, it is argued, is a condition to strategically and/or temporally propose an atmosphere that

allows for social proximity in otherwise distant relationships (Barnett 2005) and fosters its role as a resource broker.


## Implanting hospitality through a 'healthy church'

The ambitions of re-started churches to create a 'healthy church' is the ground on which parish churches in this study create hospitable spaces. But it is also often framed as the last chance to prevent the congregations from being closed down by denominational actors.

> If you look around this kind of congregation on a Sunday and you think, there is nowhere else in life where these people would sit next to each other and have a cup of tea together, then that is probably a healthy church. Because it shows that they are actually transcending the kind of the cultural norms, the cultural divisions. And that is something I think I have always found very inspiring. A place where young, old, sort of intergenerational, inter-economical, rich, poor, professional, people who are at work, long-term unemployed, whole-life British citizens, and people with various immigration statuses, you know, where they all come together and sit around a common table, so that the Christian identity becomes created. (IPL07, 01.2014, Felix Graham, Vicar of St Mary Hoxton)

'Healthy church' is often used as a term by clergy and vicars alike to refer to the organisational challenge of revitalising congregations and including various demographic groups from an area during the weekly offerings the church makes. Although these ambitions are closely related to the origins of the church as a place to marketise Christianity ("…so that the Christian identity becomes created", see quote above), it is still driven by the idea of opening up a space for 'unconditioned' mutual encounters in urban areas that are characterised by rapidly changing demographics and pressures of gentrification. This is a particular priority for the churches of St Mary Hoxton and St Markus Bethnal Green, which both belong to the church-planting network of Holy Trinity Brompton in London (> 4.3).

> The observation I made, they say that roughly 75% of the population of the neighbourhood are under the age of 40 or under the age of 45 in Hoxton. But in our congregation, when I first arrived, probably 80% were over 45. And the other thing was that the congregation was primarily constituted by the old Hoxtonian white working class, the Afro-Caribbean and the West African. So it was really 80-90% Black, either African or Afro-Caribbean. Which is fantastic, but it actually wasn't representative of the local area, which has a lot of young professionals and students from all kinds of different nationalities around. And we have actually drawn in more people of different nationalities. And a greater mixture I suppose of ethnicities, races and ages. And I think to some degree that was part of the fact that, when I was appointed you know I was the youngest vicar in the diocese of London. So having a young white man with a kind of middle-class

educational background, you know, I can speak the same language as the kind of middle-class professionals. And that maybe made it a more hospitable place... (IPL07, 01.2014, Felix Graham, Vicar of St Mary Hoxton)

The church of St Mary Hoxton is the church that Paul (the musician who positions himself as a "relatively affluent, well-educated black guy") described as his 'new community', a place to get him out of his comfort zones of homogeneity (> 5.1). Felix, who was 33 years old when he was appointed vicar at St Mary in 2010, moved into the area together with his wife and three kids. He worked as a curate in another church based in the north of London. What is distinctive about his personality is that beyond his strengths in leadership, Felix is a highly politically active figure inside the local branch of the Labour party as well as in an organisation called Christians on the Left (> 6).

He joined the congregation shortly after the diocese was thinking of selling the building due to an economically struggling and shrinking congregation. Those who were left, following Felix's description above, mainly belonged to the local West-African community, along with some of the older "Hoxtonian white working-class", which did not reflect the demographic composition of the area. The revitalisation of St Mary Hoxton was based on the idea of making it a hospitable place. Technically, it can also be understood as a church-plant in an existing parish church, which was characterised by a dying but still existing congregation.

I was invited to come and look at the church, really from that perspective with the idea of coming to develop what would be called a church graft... So rather than coming with, say ten or 15 people who have a kind of monogrammatic experience of worship and church life, and all coming like the saviours, the rescue-escort, I thought it would be more interesting, for me and my family to move down, and begin ministry here and then invite specific people to come and join in ... from different places, people who would have different skills and experiences. (IPL07, 01.2014, Felix Graham, Vicar of St Mary Hoxton)

The soft approach of a "church graft" employed at St Mary Hoxton is a way of revitalising the congregation in a slower way than the model of a regular church-plant would, closer to building it step-by-step in a functional manner. This incremental change of the congregation differs from the usual model of Holy Trinity Brompton, for instance as employed in the congregation of St Markus Bethnal Green, where about 15-20 people formed a new congregation that joined the old congregation at one time. At St Markus this provoked serious tensions over spatial arrangements that are still present in the everyday life of the congregation, which even after several years still runs two different services for two different congregations on a Sunday (> 6.1).

The attraction and integration of younger demographics into an existing church congregation is the initial task of re-started parish churches in becoming a 'healthy church'. The congregations in London and Berlin that are part of this study all started this process by becoming more attractive to families with children through the appointment of children's ministers, the setup of regular family services and children's groups. This has been particularly successful at St Mary Hoxton, as the attendance of young children has risen from very low numbers (<10) in 2010 to over 50 children regularly attending Sunday services in 2014. The congregation as a total grew from 20-30 regular attendees to about 150 within these four years.

Beyond the focus on children, the rapid growth of the congregation of St Mary Hoxton is due to a variety of factors that are related to the gentrification of the area. The personal identification with a young, white vicar with strong leadership skills who is able to speak the language of those 'young professionals' and their families he tries to attract but is still able to connect with all the other groups in the congregation, is one important factor that newer congregants mention as a main reason for being initially attracted to the congregation. Another reason was that what St Mary Hoxton offered was so fundamentally different to what most people had experienced in other churches. New demographic groups from the immediate area were also attracted by a variety of special services that were organised beyond the weekly Sunday-morning services, such as a 'student pizza night' with free pizza at the church that is publicly advertised at the fence of the church premises as well as on Facebook, services oriented towards young people working in the 'tech industries' at nearby Old Street roundabout,[36] and a quieter and prayer-oriented service on Sunday evenings.

All these activities successfully focus on new groups and advertise religious content in previously neglected groups. However, what makes people appreciative and become regular members of the congregation seems to be dependant not only on this change in cultural links but is also closely related to the mundane experiences surrounding the weekly Sunday services and the people who meet each other during the activities that evolve out of this. A variety of arrangements make this particular church a place in which people are willing to invest their time and effort. The decisive changes people referred to in interviews were rather small things related to organisational aspects, such as a reliable start and end times of the service, which now begins at the family-friendly time of 10.30 am, a worship band that plays contemporary

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[36] Old Street roundabout is centrally located between Hoxton and the City of London. The area is home to approximately 1,500 digital businesses, which is why it is also known as "silicon roundabout" and a magnet for "creative workers" (Martins 2015).

songs as well as more traditional hymns, a sermon that connects the everyday life of the various demographic groups in Hoxton, and an inviting atmosphere with tea and coffee being served after the service: "we just had to have a service that started on time and ended on time. And the experience of visiting church became a positive experience" (IPL07).

These practical changes initiated by the new vicar were led by a strong idealism about the church as a 'neighbourhood organisation' that should not only be a place in which to regularly celebrate Christianity, but also somewhere that brings people together to solve problems and initiate personal change through "active citizenship":

> The more confident people are standing up speaking in front of their Christian peers on a Sunday, the more confident they will be of standing in front of a residents association or the Hackney Citizen meeting. (IPL07, 01.2014, Felix Graham, Vicar of St Mary Hoxton).

This "ideological dimension of a hospitable space" (Lugosi 2009: 401ff) represents the basis of a variety of active social projects the congregation of St Mary Hoxton is involved in in the immediate neighbourhood and that lead to regular encounters of people belonging to the different groups in the area, which results in active boundary work as well as conflicts inside the congregation (> 6.1). But beyond this ideological dimension lies the ground for a *situational* hospitality. Situations of hospitality are accountable for the congregation as a space where 'politics of connectivity' are grounded in an everyday togetherness among the congregants, as Bella Patterson, a relatively new member of the congregation, explains:

> And we've got this sense of fellowship that overrides whatever differences people may have. And I think there are a lot of people who are actually trying to work to bridge gaps. So things like our shared lunches are great, because we get to talk about our recipes. So people want to know why I am always making Vietnamese food and want recipes for this and that. And we've had African migration members who teach English people how to cook their food in their home. And this is great. People have got a willingness to share and to learn at St Marys. So I think that goes a long way with bridging the gaps that may be there. And I think because everybody just sits together and gets on with stuff, that helps too. Because whatever differences there are, the common ground is more important I think. (IPL46, 07.2014, Bella Patterson)

Bella, a white working mum in her mid-30s who positions herself "more working than middle class", never was a practicing Christian before she joined the congregation of St Mary Hoxton. She got introduced into the congregation through a mother of her little boy's friend. But when she and her husband moved into the area in 2008, they suddenly found themselves in the role of

'yuppies and gentrifiers', marked as such by others due to the fact that she had bought a flat in one of the council estates.

> I live on a council estate, I bought a flat on a council estate, and when I moved in, they said we were yuppies! (laughs out loud) And I thought, that is hilarious! I bought my house because I was a keyworker so I've got a shared ownership scheme, so I pay half rent and half mortgage. Because I was on a low wage. And that's how I could afford to buy a house and not because I was a yuppie! I just thought that was amazing and some people didn't speak to us for years. Because they just thought... Actually, some people didn't speak to us until I got pregnant. And then I think they realised that we were going to stay and build our family here. But until then, they were just hostile, because, you know, 'Oh, they are not like us'. (IPL46, 07.2014, Bella Patterson)

Becoming a member of the church was not only a practical decision, but it seemed to Bella an easy way to get a foothold in the 'community', to get in touch with people from the area. Although she positions herself as being a very spiritual person, Bella struggled to become part of the congregation in the beginning due to the spiritual imprint of the service. Her feeling of connectedness was based more on the experience of singing in a church choir with other mums who live in the same estate and seeing her son easily making friends in the congregation. It was the practical reasons that made her stay initially. However, after a couple of months, during a Sunday service, she had a moment of "being called by God", successively transforming her into a strong believer. Accordingly, Bella clearly states in the first quote above, "the fellowship" is the "common ground" the hospitality in the congregation is based upon.

> I mean it is just a place where people can place all sorts of concerns I think. One topic often is around housing. People actually had to ask for a place to stay for a period of time. And a situation where a family had to struggle with an immigration problem. That was brought up in church, and there were always people who could give all sorts of practical advice for that. And those who couldn't always knew someone who could help. And there were families who really had difficult times. They will come find people, and ask for support. …Because that's what we do, we care for each other. And there is a real strong sense for that. And when the children fall over in the playground and their parents aren't there, the children will look and they know that they have a number of adults that they can trust. And feel comfortable with going to for help. And that is really important. We don't live in the kind of society where people have necessarily extended families around them. So people are extending their family by making close bonds with other people in the congregation. (IPL46, 07.2014, Bella Patterson)

The coming together in the church on the common ground of celebrating a common interest that is based on people's desire to belong but also to believe

creates a particular kind of hospitality. It is a hospitality that is strongly ideological in the sense that it is based on the ground of a Christian faith and – in the case of St Mary Hoxton – also based on the goals and political values of activating members to articulate their problems and positions. This ideological perspective is the starting point for a situational hospitality that creates bonds across long-established boundaries for people to get things done. As Bella suggests, the congregation is much more than a place to go to on a Sunday; it is a tight 'community' of very different people, an extended family for many, a place to make a 'home'.

## Welcoming aesthetics of hospitality in church plants

'Home-making' practices in re-started parish churches are different to those in younger church plants. Although there are many overlapping characteristics and both types of growing churches are aiming for similar demographic groups, network churches are not necessarily eager to represent the demographic composition of a geographic area. Their main strategy is based on 'filling the gaps', as church plants claim to offer a frame to practice Christianity for people who are not attracted by the offerings of the more established churches. Consequently, their acts of hospitality are less focused on the congregation as a place for encounters among different demographic groups, and more on the experience in the physical space itself, and the creation of a place for peers to meet. However, the underlying ideological dimension of hospitality is not fundamentally different to those of parish churches. In most of the church-planters' perceptions, church plants as Christian congregations are not meant as a mere cultural club, but rather as a starting point for 'contextual engagement'. Here hospitality functions to create links between church services and congregants' everyday life in the inner-city. This is closely linked to a pious theological focus and summarised in the term 'urban church'.[37]

> If you want to found an urban church, if you want to be open for the urban context, then it is really important to practice a theology based on mercy. Otherwise you'd constantly have to complain about all the pagans crossing your way. Or you'd have to be afraid of all the Muslims around you all the time. That would be really exhausting. If you don't focus on the effect of contextualisation, then you are building a monastery in the middle of the city. The central difference of urban church-planting are the topics. I think that due to the high flexibility of the people, due to their focus on their careers, due to the constant competition and achievement-orientation in the city centre and the dominance of singles, it needs a specific type of

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[37] "Urban church" captures what has been described as the focus on the contemporary urban and praising the urban fabric earlier in this thesis (> 4.1).

church…That is why we held our service in the cinema and not in a church. Otherwise you would restrict your practice of faith to one day in the week, Sunday in church. And this would be the only day that is reserved for religion. But that just doesn't extrapolate the possibilities of faith. (IPB07, 08.2013, Benjamin Marks)

The Berlin-based church plant Kirche für Berlin is, similar to its smaller counterpart Kirche für Kreuzberg, based on the idea of intertwining with its wider urban contexts (> 4.2). But in contrast to established churches, their focus on demographic groups such as 'young professionals' and 'creatives' is particularly driven by the idea to lower the entrance barrier into the physical church-space itself and therewith create bonds with people that aren't otherwise attracted to church. As Benjamin, one of the two pastors of the church, states in the quote above, the whole congregation is aligned to host the 'new middle classes', as he refers to target people who regularly experience professional competition and flexibility. The aesthetics and familiar qualities of church spaces are, therefore, one of the most crucial aspects for young church plants in creating a hospitable space in this sense.

We are here in this space because we think that it is a space where people would go anyway. It is a space where we think that the worlds of the church and everyday life can overlap. And for the people, this is the lowest possible barrier to entry. Because we are coming here with something unfamiliar, with religion. So the space shouldn't be unfamiliar to the people. But if the space, the structure, the form and the content is unfamiliar, well, how on earth are people expected to get access to it. The content might still be unfamiliar and even weird for some people. But at least the room is okay and the music is nice. (IPB07, 08.2013, Benjamin Marks)

The creation of a hospitable space is of strategic use to lower the barrier for people to enter congregational activities in a secular environment. The quote above reveals a defining self-understanding of church plants in Berlin: the fact that religion is something unfamiliar in the inner-city for the people the church tries to reach. In contrast to its counterparts in London, church plants in Berlin take it as a rule that Christianity is something that needs to be explained in a post-secular society (> 4.1).

Kirche für Berlin runs three services on Sundays in different locations in the inner-city,[38] all of them spaces that are deliberately unrelated to church buildings and which people will not connect with possible past experiences in established churches. The main service at 11am, in which 400 to 450 people take part, takes place in the main hall of the Babylon cinema located right next

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[38] In the boroughs of Mitte (11am), Prenzlauer Berg (10am), and Kreuzberg (6pm).

to the famous theatre Volksbühne at Alexanderplatz, which is in the former East of Berlin.

The cinema is a building from the 1920s, known as a historically important public space in the city and dominated by a generous entrance hall Entering the hall on a Sunday morning shortly before the service, one finds it crowded with people in their 20s and 30s, some of them serving coffee and tea to the arriving guests. Entering the cinema-hall, which is dominated by heavy red curtains and comfortable red armchairs, hosts hand out leaflets with the programme for the service. However, the service itself is not much different to the ones at many other younger congregations, starting with contemporary worship music performed by a band and ending with holy communion. Besides the spatial arrangements, it's the sermon that is particularly well fitted to the clientele, focusing on the translation of biblical passages for 'young urban professionals' and their professional life in the city of Berlin.

A particularly valuable moment that captures the congregation's situational hospitality in the sense of a proposition of contextual engagement as described above, is situated right at the end of the service. Someone from the congregation comments on the sermon with a personal thought or an everyday experience, often related to either everyday life in Berlin or job-related situations. This transition of 'Christian values' into everyday professional life is described by many congregants as a precious experience, which is often filled with a certain amount of piety. It is one of the central missions of the congregation:

> We are here to actively participate in Berlin's culture and society and to live and reflect  our careers through the perspective of the gospel.[39]

Jürgen, in his early 40s and originally from a small city in East Germany, has been a member of Kirche für Berlin for a couple of years. He runs a media agency with over 40 employees in Kreuzberg, often shares episodes from his professional life with the congregation, and sometimes brings colleagues along to the service.

> Well, for someone who has no relation to faith, Kirche für Berlin is just perfect. Due to the space and the way people are addressed, you can always bring someone along. And a lot of my colleagues actually went with me to the service already…and you meet people, who look absolutely super normal and sane. Some of them are quite stylish. So you just don't have the feeling to be among people who are not from this world. Or among people who are behind the curve… The congregation just meets the right tone. But for someone who doesn't have such a good education, it probably isn't the right congregation. There are congregations who use a

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[39] Website of the congregation.

language that is much more mainstream… (IPB47, 04.2014, Jürgen Podzimek)

The hospitable atmosphere of younger church plants is defined by strong connections between both the physical spatial arrangements and lived cultural content. A low spatial barrier, a more or less homogenous congregation with a certain habitual distance to what might commonly be associated with Christian congregations (as Jürgen describes above), and the translation of biblical content into messages that intend to give ethical directions for congregants and visitors through their everyday life, is seemingly a winning combination that attracts people who are not necessarily practicing Christians, and people who are open to spiritual experiences and appreciate a fixed time during the week to reflect about their life and their faith. And yet, it similarly creates quite an exclusive environment, as one would need "a good education" and to meet the "right tone" to belong.

For Jürgen, being a rather deeply religious person himself, his religiosity is not a merely private matter. On the contrary, he understands his way of leading his own company in the middle of Berlin as an essential expression of his Christian faith. Inviting employees to the service of Kirche für Berlin or spending a weekend silently in a monastery with business partners, are ways for Jürgen to connect his professional life with his faith.

> In hiring interviews I always tell the people that I am Christian. I also tell them we are not Jehovah's Witnesses, but that this is the hidden agenda of our agency. The agency for me exists so that we can give our employees and myself an opportunity to make a living in a reasonable manner. We create an atmosphere that is lifeward, where people can grow and thrive. That's the whole purpose of this business. We do an excellent job and the work generates profit and profit is the foundation of our personal togetherness…And I am telling my employees, those who lead in our agency, have to understand it as a service. A service to their colleagues. And once I remembered this passage in the bible where Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and says 'The greatest among you will be your servant'. And I thought, oh well, what a nice agenda we've got. (IPB47, 04.2014, Jürgen Podzimek)

Jürgen's professional life is guided by values that are the result of his engagement in the congregation. The way he runs his company is in line with Christian ethics, and his experiences are the basis for his giving back to the congregation of Kirche für Berlin.

Hospitality in church plants is focused on a 'contextual engagement', on the creation of links between the everyday lifeworlds of congregants and ethic principles as lived in the congregation, tailored towards target groups. Central to this connection is the hosts' ability to value people's preferences and to

enable access to the physical as well as the social space of a congregation. The welcoming hospitality is materialised in the atmospheric place pieced together by the accurate choice of the actual church space and its cultural contents, which is an adjusted mixture of its religious concerns and its aspirations to function as a sociable space. The openness towards newcomers and hospitality to so-called de-churched people and people who are struggling with their faith as much as they are struggling with their position in everyday life in a large city is why both newer and older congregants are so appreciative and loyal to their congregations. In other words, hospitality, the "proposition of closer physical or social proximity" (Lugosi 2009: 399), is the reason why people stay and develop a sense of belonging that is grounded in the congregation.

This is particularly apparent in the tight-knit congregation of Mercy Church Hackney, which stands as a generic example for the other church plants in this thesis:

> It is welcoming but not really in your face. And I've been to too many conservative churches where things were quite strict. And it wasn't that. And there was no requirement to be this or the other. It was really open doors. Someone said to me in the beginning, it would be really nice if you stay with us, but if you find somewhere else, that is also totally cool. Which is nice. I didn't feel that in any other church so far. And that is a really unique thing for Mercy church. Welcoming here is really really good in a way. (IPL25, 12.2013, Deborah Aminu)

> Mercy Church is able to hold on to people who say, well I would say who've got quite a cynical approach to life. Some other churches are probably a bit more optimistic about life in general. That's probably what I mean by intellectual approach. This may sound judgmental, but I think not everyone wants to be engaged in questioning stuff through. And Mercy Church is just very good in stimulating this. And I think its style as well – people just like our kind of music. It's a bit snobby, a really elitist approach to music. And I am not an elitist, but it's quite intentionally, and the kind of music that people like who live in Hackney. It's really good-quality music. And this style just resonates with the people. And allowing the brokenness. That is evident. (IPL10, 12.2013, Andrea Bell)

> And it is interesting, as some who go to Mercy Church are really unsure about their faith. But they obviously go because they enjoy it, they get something from it, even if they are not that strong in their belief. And that is a good thing. It can be a place for everyone. It is an agnostics-friendly church. Or have you heard talking the vicar about that you have to stay with your belief and stuff? No! Even if you are not too sure, you are welcomed there. (IPL11, 12.2013, Caleb Rogers)

> I like churches that meet in a leisure centre or a community space, or something that is less of a physical barrier, and I think that it is interesting how a building itself can be quite a big deal. Like my friend who is gay. When she is going to church with me, she is literally freaking out. Because

church is against gay people like her. So just walking into a church is a big deal for her. For her it is always anti-gay. And the building is the main barrier for her. It is just really powerful. (IPL10, 12.2013, Andrea Bell)

It is not a very judgmental church. That's big. And I think that it is not massively Christian, more in a subtle way and more sensitive. It is very much based in the East End, so it's got that artistic, intellectual idea. And it's a shame, because it is quite middle class, which is a shame, it is not as diverse as it could be. (IPL12, 12.2013, Yasmine Brown)

While the appreciation of the congregations' welcoming atmosphere defines the attraction congregants express, it is also obvious that this involves symbolic boundaries. The details of church life reveal expressions of taste such as "elitist approach to music", "really good-quality music", "artistic" and "intellectual approach" that are markers of middle-class distinction (Lamont 1992). So while hospitality has a strong inclusive effect and leads to expressions of (local) relatedness, it may at the same time set boundaries that come with exclusionary effects along (class-based) lines of cultural distinctions (Dikec 2002). This translates into a larger social homogeneity particularly of young church plants such as Mercy Church Hackney.

The prospect of living faith in a congregation and connecting it to other spheres of life – which ranges from being able to negotiate differences to gaining confidence in social situations and job-related issues – have a positive effect on people's connection to place, evolving out of a desire for belonging. This is the foundation of churches as meaningful neighbourhood organisations operating with and shaping changes in gentrifying neighbourhoods. The different ways of creating hospitable spaces also address different groups, and yet they have very similar effects. Contrary to what has been claimed by others as the separation of the spheres of life between an everyday professional identity and an identity of faith (Strhan 2013), it shows that contemporary Christianity in the inner-city neighbourhoods of London and Berlin is strongly connected to individual desires as much as to the practical requirements of everyday life . Young Christians and those in favour of church congregations, who mainly belong to what has been framed as the 'new middle classes', don't just 'use' a weekly church visit as a welcome escape from everyday life in a stressful city (Strhan 2013). It is one "way of relating" (Barnett 2005) with local areas, rather than a way to ensure one's insulation and disaffiliation from (unwelcome) local realities (Atkinson 2006).

Where does this lead regarding the initial question of the social and cultural qualities of the places that have resulted from the religious

community's embrace of secular spaces? The discussion in this section has shown that the spaces in church congregations create hospitableness as a condition for places of commonality and mutual experience as well as spaces to experience mutuality. Encounters happening in church spaces of hospitality are a source of "meaningful interactions" (Amin 2002) that are likely to be a nucleus of the crossing of boundaries, because people meet people they would not have met otherwise. The spatial arrangements made in these churches and the common theological ground that people agree on form the socially productive atmosphere in which people come together.

These interactions are not a guarantee for "meaningful contacts" in the sense that social barriers between minority and majority groups will soon be erased (Valentine 2008: 330ff). But what such "lighter touch forms of sociality" (Thrift 2005: 145) can trigger is a stronger connection to the local realities people live in and a less encapsulated life in between cultural boundaries. Church congregations may then become a nucleus of collective actions that involve very different and otherwise separate groups in an area (> 6). Those parts of the 'new middle classes' that have been attracted to participate in congregational life are an important element in gentrifying areas that urban researchers rarely shed light on.

# 5.3 Gentrification and 'Hipster Christianity'

> We have all heard enough ironic comments about the lattes, expensive baby strollers, and flannel shirts and little beards that various tribes of gentrifiers exhibit as marks of their distinction. Yet aesthetics always play a crucial role in constructing not just the habitat, but the habitus of gentrification. New residents justify their choice of a neighborhood because it is 'interesting' in cultural terms. (Zukin 2016: 203)

> Does the church have a one-word name that is either a Greek word, something evocative of nature or something otherwise biblically obscure? Does the pastor frequently use words like *kingdom*, *authenticity*, *justice*, and *N.T. Wright* in sermons? Does the church advertise a gluten-free option for communion? Do at least two members of the worship band regularly wear sport V-neck T-shirts or skinny jeans? If you answered 'yes' to all of those questions, chances are good that you're talking about a hipster church. (McCracken 2010: 117)

The overlap of accounts of the urban social figure of the 'hipster' and what has been framed as 'hipster Christianity' is a fruitful starting point for further integrating the empirical insights from this chapter into some more theoretical

considerations of urban studies. 'Hipster' – usually understood as a pejorative ascription – captures expressions of culturally distinctive behaviour and expressions that are increasingly observed/experienced in gentrifying areas (Douglas 2012, Hubbard 2016, Valli 2016). This is closely related to the role of 'culture' in gentrification, as has often been discussed in urban studies since the early 1980s (Zukin 1987). Growing patterns of consumption (Gotham 2005), the aestheticisation of urban spaces through middle-class lifestyles with preferences for "loft-living" (Zukin 1982, Hamnett and Whitelegg 2007) and the massive promotion of creative and cultural industries (Pratt 2009) changed the appearance of inner-city areas drastically – and therewith the 'face' of gentrification.

This 'cultural' perspective in gentrification is usually tied to a certain 'habitus' of middle-class people being portrayed as gentrifiers. In contrast to the discussion of the empirical findings above, dominant perspectives in urban studies claimed that people belonging to the different factions of the middle classes in inner-city areas usually employ variations of the various capitals they possess to spend time with similar people, particularly so in the areas of schooling and leisure activities in the neighbourhood (Butler 2003). Such "strategies of disaffiliation" (Atkinson 2006), it has been stated, are leading to segregation on the local level and the maintenance of strong boundaries. Although 'others' (such as a constructed 'multicultural other') are often part of the overall narrative that lead to a decision to move into a certain area (Jackson and Benson 2014), the social boundaries drawn by middle-class gentrifiers are usually discussed as being based on intolerance and prejudice (Amin 2007, Helbrecht 2011).

Although these conclusions rightly interpret dynamics of inequality, they often lead to a dominant picture of 'cultural' aesthetics as a form of distinction that inevitably results in segregation and enhances gentrification pressures. It is true that even on the level of congregations, cultural distinctions lead to processes of categorisation and 'othering', often through expressions of taste, as shown above. These processes of "inclusion and exclusion, presence and absence, in-place and out-of-place", the controlling of boundaries, are an integral part of identity formation (Barnett 2005: 7).

However, this perspective has its short-comings. To interpret exclusion as an inevitable consequence of difference creates only passive individuals: "it leaves unexplained the capabilities of individuals to respond to difference in a less defensive and even, at times, a more creative fashion" (McNay 2000: 3). As shown in the empirical discussion above, people who are part of church plants that are often classified as "hipster churches" by observers from within the religious field (McCracken 2010) as well as the media (Uddin 2012) and other congregants due to their expressive distinctiveness, also live by values

that are closely linked to a 'desire for belonging' as a form of "dwelling in place" (Savage 2010), rather than intolerance. This "way of relating" (Barnett 2005) to the local is more the starting point of connections and boundary crossings, and less of segregation and seclusion.

People who are part of "hipster churches" are far less interested in a lifestyle of separation then one would expect from the dominant picture in urban studies. On the contrary, the hospitable spaces created by churches as described above meet the desire of those 'hipsters' for "imitation and authenticity" as a means for "collective enjoyment" (Schiermer 2014).

The presence of 'hipster' and 'hipster spaces' in gentrifying areas, then, are not only signifiers of "neoliberal consumer culture" and a growing infrastructure of gentrification (Maly and Varis 2015). They may also be producers of different ethics of consumption and dwelling that lead to spaces of communal togetherness. This theoretical interpretation will be discussed at greater length in the chapter that concludes this thesis (> 7).

# 6 Responding to needs in 'urban frontiers'

This chapter discusses the consequences of encounters in church spaces and the ways they lead to collective activities. The previous chapters showed that church congregations create places where 'hipster-culture' meets with what has often been categorised in this research by newcomers as the 'local culture' of long-time residents (> 5.2). It is argued in this chapter that such encounters of difference are the bedrock on which church congregations respond to the needs they identify in the gentrification frontiers of London and Berlin.

On the individual level, encounters between two different people are not always "meaningful contacts…that actually [change] values and [translate] beyond the specifics of the individual moment into a more general positive respect for others" (Valentine 2008: 325). Interactions between individuals with different backgrounds thus may not necessarily erase more deeply grounded attitudes towards others. Whether encounters in the church congregations of this study will lead to the permanent disappearance of intolerance and prejudices, as Valentine (2008, 2010) suggests ought to be the yardstick for the meaningfulness of an encounter, is beyond the empirical scope of this thesis. However, as has been argued earlier (> 5.2), situational hospitality in church congregations leads to "lighter touch forms of sociality" (Thrift 2005: 145). These lead to encounters that bridge different cultural experiences in a neighbourhood and that are crucial starting points for people to share variegating local realities. Hence, encounters may cause "moments of reflection that disrupt preconceived categories and boundaries" (Leitner 2012: 829), whereas others may simply reinforce racial and class-based stereotypes.

The encounters observed in the church congregations that are part of this study are often led by processes of 'othering' and categorisation, as discussed in the previous chapter (> 5.2). However, the very same encounters are an essential starting point for negotiating differences and ethical positions, scaling and spreading (otherwise unheard) local concerns, and opening up potentialities to empower and mobilise people for and against political issues that matter in a local area, the city or nationwide. In other words, the encounters of people, contents and topics that are negotiated in the particular institutionalised spaces of a church are the ground on which the welcoming spaces of hospitality get transferred into spaces of possibilities for transactions of resources and capital (Marwell and McQuarrie 2013, Small and Jacobs 2008). Encounters are understood as always potentially momentous

and fateful; they are "an expression of a plurality of participants…within a configuration that makes itself" (Merrifield 2013: 33).

This chapter discusses how congregations aim to scale up encounters of difference to spaces of social care and political debate through church-run social projects such as food banks and various forms of political campaigning. The activities in these spaces, framed by principles of Christian ethics, shape the perspectives of congregants and other volunteers engaged in social projects, and enhance the possibility of getting ahead in neighbourhoods by presenting alternative pathways to the dominant narratives of economic pressures and gentrification.

In the course of this chapter it will first be shown how congregations that focus on numeric growth integrate a mode of empowerment into their weekly services to 'make use' of the encounters happening in their 'healthy church' environments and therewith mobilise people politically (> 6.1). As will be argued, 'successful' vehicles of mobilisation are usually social projects that are strongly related to change in local areas. The motivation for these projects is grounded in an ambivalent activism between the churches' aim to gain more 'presence' locally, and to respond to the social needs of underprivileged groups in urban frontiers. In other words, congregations' activities can be read simultaneously as acts of self-promotion and benevolence, as will be argued further in the following sections (> 6.2).

# 6.1 Empowering and mobilising

Responding to local social needs, such as primary education, youth work, food provision and elderly care, is generally a primary concern of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in central urban areas (Ley 2008, Kong 2010: 766, > 3.1). Educating and empowering individuals to take action in matters of everyday life is an often overlooked impact of the activities of FBOs situated in the welfare sector – and it is a primary goal for most church congregations (McRoberts 2003). This sub-chapter focuses on the ways church congregations sensitively aim to make use of encounters in their church spaces for the empowerment and political mobilisation of their congregants. In other words, it shows how internal activities are performed to matter and make a difference outside the congregation, in the urban settings churches are placed in.

The social activities of churches outside the inner working of a congregation are often matters of controversy. The faith orientation of FBOs

and churches alike is considered to be biased for beneficiaries of social actions when compared to offers from other civil organisations (Furness and Gilligan 2012). From an urban studies point of view, the critique of FBOs working in inner-cities arises from a focus on how actions facilitated by FBOs become "vehicles of neoliberalism", as their work prolongs an ideology of austerity politics instead of resisting it (Hackworth 2010: 768f).

Most of the church congregations in this study are well aware of these ambivalences, which makes their activities sensitive translations between secular and religious terms. These translations require the generation of relationships between the 'internal spiritual world' of a congregation and the 'outside secular world'. Social actions are rarely the result of pure self-purpose, but often designed to create "political and moral landscapes" (Williams et al 2016: 21) that aim to serve individuals by enhancing their potential to be better connected to others and to 'get things done'.

On the one hand, church leaders are focused to inspire their community to do good things in the 'worldly sphere' outside the church, while, on the other hand, their focus is on aspects of building a Christian 'community' which involve the more 'heavenly' issues of belonging to a faith 'community' in which people are able to meet 'others' they would not meet elsewhere. To empower people in the logic of a Christian congregation means to transfer the latter into the former, the "heavenly citizenship" into the worldly sphere of 'community', as the following makes explicit:

> An enormous part of it ('doing church') is a programme of education. Because it is about helping people to recognise their identity, as a citizen. I often think about this theologically in terms of…ahm…we have this role of being citizens of heaven but we are residents, kind of expatriates, resident in big surfaced cities, but representing the city of God…And, but the temptation for the church is, you know we do our heavenly things on Sunday mornings and then maybe on the mid-week prayer meeting, or whatever. But the rest of the time we just simply life in the earthy city. And so the educational challenge for people like myself, is to help people understand, what their heavenly citizenship 24/7 is…and that means when they're chatting at their local residents associations meeting about the problems with the council and why they are not doing X, Y and Z, they can't, shouldn't, mustn't as Christians give in to the dialogue of the world which says we are powerless and nothing can happen. We just rent and can't do anything. That kind of nihilism that says everything is hopeless and there is just a massive bureaucracy we ran against it but we never change anything, that is where Christians have to actually live their heavenly citizenship and say, no, change is possible, transformation is possible, we can challenge this power, we can challenge this injustice, we can expose corruption...you know. So that seems to me, that part of that, that is how you get the actions to the outside. So we bring projects in the church, and we bring that kind of instincts and impulses around justice out from the

church into everyday life. (IPL07, 01.2014, Felix Graham, Vicar of St Mary Hoxton)

Felix, the vicar of St Mary Hoxton, presents an ambitious self-understanding of doing church for a mixed demography in an area that is characterised by a high amount of poverty and gentrification with major problems related to housing. In the analogy above, congregants have a particular position in the real world: they are meant to be representing the 'city of God', which would mean to act in a way that is in accordance with Christian ethics. The role of the church congregation in the neighbourhood as understood by its vicar is to function as an incubator for stronger moral interactions between people in the church and the surrounding areas, between an internal logic of community building around ethical principles and the rationale of everyday life in the 'world', which is characterised as rather powerless in the quote above. Beyond the mere process of creating an intimate community of similar as much as different people, the aim of St Mary Hoxton is to – in a more worldly sense – empower individuals to be able to stand up for themselves in times of crisis, to act against a faithless "nihilism", particularly in terms of local problems. The power to transform and challenge the status quo, and to challenge "power" and "injustice" is, however, deeply rooted in the logics of the congregation, which uses its communal actions for the empowerment of individuals – who shall serve the greater good with their actions in return. To phrase this in more theoretical terms, this is when the spiritual capital of the church as a powerful institution is transferred into social capital for its congregants. This will be discussed along with more empirical material in greater detail below.

Such a highly ambitious fusion of church congregations with their neighbourhoods is not represented in every congregation in this study. However, leaders of church plants and re-started parish churches alike aim to foster an active empowerment of individuals in their internal congregational activities. What greatly differ are their ways of linking this with social activities external to the congregation. Whereas all the congregations in this study support and/or organise social projects in their immediate surrounding areas, parish churches, by definition, are far stronger in creating the links between internal and external activities. The following two sections discuss two ways of connecting and empowering people internally, with different outcomes for the 'external world'.

**Negotiating over pews: "We might have two services, but we are one congregation"**

A pivotal element for the transmission between internal and external activities of church congregations is the weekly worship service. The way Sunday services are performed turned out to be the most sensitive of the congregations' activities, as the spiritual experience as well as more technical details are of great value to both old and new congregants. It is also the initial impression visitors and potential congregants get of a congregation. It represents the identity of a church.

Among the growing church congregations that are part of this study, re-started parish churches are particularly eager to establish weekly meetings in their church spaces as a representation of the demographics of the parish and to enable people to engage with others during, before and after the service (> 5.1). A closer look at the church members' fears and hopes relating to the changes in growing congregations and the changes happening in the surrounding areas, helps us understand why churches succeed or fail to empower their congregants and impact their surroundings. In other words, the performance of the very core of a congregation's business is decisive for its abilities to shape an area.

St Markus in the area of Bethnal Green was re-started as a church plant in 2010. The main difference between the congregation of St Markus and St Mary in Hoxton, is how the re-start was organised: at St Markus, the existing 'old congregation' perceived it rather as a 'takeover', as technically a new congregation of 25 people – who were predominantly white, young and middle class, as described by the old congregation – joined an existing, but shrinking congregation. The congregation as it existed before 2010 performed a Catholic service, with vicars in white robes burning incense at their entry and a sung liturgy.

> And it was a very white, predominantly working-class church that was very safe, village-like, protective of its congregation. Not very outward-looking, although it did recognise there was a community outside. And that way we had a social link. But it didn't have the capacity at all to remedy that. Not very outward looking… (IPL38, 06.2014, Olivia Harris)

Olivia, a 60-year-old accountant, has been a member of the Church of St Markus for most of her life. Growing up in the area of Bethnal Green, she is a witness to the changes that have taken place in the area as much as in the congregation. For her, both changes are closely related.

> Going through that transition from where we were then and then going through the change of the whole time when we didn't have anybody here at

all. And we were basically running the church. The same kind of safety net still being there. Then coming up to where Andrew (the vicar) starts to coming in and then suddenly – hang on, you know, we are all socialists or people that need to do out doing everything for the community. So it's quite – when you think about it, it's a short time. In which some people had to really switch from being there and then there. And the change now here from this time, from, like 5 or 6 years ago, the area itself has started to change…I mean Shoreditch when I knew Shoreditch was from Hoxton to there. This wasn't Shoreditch, this was Bethnal Green! Shoreditch ended at Shoreditch Church! And everything from there to here was Bethnal Green. But now we are in some kind of Shoreditch thing, you know. So now if you sell your property you advertise it with Shoreditch really. (IPL38, 06.2014, Olivia Harris)

Olivia has been a gatekeeper for the 'old' congregation since the re-start occurred in 2010. She primarily negotiated the changes between the old parts of the congregation and the new congregants that would join together with the vicar. In her narration, she still refers to the different parts as the 'new' and the 'old' congregation. As the quote above shows, Olivia seems resentful of the way the congregation developed as much as she shows a lot of sentiments about the changes occurring in Bethnal Green in the recent past. The outward-looking attitude she ascribes to the new vicar ("out doing everything for the community"), whose focus lies on the connection of the church congregation with the immediate area surrounding the church, stands in harsh contrast to the intimate "village-like" community she experienced before, one "that was not outward-looking". The changes that are happening inside the church are closely related to the rapid changes in Bethnal Green. Olivia describes this in a very geographical manner, one in which Shoreditch spreads out into the east and overrides Bethnal Green.

Olivia's geographical references stem from an anti-theses that has often been employed in the area of Bethnal Green in the course of this research, and one that is quite commonly used as a descriptive spatial distinction for the two neighbouring areas. Whereas Shoreditch is understood as a synonym for rapid change, artists, 'hipsters', vibrant nightlife and gentrification (Proud 2014), Bethnal Green's predominant culture is defined by close working-class families and a community attitude bound to geographically well-defined neighbourhoods (Wilmott and Young 2007/1957, Andersson 2009: 65). This stereotypical geography of rapid change in East London, of a neighbourhood on the 'frontier' of gentrification, gradually became the reality of the church congregation of St Markus during its re-start.[40]

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[40] Which is also evident in the fact that a small group of the new congregation of St Markus initiated The Shoreditch Group (> 6.2).

This coalescing of spatial changes on multiple scales makes the empowerment in the congregation of St Markus difficult during the internal activities of the congregation. To initiate changes gradually, the vicar started with two different services on a Sunday morning. A rather conservative service, adjusted for the older parts of the congregation, which lasts for about an hour from 10am is followed by a more contemporary service, with a band performing modern worship songs. What requires time for the occasional observer to get used to is that both services are usually led by the same people, who move from wearing white robes, a sung liturgy and the use of incense, to playing guitar in blue jeans and performing an animated sermon. Whereas the first service is almost exclusively attended by the old parts of the congregation, the second service is significantly younger with at least double the amount of visitors. The way the clergy switches roles during the different services is symbolic of how different parts of the congregation lack the feeling of unity: the older people from the 'old' congregation who come for the first service almost all leave the church after their service is finished. Most of them claim to do so for a very pragmatic reason, as they are used to having lunch at home after church service.

The only time for the congregation to encounter one another is the time in between the two services. With tea and coffee being served, this is organised as the time the congregation is informed about common projects, where people have time to meet and talk to each other about joint ideas or other everyday matters inside and outside the congregation. However, this only takes place with great caution. One reason for this is the social boundaries between the two groups, which are not only enforced by their different times of arrival and different ages and class backgrounds but also by very different dispositions in the form of spiritual capital, as the different ways of performing the services require different knowledge. Even five years after the 're-start', this is still dominant in people's perceptions. The different approaches to togetherness are outspoken, and yet seemingly incompatible.

> It is really difficult often, when I introduce people to each other, some say, oh, I feel really bad, X is a doctor and Y is a teacher and so and so on. But when they actually start to get talking, they start to realise, well fundamentally again, we are back to where we are here. The family is here, and not where people are doctors or whatever. It does have a little of a levelling off. The fact, the sort of thing that there is no hierarchy here. We are where we are. They sort of meet here and they would never meet outside. That would just never happen. They are two, three, four generations of change apart. And they wouldn't meet outside because there is just no other social circle in which they would meet. (IPL38, 06.2014, Olivia Harris)

There is a real commitment to not being sort of mono-cultural, there is a real desire to be different. Although the external initiatives have brought in many new people, but they have certainly kept people who are beginning to explore worship in a different way. And it's brought in people who engage with the community in a different way. And that process allow that group to work together on external projects…And one of the things Andrew said to me in the beginning about St Markus, is that everyone has to sacrifice something to be here. And for me that is an excellent starting point for a church. That is to say, that is our space, that is a mutual space and I would like it as much to work for you as it does for me. (IPL08, 11.2013, Bea Atkinson)

Whereas Olivia, from the perspective of the old congregation, points out that the church space actually affords one of the rare opportunities for people to meet others in the neighbourhood, which is the essential starting point for people to be able to cross boundaries, Bea, a new member of St Markus in Bethnal Green, specifies that this crossing of boundaries only occurs when people are willing to sacrifice something to create a trustworthy 'community'.

The 'something' is the starting point for a hospitable space and a trustworthy atmosphere among congregants. However, this 'something' at St Markus was primarily sacrificed by the old congregation, who, in their perception, gave up their safe, small environment for the sake of the church to survive.[41] In return, they struggle being close to the new congregation and are rather reserved in participating in joint social actions. They are also simply not used to it, as Olivia stated above. That is why the 'old' parts of the congregation insist on keeping their more conservative service alive – and this, according to Olivia, is non-negotiable. The two different services remain symbolic of the lack of joint actions and therewith a lack of possibilities for encounter and empowerment.

However, the level of trust members place in their fellow congregants is a decisive parameter for them to open up and share intimate insights. St Markus is a very active congregation in Bethnal Green, reaching out to different communities in manifold ways and integrating and impacting people from the neighbourhood in their actions. A small group from the new congregation initiated the founding of the Shoreditch Group, which started the food bank in Hackney (> 6.2). Together with the local police the church initiated a project to create 'safe havens' at a nearby high street known for violent gang activities, and organises regular meetings with members of the local council to discuss local politics. Although these external activities have a strong impact on the area surrounding the church, they were all initiated and realised by a few

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[41] Things that appear to be minor changes such as a change of the familiar order of the pews, or the move of the altar from the left to the right, have been central in the congregation's narrative about the elements lost due to the re-start.

people from the new congregation only, some of which are also employed by the church.

Although Olivia points out that "we might have two services, but we are one congregation" the congregation of St Markus is barely united in their social activities outside the church. Due to the missing link between external and internal activities, the church congregation functions as a hub for social projects in the neighbourhood, but only partially as an incubator for social practices beyond the (new) inner circle of the church. This does not mean that boundary crossings and new contacts do not happen between new members of the congregation and people outside the congregations living in the area. But where the congregation of St Markus does not succeed is in producing an atmosphere of mutuality between the different members as a source of individual empowerment and political mobilisation.

## Domesticated church spaces: Campaigning for toilets, money and health

This is different at the church of St Mary. The congregation in Hoxton is very similar to its neighbouring church in Bethnal Green. However, also re-started in 2010, it employed a softer approach to re-start the congregation in the form of a graft, slowly inviting new (younger) people to join the congregation (> 5.2). The Sunday morning service has always been organised as a joint service, now representing a regular service the church always held, mixed with more modern approaches to music and a lively sermon.

The church building itself is a large classic Georgian church, situated at a roundabout that symbolises the border between the gentrified areas of Hoxton and Shoreditch to the south and the parts of the area that are primarily shaped by large social housing estates to the north. With its massive church garden the church represents a visible, quasi-physical barrier right at the frontier between the two parts of Hoxton. This privileged position makes it easy for the church to display their activities at the church's garden fence. The church garden itself is usually well-frequented, during the summer particularly by people working in the cultural economies close by, spending their lunch break in the shade under the trees.

To empower people to become aware of their opportunities to partake in or initiate collective actions, the church space is required to embody "certain domestic qualities… to provide a sense of trust, comfort or amenity"[42] (Koch

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42 In this sense, the sociality in congregations demands similar qualities to other public spaces.

and Latham 2013: 9). Bella, a young working mum who recently moved to Hoxton (> 5.2), points out that the congregation of St Mary Hoxton is a place where people feel engaged to talk about private as much as political concerns, because they are comfortable.

> Sebastian: You mentioned earlier that the congregation is actually a place where people know who to go to.
>
> Bella: Yeah, I mean it is just a place where people can place all sorts of concerns I think. One topic often is around housing. People actually had to ask for a place to stay for a period of time. And a situation where a family had to struggle with an immigration problem. That was brought up in church, and there were always people who could give all sorts of practical advice for that. And those who couldn't, always knew someone who could help. And there were families who really had difficult times. They will come find people, and ask for supports. I recently ask for support for a family. They are having problems looking after one of their children who needs some additional input. And I asked if people would know someone. And somebody in church then came forward and said, I would like to address this problem for you. And I would love to pay for a person who takes care of it. (IPL46, 07.2014, Bella Patterson)

This intimate atmosphere at St Mary Hoxton is created via a careful integration of private concerns and political announcements at the most central place in the weekly service. A regular part of the church service on Sunday mornings is reserved for people who are willing to share or report issues they want to draw to the congregation's attention. At these moments, the church functions very similarly to a public square, with the opportunity for people to address a wider audience in a moment in which they feel they belong to an intimate community.

Depending on how serious and urgent the matter is, the worship team of the church decides before the service how much room is needed for people to talk about it. This may range from a short notice for making the matter an issue to creating a series of sermons over several weeks. The matters that are raised range widely, and are not always of immediate concern. Whereas one Sunday someone may need advice on how to deal with the learning disabilities of their child, another day a congregant may raise serious immigration issues or draw attention to acute threats of eviction from social housing due to the privatisation of a nearby social housing estate.[43]

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[43] This was the case in the autumn of 2014, when a member of the congregation reported at length about the selling of "New Era Estate" in Hoxton, which would cause the raising of rents by about 300%. This mobilised about 10 members of the congregation to help start and scale the protest, which after a few months collected over 350,000 signatures on a digital petition and finally prompted the local council to intervene (Booth 2014, 2015).

During the research period, various topics were raised in the congregation. Three brief insights show the different scales on which the practice of empowerment and the ability to mobilise people beyond their own concerns and politicise them for a greater good has become internalised in the congregation of St Mary Hoxton.

(1) A very private matter which did not directly relate to the local area, but had far reaching effects on the intimate bonds in the congregation and raised the level of trust among the people who took part, was concerned with mental illness. In a sequence of three services, the topic was introduced with several personal stories, linked to faith practices and followed by practical advice.

On the very first Sunday of this sequence of services, Rosie introduced her personal relationship to mental illness. In contrast with regular Sundays, the introductory worship was not led by the church band, but by two younger members, playing a violin and a trumpet, which created a particular atmosphere steeped in emotion. Rosie, a young physician in her mid-30s, did not personally suffer from mental illness, but her personal experiences with depression had determined her life during the previous two years. A couple of years earlier, she had fallen deeply in love with a colleague. They were on the point of getting married about a year before this service was taking place. Two weeks before the wedding, Rosie noticed her boyfriend was having trouble sleeping. She did not pay close attention to it, and she did not question the reassurance he gave her that this was only a temporary problem related to pressure at work. Her future husband committed suicide the day before the wedding.

Despite the feeling of mourning felt by the whole congregation in the face of this tragic personal loss, Rosie managed to talk about the lessons she had taken from her story and called for the role of the congregation to be more receptive to mental illness, to not be too lazy to ask for help and to tell others about depressive periods. As a physician, Rosie did not constrain this moment with moral appeals, but explained some of the science behind mental illnesses and reported the effects of medicine.

(2) A very different matter occupied the congregation earlier the same year. 'Money Talks' and the 'Payday-loan campaign' are two connected examples of how people inside the congregation were mobilised around Sunday services for political concerns about inequality on a local as much as a national scale and began creating links to the external world.

The idea behind 'Money Talks' in the church of St Mary was to get members in financial difficulties to report their problematic situations in front of the congregation. The aim was to raise awareness of debt-related issues and

present better ways to deal with financial illiteracy. One Sunday in the late summer of 2013, Beth, a member since a few years of the congregation and a mother of two, reported her difficult financial situation and how she had struggled to get through the previous winter relying on food vouchers and other means of social welfare. Her report was not performed in an overtly emotional way, but rather aimed to demonstrate a kind of transparency in a usually private matter, that people generally and particularly in the congregation found difficult to talk about. However, the atmosphere in the church was appreciative and caring, and as such people were perceptive in relating Beth's story to their own situation. In the following plenum-like discussion, moderated by the vicar, members of the congregation shared similar concerns and discussed possible ways out of debt as well as ways to avoid financial difficulties in general.

This is further embedded in biblical reflections about the matter that are oriented towards ethical ways of spending money and the ways debt raises the likelihood of personal relationship problems. It is also interesting what did not happen. Debt was not demonised, but instead portrayed as sometimes unavoidable for covering difficult stages in the life of poorer households. It is not considered a sinful practice, but instead understood as a worldly way of coping.

Closely linked to this way of integrating financial education into doing church is a political campaign against the advertisement of payday loans on publicly-owned billboards. Payday loan companies usually lend small amounts of money on a very short term basis, with very high interests allotted to people without any security. As even people in a financial crisis are provided easy access to money by this system, payday loans have been discussed as a primary reason for the increasing number of overly indebted households in the UK, in particular in East London (Hartfree and Collard 2015). The campaign, presented to the congregation by the vicar of St Mary in the same service in which the 'Money Talks' sessions take place, is promoted as a small but significant step against the overall presence of payday loan advertisements in public spaces including on high streets. During the church service, the vicar not only encourages people to become active in collecting signatures, but also to become the faces of the campaign, talking to local news agencies, presenting the results on a Citizens UK meeting and together delivering the signatures to Hackney council on St Nicholas Day, accompanied by the vicar dressed as Saint Nicholas.

(3) A further campaign established strong bonds between the church congregation and other local community groups in the area. Two blocks north of the church of St Mary Hoxton, situated in between social housing estates,

Shoreditch Park is the main local green area of Shoreditch that many people of the congregation regularly use for leisure activities. But the intensity of various activities has risen greatly in recent years, as Hoxton, and Shoreditch in particular, have become increasingly attractive to new user groups. So the park today serves locals for sporting activities in the evening hours and on weekends as much as it has become a place for people to meet in groups, relax and consume alcohol on sunny summer weekends. The major problem that has evolved is a lack of public toilets in the area and the ensuing pollution of nearby community gardens as well as the park.

Initiated by the congregants in alliance with Hackney Citizens (the local branch of Citizens UK), the church started a campaign for the installation of additional toilets and a public cafe with facilities in the park. The collection of signatures occurred, among other occasions, at public events in the park, where almost the whole congregation campaigned for this matter, raising people's attention with vicars sitting on loos reading the bible.

The Shoreditch Park toilet campaign was important not only for the surrounding area's community initiatives, but also had a strong impact on the congregation. On the one hand it mobilised many people to become active for local concerns and to get in touch with other people in the neighbourhood over political goals. On the other hand, it created tight bonds inside the congregation, as people from the various groups inside the congregation worked together on a joint project with a high level of identification with the immediate surroundings of the church. People felt they were doing something for the neighbourhood.

> The Shoreditch Park toilet campaign, that engaged a lot of the wider community. And they were glad that somebody had stepped up to run the campaign. And I don't think that they expected the church to turn up with toilets and have photos of vicars sitting on toilets in the park. Because many think that religiosity is rather dry and lacking this kind of humour. And I think that this it is important that people see people from the church. There were loads of us that day…But it is important for people to see what we are doing for the community. And we can show there that we're invested in our community. And it is not about building the church, it's about building the community. Which is really important, that people don't think, 'Oh, they've got this church agenda'. Well, no, we've got a garden and we've got toilets, so we don't actually have to campaign if it was for us, we don't have to say anything about Shoreditch Park. But it's not just for us, it's for everybody. (IPL51, 07.2014, Beth Coleman)

The act of making these very different matters public in church, and producing a ground of joint as much as public and political action, has several effects. On the one hand, external actions create bonds between dwellers and congregants and between the church and other local public bodies. Such a

materialisation of collaborations between religious and secular actors is representative of a postsecular urban environment, in which the secular sphere of public spaces interferes with the worldliness of religious actors.

On the other hand, it creates encounters between different congregants, as well as between congregants and the 'external world', that are focused on a common activity, but incidentally – and yet very importantly – are also the ground for what Amin (Amin 2006: 1015f) has termed "prosaic negotiations", which produce relatedness among strangers and make "cultural transgressions" more likely. Church congregations in this sense function as a 'micropublic', since they "provide very different opportunities for encounter and interpersonal contact from those offered through random interaction on the streets" (Andersson et al 2011: 622).

Furthermore, the active empowerment of individuals publicly speaking about very private and infringing matters like financial illiteracy and mental illnesses, as well as the more passive empowering act of experiencing others in the very moment they publicise these matters for educational or political purposes, adds identity-establishing meaning to these transgressions, around which bonds are created that are likely to bridge differences on a more permanent basis. This effect is strongly supported by the Christian environment these transgressions are performed in. The "moral landscape" (Williams et al 2016: 21) of the church space is not only present as a physical spatial arrangement, but also authoritatively reinforced by biblical comments on the matters that are negotiated by the Sunday church service that frames these performances. This creation of spaces of opportunity for individuals, framed by an authoritative space of the church and the ethical environment of the weekly sermon, is the motivational environment for many to become active and mobilised in political matters.

The encounters between different people in a church space do not guarantee a change of any sort. On the contrary; as has been argued in the case of St Markus, a missing link between 'new' and 'old' congregants rather leads to a re-enforcement of social boundaries between the different parts of the congregation and makes social actions a monopoly for those members of the congregation who are able to invest their cultural and social capital in the neighbourhood. Although this heightens the visibility of the church in the area and may make a difference to certain groups involved in these practices, it does not empower and mobilise older congregants to take action in their own causes and hence has a limited effect as a response to the social needs of the urban area.

But at St Mary Hoxton, the provision of a trustful environment during weekly church services transforms the church into a domestic space in which

encounters are a fruitful starting point for mobilising and empowering congregants in political as much as personal causes. What this case shows is that encounters happening inside church spaces are a necessary condition for church congregations to have an impact that lasts longer than the volatile encounter itself. The institutional space of the church, spiritually as well as ethically loaded, embraces these encounters and is the ground on which the plurality of participants inside the church can be transformed into mutual activities.

# 6.2 Shifting collaborations and local activisms

Empowerment and political mobilisation through projects related to social inequality and matters of local public spaces, is, despite altruistic goals, a way in which singular church congregations maintain and/or increase their general visibility in secularising environments. But different modes of running a church pursue very different outcomes. A crucial factor for the degree of local embeddedness of church congregations is their different collaborative practices on various geographical scales. As will be shown in the following sections, church plants' focus on their own growth is often maintained by adopting an internationally-oriented start-up mentality, which restricts their long-term involvements on the local level. In contrast, established parish churches are usually much more integrated into larger institutional structures and orient their goals along different rationalities of local collaborations.

This sub-chapter shows how these different modes of doing church between 'running in a start-up mode' and collaborating with others affects the abilities of churches to respond to urban needs and to shape urban spaces accordingly. The most substantial and controversial space of church activity is the Hackney Foodbank. This concrete result of collaborating efforts is, however, considered a space saturated with ambiguities, as the last section of this sub-chapter will argue.

### "Running church in a start-up mode"

Despite their role as organisations for a greater good, congregations also follow their mission to evangelise and aim to convince more people to become practicing Christians. The church plants in this study are vivid examples of how, on an organisational level, goals for the greater good compete with religious goals to grow a larger and stronger congregation. Considering for

example the focus on the arts and sports at Mercy Church Hackney and Kirche für Kreuzberg respectively, their social activities in their areas are often rather lukewarm (> 4.2), as their focus is not necessarily on projects that obtain social goals outside of the congregation, but rather those aimed to please their fellow congregants. Their motivation is much more focused on winning new members and rather broadly oriented on an inherent impetus of "creating a better world, with better citizens" (IPL21, 12.2013, Gabriela Jones).

> Indeed, the whole idea depends on donations and partner congregations, they are the investors. It's like a normal start-up company, it entails a risk. And it truly may be that we will have reached an end in two years' time.
> (IPB11, 08.2013, Andi Clausnitzer)

The lack of social activities at church plants, however, is not merely a result of a disinterest in the local. The focus on doing mission rather than on organising projects for the greater good is related to more practical reasons such as the lack of human and financial resources. As Andi, a young church-planter affiliated to the Kirche für Kreuzberg points out in the quote above, church-planting is a risky undertaking for those starting it. Beyond the institutional mission to function as a place for people to worship, the transformation of churches from hospitable spaces to spaces of empowerment is essentially a question of the availability of people and money, of leadership and economic capital. This has been a crucial topic in every congregation taking part in this study. The leadership skills of pastors are just as important a factor as monthly incomes in the form of donations or taxes in whether the goals of congregational growth or outreaching activities are achieved. Church plants in particular do not usually have access to larger institutional support and are dependent on different channels to maintain their income.

In other words, their need to search for funding outside of the institutionalised church circles strongly determines their mode of operation and therewith their ability to respond to social situations in their urban surroundings. The church plants belonging to the church-planting network of the New York-based Redeemer City to City network illustrates this very strongly (> 4.2), as their own mode of running a church has striking similarities to 'start-up mentalities'. Here, running a new congregation entails similar risks, as investors who need to be satisfied are an essential part of the 'project', as the example of the Berlin-based plants of Kirche für Berlin and its younger sister Kirche für Kreuzberg show.

In these two congregations, 'supporters' literally determine the way of doing church. The main supporters are individuals and other church congregations, predominantly in the United States, who technically function as

'investors'. Similar founders of start-up companies, the church-planters have to make a pitch in front of investors. The pastor of the redeemer-affiliated church Kirche für Kreuzberg visits his potential and actual supporters twice a year, and undertakes a 'fundraising tour' throughout different cities across the US. During his two-week journey, he visits predominantly evangelical congregations who are situated in rural regions in the bible belt as much as urban centres on the West and East Coasts. The supporters are either wealthy individual members or whole congregations that give a certain sum of their donations to projects like the Berlin-based start-up churches.

In return, congregations like Kirche für Kreuzberg 'sell' their ambitions for church growth in 2-to-5-year 'business-plans'. Particularly for the churches from Berlin, the narrative for the donators follows a rather simplistic geographical stereotyping on the larger scale. The fact of church-planting in a major European capital, once dominated by unchurched socialism and now shaped by decades of Islamic immigration[44], is seen as a good reason for evangelical church congregations in the US to support young church plants who aim to target their activities towards young people in one of the most secular regions of the world[45] (IPB18,09.2013, Eric Kaltenegger).

The effect of this start-up mentality on the congregations is that they have focused on how to reach a certain demographic, and particularly, how to sustain the growth of the congregation in a certain amount of time. As with start-up mentalities, within the constraint of acting to satisfy 'investors', church plants are not necessarily eager to collaborate with others, as they operate within the same 'market' and reach out to the same 'customers'. As a consequence, joint social projects between church plants are rare, particularly in the city of Berlin, where church-planting and church growth are much younger and less self-evident phenomena than in London (> 4.1).

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[44] The most salient social boundaries in the districts of Kreuzberg and Neukölln exist for the Muslim population as the 'generalised other', whose presence has been held accountable for 'failed immigration' (Huning and Schuster 2015). Church-planting in this context is also openly framed as a mission activity, at least for the American supporters of the young congregations. Therewith, church-planting activities also maintain very powerful social boundaries.

[45] A further example of this way of doing 'postmodern mission' are church spaces that function as regular cafes such as Kahaila Cafe on Brick Lane in London and Prachtwerk in Berlin-Neukölln. The latter is financed by a large urban church from Chicago. But this cooperation is rather opaque to the frequent user, as no information relating to this backing is available either in the actual cafe spaces or online. The way the massive space is run is similar to a regular cafe, with the addition of a small stage to promote local artists. Their approach to Christianity is rather invisible: their aim is to enrich the neighbourhood's public spaces, in which Muslim communities are very present, with cultural activities. The actual practice of doing church is focused on irregular prayer meetings, which are not publicly advertised.

Consequently, the activities of most of the church plants are often less aligned as responses to pressing social needs in urban frontiers and more often focused to maintain their homogenous growth, not least to meet 'investor demands'. This contributes to the perpetuation of existing cultural boundaries.


## Geographical alliances: the 'Shoreditch Group'

Parish churches usually have to contend with similar financial and human scarcities to church plants, despite a growth in visitors. Particularly in the area of Shoreditch, geographical proximity plays a crucial role for alliances, as the church plants and re-starts in the areas of Hoxton and Bethnal Green have strategically joined their resources to better respond to the needs they have jointly identified in their area.

The 'Shoreditch Group', a network of churches initiated by the HTB re-start of the parish church St Markus Bethnal Green is a vivid example of how churches seek to heighten their visibility in local areas by working together for the common good as a form of voluntary association (Cnaan and Curtis 2013), and therewith try to overcome their under-resourced existences to carry out transformational work. It exemplifies the boundaries such initiatives meet.

The 'Shoreditch Group' was established as a loose relational network of churches in the area of 'Greater Shoreditch' in 2010, aiming to "bring churches together, and unlock their capacity to undertake more social actions" (CTC 2014). This liaison of churches from various backgrounds, working for the 'common good', is grounded in the Citizens movement[46] in the UK, which links it to secular as well as religious resources of funding for church actions.

The crucial particularities as well as the downsides of the Shoreditch Group are intimately related to its geographical references. The initial support for the Shoreditch Group reached back to the founding of the Mayor's Fund for London, a charity initiated by the former Mayor of London Boris Johnson to alleviate child poverty in the city. The Shoreditch Group was the first project it supported, via the newly founded local group, Shoreditch Citizens.[47] With this initial source of funding, the Shoreditch Group is an example of the way faith groups have slowly become an integral part of recent local government strategies, as has been outlined above (> 3.1).

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[46] UK Citizens is a nationwide "broad-based community organisation, made up largely of faith communities, schools, universities, a few union branches and a small number of NGOs" (Holgate 2015: 434).

[47] Shoreditch Citizens was a local branch of Citizens UK initiated by the London Mayor's Fund. However, the movement of London Citizens decided to reorganise their local branches along the borough boundaries. Shoreditch Citizens was separated into Hackney Citizens and Bethnal Green Citizens.

The reference to Shoreditch as an area of activity was an attempt to create a network that went beyond individual neighbourhoods, and at the same time to reference an area that is known widely for its trendiness, its night-life, expensive eating and distinctive cultural amenities (Pratt 2009). A brochure of the Shoreditch Group states its aim to respond to social needs on this frontier of urban gentrification:

> …the whole area is a real mix of wealth and deprivation, of tradition and fashion. From Brick Lane and its curry houses to the fashionable bars and restaurants of Shoreditch itself, to the art galleries of neighbouring Hoxton, to 'Silicon Roundabout' at Old Street, this part of inner East London has been 'gentrifying' rapidly in the last 20 years, and prices have been rising. Yet much poverty remains, and many in the local communities are not sharing in the area's rising fortunes. (CTC 2014: 7)

As Gabriela Jones, the group's coordinator, explains, the initial idea to claim Shoreditch as the home of churches active for the common good in one of the hippest and yet most deprived areas in central East London, was a huge part of the motivation of the initiators of the group (IPL21, 12.2013, Gabriela Jones). This is symbolised and has been continually illustrated by some of the major ambitions of the group to create a strong network of vicars working in the area.

One particular aim of the group's initiators was to strengthen the bonds between financial companies operating in the City of London and Shoreditch churches, and promote initiatives on financial education similar to 'Money Talks' at St Mary Hoxton as discussed earlier (> 6.1). Meetings of the network are organised outside church spaces in trendy Shoreditch cafes: "the 'third space' non-church context of a café was essential to creating the right 'feel', being neutral, professional and local" (CTC 2014: 11).

However, the reference to Shoreditch as a vaguely constructed geographically fixed point was not only supposed to be at the heart of the identity of the group, but simultaneously became its downside. The pure largeness of the area led to relationships between vicars from neighbouring yet quite different areas, who barely knew each other's parishes and for the most part could not think of working together across the span of such a diverse geographical area and under one organisational roof.

> The geographical area defined as Shoreditch was a very strange area; it was a sort of thing that gets hooked up in the mayor's office that doesn't really bare much resemblance to the psycho-geography of an area. So I think that may have been part of it that you are trying to pull in church leaders from Kings Cross right through to Bethnal Green. And those are very different areas with very different dynamics. So I think that was part of it. I think also the early days of the Shoreditch Group we have been exposed to numerous projects. With the potential that all of them

> happening in the Shoreditch Group area. But I think the reality is there are
> only so many projects, that a small number of churches with actually a
> small amount of people can actually sustain. (IPL02, 11.2013, Angus Inglis)

Furthermore, the spatial reference to Shoreditch, an area that is a London-wide synonym for gentrification (Harris 2012), turned out to be rather problematic.

> I think with geography it was fine [but] the word is difficult, isn't it? Most
> people struggle with 'Shoreditch', because it means just that crossroads
> area, the night clubs, the expensive coffee… (IPL06, 11.2013, Andrew
> Aldridge)

Angus, the founder of the network church Mercy Church Hackney and one of the founding members of the Shoreditch Group, criticises the attempt to span activities across very different areas that might be connected for those people who are newcomers but are quite disconnected from long-time residents, with a very different "psycho-geography". Andrew, vicar of St Markus in Bethnal Green, similarly identifies the spatial stereotype of Shoreditch as a problem when it wants to be recognised as a network related to the urban poor rather than another component of gentrifying East London.

The disconnectedness of congregations was papered over by activities of a bustling nature, as such papering over the problems of the Shoreditch Group with a high degree of project-drivenness. The much-welcomed attempt to initiate projects and join forces to organise them led to strong demands being placed on the local congregations, which resulted in a high degree of dissatisfaction among many members:

> Over a six month period it's the Shoreditch Group that expelled us to
> twelve projects. And with the best will in the world, we are only gonna be
> able to sustain maybe one of them as a new initiative. So it is that kind of
> project fatigue almost, what's achievable?  (IPL02, 11.2013, Angus Inglis)

Beyond the critics of the geographical focus of the group's related social actions, the congregations involved also struggled with the principal idea and the language that came with the initiation of the Shoreditch Group, as it was closely related to governmental activities bundled in the idea of 'Big Society'. Launched in 2010, 'Big Society' quickly became synonymous in the UK with policies related to the aim of converting welfare provision from its current incarnation, where it is organised and delivered by the state, into a system that relied on the self-organising abilities of civil-society actors (Baker 2012). It was dismissed by most churches as an 'ideological agenda' fuelled by ideas of advanced neoliberalism and austerity politics (Lowndes and Pratchett 2012).

Although it puts FBOs and church congregations in the centre of welfare provision and therewith makes them more visible, Felix, the vicar of St Mary Hoxton, has positioned himself very clearly in political opposition to policies that have been developed in the ideological frame of 'Big Society'.[48]

> And I think that a lot of the impetus for the Shoreditch Group came from the Big Society movement that was going on in 2010. And it is amazing how quickly this notion of Big Society has been jettisoned or how the government has forgotten, dropped off the radar… and a lot of church leaders were very ambivalent about Big Society. Myself included. I felt cynical and probably opposed to this whole notion of Big Society. Because it seemed to me that Big Society was a way for central government to educate responsibility for the delivery of core services and core provision for citizens and say, this enables local groups and charities to come and step up. And I think what it actually tried to do was to introduce neoliberal free market assumptions into the provision of services for local communities. Where there actually shouldn't be. Most of the localism bill were, if you don't like the ways waste collection is being dealt with, then you can get together with your local residents association and you can bit for the contract to run it yourself. You can take it over from your local council. And that is just ridiculous, the idea that you can just have volunteers taking over core infrastructure services. (IPL07, 11.2013, Felix Graham)

Felix's judgement of the group's larger involvement in the political climate surrounding 'Big Society' was grounded in the geographical organisation of 'communities' (> 3.1), touching the same ground on which critical perspectives have interpreted the increasing visibility of FBOs in the welfare sector as "vehicles of neoliberalism" that prolong the ideologies of governmental policies to tighten the budgets for urban social welfare in general (Hackworth 2010: 768f).

However, this critical reflection on the larger role of churches by church leaders shows that they are well aware of the ambiguity of their role in a postsecular society.

> …obviously the Shoreditch Group has facilitated a number of initiatives, or enabled a number of initiatives, you know Hackney Foodbank grew out of the Shoreditch Group. Because there were two or three of us who said, we could do it, rather than being an initiative of the Shoreditch Group as a whole…but I think the freshness of the Shoreditch Group was a catalyst for a number of new things happening in the area. (IPL02, 11.2013, Angus Inglis)

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[48] The term and with it its key policies vanished from the political agenda in 2013, as its political instruments to encourage volunteering were said to be ineffective (Butler 2015).

The Shoreditch Group has been an energy-driven and yet not very long-lasting attempt to heighten the presence of local church congregations in a time of continuing secularisation and pressure on younger churches to grow. The fine line between the congregations' role as an instrument to implement austerity politics and a reliable neighbourhood organisation that serves less privileged people in urban frontiers culminates in fragile atmospheres of concrete social activities, as will be argued in the next section.

## "When you feed a hungry, they call you a Christian" – the ambiguous spaces of food banking

The Hackney Foodbank has been the most impactful result of the Shoreditch Group. Food banks are emergency food aid charities for people in desperate need. Often cited by actors from inside the church as a proof of its important communal interactions and presence in society (Notes and Blond 2013: 10), critics instead understand the rising use of food aid in the UK in recent years as a proof of the failure of the continuing neoliberalisation of local government and efforts that evolved out of the 'Big Society' claims and its aftermath (Lambie-Mumford 2013). The fact that food banks are addressing the symptoms of these failed policies rather than fighting against the roots of hunger is a matter of controversy in academia (ibid.) but is also present in discussions within church congregations and among volunteers.

At the same time, food banks are spaces of social engagement where volunteers encounter the failing of welfare reforms during their work and are confronted with ethical issues they are not facing in their everyday lives. This makes food banks ambiguous and significant spaces of engagement, as they provision activities for "liminal encounter and politicisation" (Williams et al 2016: 18), as will be argued in this section.

Food banks are usually run by individual charities, but the organisation of food banks has been highly institutionalised in recent years. Today, food banks are a franchise, of which Trussel Trust is the largest provider in the UK (Caplan 2016). This model makes it comparatively easy for churches and other organisations to found a charity and become a franchise holder of a local aid system in the form of a food bank, as it provides organisations with a full marketing package and a well-known brand in exchange for a (costly) yearly contribution to the Trussel Trust.

Hackney Foodbank was founded by St Markus Bethnal Green, St Mary Hoxton, Mercy Church Hackney and three other churches located in the borough of Hackney in 2012. With the help of volunteers from all three

congregations, the Food Bank collects food from local supermarkets and donations from congregants as well as people living close to the churches.

The collection of food as well as announcements of the need for new volunteers occurs during church services. This makes congregants aware of the engagement of their congregation, reminds people of the existence of the Foodbank and at the same time frames their contribution as an activity in line with Christian ethics. Inside the churches, activities surrounding Hackney Foodbank are usually framed as the churches' most important and permanent external activity that connects the congregation to 'local people in crisis'. This makes the Foodbank a central pillar of the bonding of the congregation with the poverty present in the immediate surrounding areas.

However, food banking simultaneously embodies the ambiguities of church practices in an urban frontier, as they produce contested and contradictory spaces of political engagement as much as spaces of care, which materialise in the various activities of Hackney Foodbank.

> During the weeks before Christmas, the need of food supply is particularly high, as is the willingness to give. Together with volunteers of Mercy Church Hackney we meet on a Saturday morning at a Tesco parking lot and start to arrange our booth to collect donated items from people leaving the supermarket and advertise the collection to people entering. Tesco is the largest grocery retailer in the UK, and known for a low-price policy. The volunteers are all very similar to myself: between 25 and 35 years old, mainly white, mainly male, mainly higher education. We are all wearing green vests with the Logo of the Trussel Trust, the franchise brand of Hackney Foodbank. The people entering the Tesco's on this pre-Christmas weekend more or less represent the area: a super-diverse customers. However, the majority is black. Most of the people entering the market don't have time to listen to our text, while grabbing one of our list of items the Food Bank needs: "We are collecting food for local people in crisis. It would be of great help to people, if you could buy one or two of the items on the list and donate them here for Hackney Foodbank! Merry Christmas". If they respond, the responses of customers vary greatly. Some people stop and ask about more information and which items they shall buy in particular. Others just double the products they buy and donate half of them. The fact that Trussel Trust is Christian or that the Foodbank is run by churches is not a topic at all. But the majority of the people are not listening, and many are angry, shouting at volunteers and pointing out how poor they are themselves. As they don't get help, why should they help others? Why are they not collecting at Waitrose? Over the time many volunteers get frustrated over this experience; some are raising serious ethical issues: why would we collect food from the poor to give it to those that are a little poorer? (Field notes London, 12.2013)

Food collections in supermarkets are carried out by a rather homogenous group of volunteers. In particular, the congregants of the rather young congregation of Mercy Church Hackney are often the majority during food

collections, as the project manager of the Foodbank is also part of their congregation. As food collections usually take place on the weekends or in the evening hours, people with regular jobs are more likely to volunteer during the distribution to customers.

The collection of food presents volunteers with a variety of ambiguities as well as moral concerns, in particular regarding the treatment of symptoms, rather than "working on the roots of the increasing presence of food insecurities".[49] The fact that the food collection happens at a supermarket that belongs to a low cost chain makes many wonder whether this is an efficient way to get engaged and if cooperation with supermarkets in a higher price range would not have a larger impact.

More fundamentally, the collection of food items is a moment where volunteers who are usually not in touch with the beneficiaries of the food bank are in a position to defend a system they are not necessarily convinced of, in front of people who are not necessarily willing to donate. During conversations with volunteers, it seems that most of them take part primarily because this is what congregants do; it is what 'good Christians' do – they support the social activities of their congregation and engage in local social issues. The authoritative environment of a church space contributes to the congregants' disposition to become engaged.

However, for Vicky, a young congregant who recently moved into the area of Hoxton, as for those congregants who strongly identify with their beliefs, this also reduces the church to being just another actor in the welfare sector, and buries the unique feature of a religious organisation, which is to do mission:

> And I think it is really good that the church engages with the community, but I sometimes also think if that is just the excuse why the church is still there. We are not social workers, but we are ministry people. (IPL34, 12.2013, Vicky van der Veen)

Beyond the collection of food, the distribution of food to costumers is the key task of food banks. At Hackney Foodbank this occurs three times a week at different churches across the borough during morning hours. The volunteers at the distribution centres are usually from very different backgrounds to those present during the collection of food in the supermarkets. Most of the volunteers are either unemployed, students or retirees, and usually work for food banks on a very regular basis. They are used to being in contact with their customers, who are in a state of emergency

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[49] These concerns were mainly raised in private conversations during the collection of food. However, volunteers were aware of my role as a participating researcher.

relying on the free aid of charities. For costumers the collection of food is often accompanied by feelings of shame and embarrassment. Those who come to Hackney Foodbank mostly consider this their very last chance to reduce hunger in a state of emergency. The substitution of financial support for people in need with strictly rationed support in the form of groceries puts those that have to rely on this emergency system in a stigmatised position that dominates the relationship between giver and receiver (Purdam, Garrit and Esmail 2015).

Within this atmosphere of a volunteering space of care and benevolence, volunteers at Hackney Foodbank are confronted with a strong hierarchy and continual moral rulings. To be provided with food, clients of the food bank have to bring a voucher, which they get from local doctors, social workers, or other professionals in the field who have to decide whether their state of emergency is dire enough for them to receive help from the food bank. A voucher entitles a person to collect food for him- or herself and their family. However, the collection of food is strongly restricted to one collection per person per week, and a person or household can only collect food three times per year, as the system is considered to be an emergency aid and should not substitute other long-term programmes to help people out of difficult situations. At the check-in, volunteers have to assess the voucher and decide individually about the voucher holder's eligibility. Vouchers with unclear origins or unstated provenance are not rare, so volunteers are often confronted with the situation of having to discuss eligibility with clients and sometimes decline the provision of food.

Most of the volunteers view their own activities as encumbering, and yet liberating; encumbering because they are faced with a level of poverty they are not confronted with in their everyday live. For most, this raises strong political concerns as much as ethical questions. From the delivery point of Hackney Foodbank in the cellar of St Mary Hoxton, one can see the skyscrapers of the City of London, the financial centre of Europe. For the volunteers, of whom the majority grew up in Hoxton and many of whom are now retired, this physical proximity between wealth and extreme poverty is difficult to accept. Although they mostly position themselves as more working than middle class, most volunteers have experienced a reliable welfare state that no longer exists.

However, during the discussions with volunteers, feelings of liberation have also been expressed, as the effect of their engagement and the way their work helps people to live through moments of personal crisis is also a form of expressing their belief. For the Christians that are involved, it is a way to act according to their faith and simultaneously promote it, as Katie states: "I have gotten involved with food bank because it is a kind of ministry opportunity as

much as it is an opportunity to engage in a community" (IPL16, 12.2013, Katie Butler).

The ambiguities of food banking are expressed in the mixed feelings of volunteers between helplessness and benevolence. On the organisational level, between the trustees of the food bank and the vicars of the churches involved, these ambiguities are matters of permanent controversy:

> In as much as, you know, if things were right, you wouldn't need a food bank. So in a sense you are always wondering that the success of the food bank is a strange thing and you wish it wasn't successful on one level. And I am glad that it is successful in as much as it is feeding a hundred people in the food crisis … So the need is huge, and growing, which is sad. But I think the, what is raised for all of us in the food bank is, when you feed a hungry, they call you a Christian, when you ask why they are hungry, they call you a communist. So the more that are involved in it, the more we are aware of the dynamics as to why people are hungry. And what does it look like to be advocates on their behalf or at least alongside them. So I think, as we look to the future of food banks, this is kind of a high priority. It is to begin to explicate to people, why others find themselves in a food crisis.
> (IPL02, 11.2013, Angus Inglis)

As the quote above shows, the church congregations that run Hackney Foodbank are well aware of the environment they are a productive part of. Their collaboration is based on practices of social activism outside of the congregations, that play by the rules set by 'Big Society Reforms', reforms they are simultaneously critical of in line with their own ethical guidelines as well as political standpoints. The self-awareness of the institutionalised position churches take in the current welfare system with projects like the food bank is illustrated in the analogy above: "when you feed the hungry, they call you a Christian, when you ask why they are hungry, they call you a communist". What may be understood in part as a resignation in the face of the weight of the real problems behind the need for food banks can also be interpreted as a strategically welcome position, as churches do their bit to heal increasing social problems on the local level and are consequently recognised as increasingly relevant actors in the social sector as well as in the neighbourhood.

> The government is increasingly recognising the 'gateway' of church social action as a unique access into communities, and understands that the church is already the de facto provider of local public services, most notably health, social and investment services. (Noyes and Blond 2013: 21)

The perspective above from a Christian London-based think tank, which reflects congregations as an entry point and funnel of social policies into a

neighbourhood, is also a perspective some congregants share. However, perspectives from inside churches, from volunteers and congregants, vicars and other clergy, are much more ambivalent about the larger role of the churches' social engagement in between neutral spaces of care and acts of missional activities to gain a more solidified position in a secularising society.

> And I think it is really good that the church engages with the community, but I sometimes also think if that is just the excuse why the church is still there. We are not social workers, but we are ministry people. (IPL34, 12.2013, Vicky van der Veen)

> We don't do food bank, because we want people to come to church and we want to grow it…we do it because it's the right thing to do. And if it changes peoples' perception of church, then great, but our primary goal is not to get people through the doors when we do food banks and stuff. (IPL , 06.2014, Adam Watson)

> If you do open a food bank, actually that might help with evangelism, if you join in community organising and get to know the neighbours, you know, that might help in other projects. It comes back, it reflects back into the church and helps the church grow and develop in lots of different ways. So, these things are in competition. (IPL26, 12.2013, Sam Simmons)

Hackney Foodbank is a way for church congregations to show their contribution to the alleviation of poverty, and similarly create connections between their congregants and the immediate local area that is also shaped by social inequalities and structural problems.

However, the food bank is also one of the significant ways in which church congregations politicise volunteers, since they experience inequalities during their work in the produced spaces of care many of them would not be confronted with in their everyday lives. Food banks are spaces of encounter between those who believe and those who don't, and between those who are in need of greater connection to resources and those who are willing to share them. Yet, this simultaneously engenders the risk of food aid creating larger divisions between those in need of aid stigmatised as a group at the very edge of society , and those who 'help' (Purdam et al 2015).

# 6.3 Ethical ways of responding

> I would say, the church is always in the thick of it, it always opens the doors for those that won't find open doors anywhere else. And it is well linked-up. The church is like a bulky knot in a colourful net. There are many knots and the church is certainly not always the core, but it always is an important and central point. (IPB34, 02.2014, Frauke Ebermann)

The sections of this chapter have discussed various ways church congregations in London and Berlin respond to social and political needs in 'urban frontiers', and how this shapes the spaces they are situated in. It has been argued that the empowerment of individuals to take action in matters of everyday life as much as their political mobilisation is a central aim for church congregations in their role as neighbourhood organisations. The different forms of doing church partly restrict their ability to transform encounters of different people inside the church into mutual social practices in urban spaces.

Whereas in some cases the goals for internal growth and attracting certain demographics override the ability to create spaces of mutuality, other congregations provide spaces with domestic qualities,characterised by morality, trust and comfort. The latter generates the bedrock on which "prosaic negotiations" (Amin 2006: 1015), as a result of encounters that stem from a form of "elective belonging" (Savage 2010: 130), are translated into concrete social actions for the greater (local) good, and that involves the strengthening of relationships among the various congregants as much as with external actors.

The collaboration of different church congregations with one another significantly increases the effect church actions have on the level of engagement of volunteers and congregants as well as on the outcome of social projects. International collaborations to fund church plants are rather obstructive to their involvement in local issues, and the example of The Shoreditch Group also shows that mere spatial proximity and a mutual spatial reference ('Shoreditch') are not sufficient for the creation of joint projects that impact local problems.

However, the focus of spatially proximate church congregations on a common local agenda enabled church congregations in the area of Hoxton to found Hackney Foodbank, whose activities are an influential response to the crisis of poor people in the area. The moral landscape of the church frames these undertakings and motivates volunteers to become engaged. The production of social spaces of care that respond to urban needs affects not only the people  who are in need of the food bank services, but also provides "opportunities for the formation of ethical and political citizenship" for those involved as volunteers (Cloke, May and Williams 2016: 3). On the other hand, these spaces are representative of the ambiguities of churches as neighbourhood organisations, as the practices of food banks – similar to the increasing role of FBOs in urban welfare in general – are critiqued from outside the church as an accompaniment to the continuing neoliberalisation of the welfare state (Hackworth 2010), but are simultaneously evolving spaces of

solidarity and generosity that generate the grounds for opposing social practices.

These active ways in which church congregations respond to urban needs lead to certain theoretical contributions to urban studies related to gentrification. Firstly, they show in a more general manner the increasing relevance of 'neighbourhood organisations' in gentrifying contexts of social mixing. The responses of the churches to urban needs in this study manifests their role as mediums "through which systemic processes reach the street corner" and "settings in which neighbourhood social integration is produced in interaction" (McQuarrie & Marwell 2009: 257). Beyond the dominant perspective of separation, cultural reproduction and a shielding of middle classes from the 'real world' (Atkinson 2006, Jackson and Benson 2014), the working of church congregations shows the need for the right institutional settings for different people to encounter, communicate and act. Similar to the role of bars and other "third places" (Oldenburg and Brisset 1982), and yet more profoundly, the impact of church congregations as neighbourhood organisations in this study shows that a wide variety of people actually make use of such places to deliberately encounter others. Similar to the function of schools (Blokland and Nast 2014) and other semi-public spaces (Peterson 2016), church congregations represent an opportunity to develop a stronger sense of familiarity with others to overcome social boundaries and become engaged in local issues.

Furthermore, carrying forward the theoretical conclusions drawn at the end of the previous chapter (> 5.3), the hospitality in the institutional settings of church congregations not only makes encounters and connections between different local realities through "lighter touch forms of sociality" (Thrift 2005: 145) more likely, but also translates the moral landscapes of churches into a domesticated space. This increases mutual familiarity with others and stimulates processes of domestication which create a "sense of trust, comfort and amenity" (Koch and Latham 2013: 9) in everyday church life. This facilitates empowerment and the political mobilisation of individuals with various social and cultural backgrounds. This joint care among neighbourhoods in urban frontiers happening "in the meantime" of social actions (Cloke, May and Williams 2016) also illustrates the existence of ethical concerns for one another that can be interpreted as a starting point for a common understanding beyond the well-practiced social boundaries of a gentrifying neighbourhood.

## CHAPTER 7
# 7 Faith in gentrification: theorising back

This thesis has studied the consequences of gentrification ('a well-known phenomenon') in inner-city areas in London and Berlin ('the usual suspects') through the perspective of church congregations. The general claim of this comparison of different cases across different contexts is to dislocate dominant perspectives of urban theory "through elsewhere" (Robinson 2015). 'Elsewhere' is not understood as a change of geographical location (e.g. a view from the Global South, Robinson 2006); instead it refers to a different (empirical) lens for viewing a different urban 'now'. The rationale behind this comparison is a stronger dialogue across (unusual) settings, traditions and urbanisms (Peck 2015). Church congregations are an organisational 'location' of 'elsewhere', situated in the postsecular urban through which the more common empirical and theoretical components of gentrification can be viewed.

The task of this final chapter is to re-order the key empirical findings, examine them via the settings of this thesis and draw some further theoretical conclusions from the material. This goes beyond the task of providing a 'general conclusion', as it not only summarises the 'preliminary conclusions' made at the end of each chapter, but also includes new literature and further analysis. Beyond a review of the main research questions as outlined in the introduction, this final chapter puts a specific focus on contributions that can be made to current discussions in urban studies in general and on gentrification in particular.

The attempted approach for these further thoughts is a mode of 'theorising back', a reflective conversation between the empirical material generated 'elsewhere' and the more dominant theoretical discourses of gentrification (see also Ward 2008, Ren 2015). This follows an understanding of theory as ideas that are situated somewhere in between a law-like explanation and a pure description of the empirical (Ong 2011: 12). Consequently, this mode of theorising is dedicated more to generating conceptual schemes than to giving a proper explanation of why something is the way it seems in the sense of a general social mechanism (see Hedström and Swedberg 1996: 281f). In other words, this deliberately aims to put some "descriptive color" into the understanding of the contemporary urban (Scott and Storper 2015: 12), and simultaneously claims to enrich some parts of urban theory. Conceptual

schemes are meant as an invitation to think about further theoretical implications in a generative way.

The perspective from within a limited number of church congregations situated in London and Berlin enriches "theoretical insights from a diversity of specific urban outcomes, processes and contexts" (Robinson and Roy 2015: 3) and follows the "imperative of taking the field seriously" (Leitner and Sheppard 2016: 6). This means to take the situated knowledges tangible in church congregations as productive parts of the urban fabric and to try to understand the limits and latitudes of contemporary theoretical framings of gentrification.

Two contributions to urban theory are made in the unfolding of this chapter. Firstly, the strong desire for belonging and the 'home-making' practices of congregants in the neighbourhoods of Neukölln, Hoxton, Kreuzberg and Bethnal Green point to a strong value of 'community'. Although an utterly broad term that has been questioned and reworked since the existence of urban studies, the perspective from within church congregations (who define a core of their work around the building of community) shows that socially diverse 'communities' can evolve even in circumstances of segregating gentrification pressures and build nucleuses for a revitalisation of mutual living in inner-cities. However, the social diversity of churches is clearly limited to those who are attracted to church and take part in their external activities. This often leaves out a large part of the population, in particular people who belong to other religious groups, Muslims in particular.

Secondly, the creation of spaces of possibility is a result of encounters in more diverse 'communities'. These spaces are enabled through lived hospitality in churches and enacted through a framing of 'theo-ethics' in concrete social practices. This creates possibilities for change and transformation, which is taken as evidence in questioning the gentrification 'frontier' as a boundary between different lifeworlds, and instead theorising it as a contested passage of urban change.

## 7.1 Reviving communit(y)ies

The processes of change in urban frontiers seen through the practices of growing church congregations brought up a major recurring reference among most interviewees in all cases: 'community'. This reference was made either because it was *absent* for individual people or groups that were supposed to

be in need of it (> 4 and 6); or because it was *found* by people who were looking for it (> 5); or because it kept being *demanded* in a more normative-political manner by those who saw it in a functional-integrationist way as an opportunity to create more social cohesion in spaces of 'social deprivation', in this case through the activation of faith communities (> 3.1).

Although 'community' is an extremely broad term that has been the subject of controversies in urban studies in the recent past (e.g. Wallace 2010), its ubiquity makes it an obvious starting point for discussing the theoretical contributions of this thesis to research on gentrification in particular, and to urban geography more generally. It will be argued that the comparative perspectives from within church congregations on 'urban frontiers' in London and Berlin help us think differently about the value of 'community' theoretically and the ways it is produced within processes of gentrification.

> So it kind of stood to me that Berlin was a city that wasn't just the way it is now, I felt like it would change, so that got me going. I could see a need for community and I could see a need for people finding common purpose and getting over the depression. London has all that too as well. But failed relationships I felt are just very common here, that seemed to be just part of the landscape. I felt the lack of trust here was high. I felt suspicion was high. (IPB17, Lucas Vaughan, 09.2013)

As the quote above from a Berlin-based church-planter shows, the perceived lack of 'community' in times of change is a driving force behind the locational choice of church-planting in the inner-city of Berlin. The comparison with London hints at the kind of change that is anticipated: a more commodified urban space. The 'need for community' as a way to accompany or oppose 'change' has been attested to by all the church pastors in this study. Whereas planters mainly refer to 'community' in the sense of the church community (IPB17, IPL07), pastors in parish churches rather refer to it in terms of territorial communit(y)ies in their neighbourhood (IPB29, IPL06). This addresses different (geographical) scales of 'community' and leads to different ways of doing church and different external activities.

However, the reach of churches in this study is limited to people attracted by churches in general, which leaves out large amounts of local populations, e.g. those who belong to other religions. The religious and ethnic diversity of Kreuzberg, Neukölln, Hoxton and Bethnal Green is characterised by a significant percentage of people belonging to the Islamic faith (> 2.3), who are not included in the practices of churches in this study. In contrast to other congregations in the same areas, the churches in this study are not involved in inter-faith activities. This limits the direct reach to people who are sympathetic towards churches and broadly share the values of Christian organisations in a

vicarious way (Davie 2012). It would need further empirical research to examine how churches in gentrifying areas respond to different religious affiliations, as this has not been the focus of this study.

Notwithstanding the above, those people who express their belonging to a church congregation refer to 'community' as an important factor in their church-related life and beyond. Most of the congregants who position themselves as middle class understand 'community' in a two-way complementary sense: as a wish to be with people who are friends, who they share more with than just sympathy towards the church and, secondly, as a desire to be with 'others', to experience 'local diversity' and 'serve the local community'; to be a part of a more diverse group of people (see for example Paul from St Mary Hoxton, or Rudolf from Kreuzberg, > 5.1). As has been argued in the empirical chapters (> 5.2), the former is connected to the latter. In other words, as soon as the circle of friends is connected with 'others', this is the moment when growing church congregations start to form a 'reviving community', as this opens up opportunities to serve as a local "micro-public for cultural encounters" of diversity (Amin 2002: 967).

The analyses of the empirical material produced two plausible reasons why 'reviving communities' evolve: on the one hand, church congregations in this study showed an ability to create hospitable spaces in an ideological as well as a situational dimension. This generates "social proximity in otherwise distant relationships" (Barnett 2005). On the other hand, people that are attracted by this way of doing church share a desire for belonging to the local fabric, which is a strong expression of local attachment as a form of "dwelling in place" (Savage 2010).

These observations are the starting point for two theoretical arguments related to current literature on gentrifying areas as places for negotiations of difference. Firstly, the increasing presence of middle-class lifestyles in 'urban frontiers', although clear signifiers of larger changes and ongoing gentrification in a neighbourhood, may not necessarily lead to a fortification of social boundaries and an intensification of segregated 'communities' that share little besides spatial proximity (see Kern 2016, Jackson and Benson 2014). In opposition to the dominant perspectives in urban studies, it is argued that intolerance and prejudice are not a compulsory implication of gentrification, but that 'ways of relating' to the local, as seen in the inner-city constellations of London and Berlin, are also closely linked to the development of familiarity, expressions of solidarity and communal togetherness by those attracted to the church congregations that are part of this study. Secondly, this shows that church congregations in gentrifying surroundings are far less ideologically imprinted spaces of exclusion than it has been suggested for other

geographical areas (see Ehrkamp and Nagel 2016). This gives way to 'communities' that are able to enhance 'spaces of possibilities in urban frontiers'.

This does not prevent gentrification from happening, but it shows more generally that neighbourhood organisations in inner-cities are able to reduce some of the social "pressures induced by gentrification" (Marcuse 1985: 207), as they contain the ability to create a nucleus that produces diverse and more inclusive 'reviving communities'. Both arguments will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

'Communities' are essentially defined by dynamics of inclusion and exclusion (Hall 1993). Church congregations and other faith-based organisations are, on the one hand, understood as particularly exclusive communities, as by definition their aim is primarily to promote belonging for those who share the same faith (Dinham 2011).

The congregations in this study are also exclusive communities in this sense. Some church plants in particular are rather culturally homogenous as their way of doing church is particularly attractive to people with a certain habitus, to younger age groups and those with more a distinct desire to belong to a spiritual community. On the other hand, parish churches and their denominations are strongly committed to the greater good and increasingly part of state-sponsored programmes that target poverty reduction and inclusion (Farnell 2001, Lanz and Oosterbaan 2016), which is the case for the UK as well as for Germany (> 3.1).

To argue that churches are spaces of encounter with difference addresses their ability to include strangers. This ability is particularly salient in ethnically homogenous immigrant churches, where newcomers to an area find a 'community' they can easily relate to, one that speaks the same language and shares similar experiences to get ahead in a new place that is to become a home. Immigrant churches often function as "service hubs" in neighbourhoods, since they provide people with bonding as much as bridging social capital, for instance in the case of Black, Korean and German churches in Chicago and Vancouver (McRoberts 2003, Ley 2008). They are also places for immigrants to gain political agency (Ehrkamp and Nagel 2012) and to overcome cultural differences within ethnic boundaries (Ehrkamp and Nagel 2016).

For newcomers to ethnically homogenous immigrant congregations, the relationship between old and new congregants, between hosts and guests, is less hierarchical and less outlandish than in spaces of greater ethnic, social or cultural heterogeneity, which is the character of most of the church congregations situated in the 'urban frontiers' of this study. To enable an

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atmosphere for the encounter of difference in these culturally heterogeneous spaces, practices of hospitality, "propositions of closer physical or social proximity" (Lugosi 2009: 399) are crucial to transform a tight 'community' of a congregation into a more inviting space.

On a theoretical level, the concept of hospitality is less focused on a normative outcome than 'community'. Whereas 'community' has a strong connotation towards the success of a relationship, hospitality is more about the processes and "ways of being-with-others" (Tregoning 2003). But hospitality is also an ambiguous affair, as Dikec reminds us in his reading of Derrida:

> Hospitality implies…the cultivation of an ethics and politics of engagement. It is a sensibility, at once political and ethical, which implies reverence for the stranger…It is never completed, the guest is never settled and not because he/she is not given the right to. There is a constant process of engagement, negotiation and perhaps contestation. There is a constant process of shifting roles as hosts and guests. The guest and the host are held in tension. (Dikec 2002: 237)

From an ideological perspective, ethics of hospitality are deeply inscribed in Christian practices. In theory, practices of church congregations are directed by a Christian theology, which guides Christians generally not to mistreat or oppress strangers,[50] to treat strangers who reside in one's land as native-born, to love strangers as oneself (Yong 2008). Whereas this idealised version of hospitality is often referred to during services, in reality hospitality in Christian practices is rather ambiguous and conditioned. Asymmetrical relationships between clergy and congregants and "conditions through which hospitality will be given and received" are general characteristics of hospitality (Bell 2007: 10) that also apply in church congregations. Ehrkamp and Nagel (2014) show in their research of churches in the US South that hospitality for illegal immigrants is conditioned when it intersects with politics: "violating (secular) immigration law here turns into a (Christian) sin that, in turn, is used to police the boundaries of membership in the church" (ibid: 325).

The practiced hospitality in the church spaces of this study is not unconditional either, as guests and newcomers are invited to complement as well as help create a 'healthy church', which refers to becoming an 'active' part of the congregation and being engaged in the local environment to a certain extent. However, the ethnically and socially diverse but mainly secular surroundings of the urban frontiers the churches of this study are situated in

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[50] Whereas *the stranger* in sociology has been understood as someone who never really belongs (Simmel 1950), in Christian theology, in particular in the New Testament, the stranger and not 'the guest' is the central recipient of hospitality, where the Greek word *philoxenia* ('love of stranger') is used for hospitality (Houston 2015: 149f).

puts church congregations in the role of representing a minority (> 3.1), which leads to strategic claims on urban spaces through the praise of the urban fabric (> 4).

The hospitality in these church congregations mirrors their standing and reputation in the urban fabrics of London and Berlin. In an "ideological dimension" (Lugosi 2009: 401 ff), hospitality is authoritatively practiced in accordance with Christian ethics of mutual care and translated into social projects that congregants are supposed to be engaged in for the greater good of local people. In a complementary way, church congregations create a "situational hospitality" (ibid) to strategically attract groups that are usually not known as churchgoers: students and 'young professionals', young families, 'artists' and 'hipsters' (IPL06, IPL07, IPB07, IPB29).

The ways of doing church and the lived hospitality in most of the congregations is adapted to both sides of the 'urban frontier', to the newcomers and the long-term residents, to those attracted to aesthetics and friendship, and to those who have called the congregation their family for decades. Situational hospitality is created through the mundane practices of performing church on a Sunday (punctuality; coffee and tea as a welcome; worshipping; intellectual and easy language and topics that matter in sermons) and supported by the lowering of (architectural, spatial and cultural) barriers to becoming a member of the church (> 5.2). The comparison of different church congregations shows that this is done in very different ways, depending on denominational belongings, locational settings and organisational goals.

However, a common pattern across the different congregations is their eagerness to make new and old members feel mutually at 'home' and increase a sense of familiarity with others, which is the starting point for reviving their 'community'. Church congregations are tied to places where new congregants, who usually happen to be new residents, find a combination of ambitions for mutuality in diversity, engagement with local people in need and a seriousness in practicing faith that is mixed with mostly progressive positions on social issues. As Paul of St Mary Hoxton summarises: "For us it is just time to engage with another community. And a geographical one and kind of serving people who have much less than we" (IPL43, > 5.1).

In analogy to the politics of urban regeneration and "social mixing" (Lees 2008), to 'diversify church' in the cases of this study usually means to invite more (young) people with 'middle-class backgrounds' (IPL07). The locational choices of people who position themselves and who are seen by others as 'more middle than working class' to live in areas like Hoxton or Neukölln can be read as a way 'others' are subjectively produced as part of a middle class

place-based identity (May 1996, Jackson and Benson 2014). This is also a plausible reading of the way church members in this study substantiate their decisions to move into the areas in question, as they actively value the surrounding local diversity inside and outside the church as a valuable factor in their choice of living (> 5.1, 5.2).

Yet, if one looks closer at the processes happening inside the church congregations of this study and the way they pair with people's motivations to live in certain localities, the judgement of the growing middle classes as catalysts of gentrification would be inaccurate, because the way growing church plants as much as re-started parish churches create social settings to cross cultural boundaries corresponds with a habitus that is defined by a form of "elective belonging" (Savage et al 2005). Inner-city destinations such as Hoxton and Neukölln are attractive to people who simultaneously value global connectedness and local embeddedness, mobility and fixity, distinctive cultural aesthetics and social diversity. Those pluralities are no antagonisms, but rather corresponding features of 'home-making' practices and a form of "dwelling in place" (Savage 2010: 132) by those people who are attracted to the 'urban churches' created in Hoxton, Neukölln, Bethnal Green and Kreuzberg and who are culturally engaged and want to invest in the places where they live (> 5.2).

With profiles that aim to attract 'young' and 'hip' dwellers in gentrifying areas, the often pejorative labelling of 'hipster churches' has been one interpretation of this form of church culture (McCracken 2010, Uddin 2012, Meinhof 2013). Most of the London and Berlin congregations in this study know how to make use of the attractiveness of distinctive cultural aesthetics, from a shabby church space (Mercy Church Hackney), to locally roasted high-quality coffee (Kirche für Kreuzberg), and an "intellectual approach" (IPL10) to their sermons that references popular secular culture as much as religious literature. To attract new arrivals to areas such as Hoxton, Kreuzberg, Bethnal Green and Neukölln demands a certain adaptation to the cultural worlds that people relate to. Although congregants would not describe themselves as 'hipsters', people in church plants and new members in re-started parish churches fit most of the criteria. More importantly, however, the label of the 'hipster' as an incongruent ascription transports some insightful characteristics of contemporary relations between parts of the 'new middle classes' and urban spaces of gentrification.

The social figure of 'hipster' is usually used as a pejorative term rather than a self-description. 'Hipsters' are portrayed as possessors of high amounts of cultural capital, but also economically poor (Michael 2015). As a phenomenon observed in areas where gentrification is already set in place, distinctive consumption habits often lead to an interpretation of hipster culture as 'ironic

mockery' (Michael 2015). Furthermore, the high value of local authenticity (Zukin 2011, Hubbard 2016) and an appeal to activities of collective enjoyments (Schiermer 2014) is set up in translocal cultural references:

> Hipster culture can thus be best understood as a layered translocal and polycentric phenomenon that rests on a complex network of infrastructures. Very local styles, tastes and attitudes can become fully integrated into and dominant in a global hipster culture and vice versa. (Maly and Varis 2015: 8)

Studies of cultural changes in cities increasingly reference the presence of 'hipsters' as agents of continuing change that drive gentrification (Douglas 2012, Huning and Schuster 2015, Lebesco and Naccarato 2015, Zukin 2016, Hubbard 2016, Valli 2016). Particularly in relation to advanced stages of gentrification, the 'hipster' seems to have inherited what used to be the role played by the 'artist' as a "new middle class" pioneer in the early stages of the process (Ley 1994: 57).

The research in this thesis shows that in addition to these observations, aspects of 'hipster culture' are seemingly related to strong concerns for local togetherness, mutuality and solidarity as an expression of a desire for belonging (> 5.1). This makes the church congregations that are part of this study relevant organisational spaces for the building of 'communities' in their areas around concerns for the local, which are predominantly socially diverse and culturally mixed. This is mirrored in Beth's summary of her experiences during the Shoreditch Park Toilet Campaign (> 6.1): "And it is not about building the church, it's about building the community … We don't have to say anything about Shoreditch Park. But it's not just for us, it's for everybody". (IPL51).

The 'making' of socially mixed 'communities' has barely been a topic in research on gentrification. One reason for this absence lies in the expectation that gentrification inevitably results in the displacement of working-class structures and their 'communities' and leads to homogenous better-off enclaves that have no sense of the local, let alone of 'community' (see Watt 2008, Slater 2012, Jackson and Butler 2015). 'Communities' have only been a topic when they are seen to be diverging and disappearing due to processes of gentrification (Betancur 2012). Consequently, the spatial practices of newcomers (people usually ascribed with the broad label of "the middle classes") are predominantly interpreted as the segregating effects of disaffiliation and colonisation (Atkinson 2006) that lead to the "social tectonics" (Butler and Robson 2003) of separate lifeworlds.

'Community', it seems, has become a neglected term in urban studies. The reason for this is that it became too normative for observers of urban life. Firstly, the focus of urban policies on 'community' and 'community cohesion' has been shown to be problematic, as it often consolidated the picture of 'communities' as homogenous territorial entities that just needed more cohesion to overcome the structural deficiencies that led to deprivation (Amin 2002: 970ff). Secondly, policies endorsing 'communities' claimed to bring salvific effects to degenerated areas in policies of urban regeneration (Blokland 2000, Lapton and Fuller 2009). The rationale behind this was the so-called trickle-down effect that let everyone in a deprived neighbourhood profit from the arrival of an economically better-off population – an idea present since the 1980s (Atkinson 2003). This is the ideological frame of policies of social mixing, which focus on the promotion of 'communities' for an urban renaissance (Lees 2008). Instead of inclusivity, the result of these policies, as observers claim for London and Berlin, is often intensified gentrification that results in a loss of 'local communities' (Lees 2008, Huning and Schuster 2015). These observations of the state of 'community' largely confirm the increasingly segregated reality of cities in the Global North (Atkinson 2006).

The postsecular, comparative perspective from within church congregations adds a further layer to this picture of social life in gentrifying environments. It de-centres some of the dominant assumptions that lead to a limited view of the current situation in cities of the Global North. Despite the undeniable fact that most inner-cities in Europe as well as North America are characterised by some form of social mix (Bridge, Butler, Le Galés 2014) and increasing "super-diversity" (Vertovec 2007) disregarded of social-mix-policies, studies barely take the settings into account and hence fail to identify where this diversity is found and translated into "cultural encounters" that produce the chance to cross social boundaries through the creation of "moments of cultural destabilisation" (Amin 2002: 970).

The hospitable spaces of church congregations function as such settings in socially mixed areas, characterised by an increasing pressure of gentrification. As "micro-publics'" (Amin 2002: 967) they create spaces as settings of mutuality for newcomers and long-time residents alike. 'Hipsters', a fraction of the middle classes (as an ascribed or self-positioning category), search for authenticity mixed with collective enjoyment and distinction, aspirations which fit snuggly into the organisational goal of translating 'healthy churches' into places of communal togetherness.

However, the qualitative work in this study revealed nuances that show that these practices operate on a fine line and carry the risk of displacing old members with too many changes and therewith boosting gentrification pressures (> 6.2). But their efforts in between practices to care for the 'local

communities' and serve a 'hipsterism' at the same time is also to be understood as an effort to integrate the changes actively in their neighbourhoods, instead of working destructively against them. This is the basis on which church 'communities' are revived and produce possibilities to become socially and culturally more mixed, 'reviving communities' for their respective local areas.

## 7.2 Spaces of possibility in urban frontiers

> …the advantages in the inner city, in an area where there has been historic migration, is that it feels as if there is much more of an possibility of change within the sort of fabric of the community… (IPL06, 11.2013, Andrew Aldridge)

A further recurring topic running through the empirical material are 'spaces of possibility' emerging out of activities that reviving church 'communities' achieve. Those spaces are emblems of the socially productive role of churches as neighbourhood organisations, as they provide possibilities of change and opposition in 'urban frontiers'. Those spaces are characterised by postsecular rapprochements, cultural transgressions, empowering and political mobilisation embedded in 'theo-ethical' practices. This leads to two further theoretical discussions: it points at the larger possibilities for urban theory emerging out of the de-centering comparative approach of this thesis and, secondly, questions the assumptions that are behind the dominant understanding of gentrification research as exemplified in the metaphor of the 'urban frontier'.

'Spaces of possibility' are the result of encounters of difference. This refers to the empirical observation that church congregations are becoming spaces that offer a change to dwellers by responding to social 'needs' they identify in their immediate surroundings. Their actions are often not directly related to housing. But through projects such as Hackney Foodbank churches "bring people from different backgrounds together in projects of common interest" and create the ground for "prosaic negotiations" about belonging as much as about the futures of their neighbourhood (Amin 2006: 1015, > 6). In other words, social actions produce settings in revived communities that are likely to transform momentous encounters of people with different social as well as cultural backgrounds (> 7.1) into spaces that hold "open the possibility of… disorienting from the habits, stereotypes, and prejudices toward the Other, creating the possibility for change and transformation" (Leitner 2012: 830).

…Christians have to actually live their heavenly citizenship and say, no, change is possible, transformation is possible, we can challenge this power we can challenge this injustice, we can expose corruption…we bring projects in the church, and we bring that kind of instincts and impulses around justice out from the church into everyday life… (IPL07, 07.2013, Felix Graham)

The focus of most church congregations in this study is on the empowerment of individuals to "live their heavenly citizenship" outside of concrete church spaces, to foster transformations and challenge injustices. As the empirical material shows, church congregations are particularly eager to create possibilities in the aforementioned sense, as the transformation of (Christian) values into everyday life is understood as their core task.

The creation of possibilities inside church spaces is not done with the purpose of growing the congregations, but with the aim of creating impulses outside the church for a greater good (> 6.2). It is argued that this particular quality makes church congregations neighbourhood organisations with a significant impact on their immediate surroundings. It further leads to the more general conclusion that a view from within neighbourhood organisations can reveal a lot for an understanding of ways to address the lack of micropublics in contemporary inner-city neighbourhoods.

The ability of church congregations to transform Christian values into more general "theo-ethics" (Cloke 2011) is, in this study, a key to understanding their local impacts. The common interest of congregants in the various church congregations is broadly connected by their belief, yet not limited to it. "We have the same kind of moral and political values, and we like the same kind of music" (IPL46), as one congregant pointedly summarised. The interviews in this study show that people are attracted to church congregations in gentrifying areas more due to their desire for belonging to a locally-based community than by actual church practices. Hence, what brings people together in the first place is a common desire for either friendship or family, to find like-minded people for joint activities as well as a trustworthy space in which to feel at home in an urban environment that is otherwise shaped by a mix of competition and solitude (Tonkiss 2003, Strhan 2013, > 5.2). But the latent moralising environment of churches – a unique feature of their ideologically-informed function as a neighbourhood organisation – increases the level of general trust people show towards others in the long term (Traunmüller 2010).

Moral values are the source of trust that church congregations work with. Hence, congregations frame their church environment ethically to –

authoritatively – nourish these values. The reference above to Christians' "heavenly citizenship"[51] shows the more or less self-evident particular aspiration of churches as spaces of Christian ethics, as the 'heavenly' frame is transformed into political action outside the church. Campaigning for better infrastructure in the neighbourhood, projects against financial illiteracy and the organisation of Hackney Foodbank are examples of church practices (> 6) during which collective engagement is tied to an opposition to dominant developments that are bound to the dynamism of a hegemonic "neoliberal urbanism" (Peck, Theodore and Brenner 2013).

However, despite a Christian framing, these church practices have mostly been guided by more general ethics (such as 'feeding the poor', making exploitative practices of financial institutions visible, helping others cope with displacement), wrapped in Christian wordings and the atmospheric support of the church. The link to ethics that are more genuine to Christianity occurs more often during Sunday services, when church practices are coupled with the everyday life of congregants and bible passages. In other words, the presence of a specific Christian way of interpreting social values and promoting political actions is vague in their appearances during social actions, if present at all.

This intermingling of religious realms and secular ethics in church practices – "postsecular rapprochements" (Cloke 2015) – is indicative of the shifting role of churches in inner-cities. Congregations as organisations increasingly promote faith through praxis rather than by dogma (Cloke and Beaumont 2013: 41). The 'spaces of possibility' that emerge out of these practices now become qualified by "theo-ethics…theological ideas about good and evil (that) are promoting faith-motivated practices…in issues of social justice" (Cloke 2011: 478). In the case of the church congregations in this study, it is through the particular quality of these spaces that possibilities for narratives about alternative local developments and agendas opposing neoliberal hegemony arise.

The diversity of church congregations, mixed with newcomers and long-term residents alike, represents the flourishing ground on which such spaces of possibility enable transgressions of cultural boundaries and the formation of political subjectivities alike. Postsecular rapprochements create moments of political mobilisation and subject formation, as for many new congregants and volunteers (who are often also newcomers to an area) their engagements represent their first time confronting poverty (e.g. in the form of lacking basic

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[51] This quotes Philippians 3:20 in the Christian bible: "Their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Biblehub.com 2017).

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needs like food provisions, > 6.2). The different practices and social actions can lead to the reaffirmation of political attitudes against, for example, austerity politics, as well as the questioning of the efficacy of church actions and the right to free healthcare (Williams et al 2016: 10ff). The concrete outcome of postsecular rapprochements differ, but in the light of the social pressures that characterise gentrifying areas and the general lack of spaces that enable encounters, the possibilities of change emerging out of organisational efforts are promising on a practical as much as on a theoretical level.

Hence, the observation of emerging spaces of possibility are a way to understand church congregations as valuable organisational realms in which, more generally, social integration through interaction can be studied. Those spaces affirm the very basic social qualities that have always constituted 'cities', as Simone citing Rancière emphasises: "the city was the possibility of those who have 'no part in anything' to become 'anyone at all'" (Simone 2001: 356). The 'possibilities' that open up in church congregations situated in the 'urban frontiers' of London and Berlin are entangled with the basic democratic values of cities, as they relate different people to a more politicised understanding of dwelling.

At the same time, practices of church congregations remain partial accomplices of the continuing neo-liberalisation of urban spaces in the Global North (Hackworth 2010), as they take over basic provisions of the welfare state for their own organisational goals, instead of fighting against the roots of social inequalities ("when you feed a hungry, they call you a Christian, when you ask why they are hungry, they call you a communist", IPL02, > 6.2). And yet, the simultaneous generation of solidarity and generosity through spaces of possibility "in the meantime" (Cloke, May and Williams 2016) cannot be overrated as a possibility of change.

It would be an exaggeration, however, to equate the practices of religious organisations with the salvation of urban democracy. Increasing religious activities are also a sign of a "local *religious* strategy…towards mapping and maintaining local religious communities" in secularising urban worlds (Wilford 2010: 342). The tactic of a composing comparison employed in this thesis generates a nuanced and positive interpretation of congregation practices observed in London and Berlin. This is a deliberately chosen peripheral perspective of a social urban setting that has not been in the practical range of secularised urban studies for a long time. It is meant as an attempt to take seriously the call to understand comparative gestures not only in terms of 'provincialising' urban theory with further particularistic accounts from a different geographical location (e.g. 'The Global South'), but also to expand

the perspective of urban studies by "attending (to) the situated knowledges of those most familiar with particular contexts" (Leitner and Sheppard 2016: 7).

This methodological position opens a further space of theoretical possibility, namely to re-visit the 'urban frontier'. The analysis above is an invitation to question the assumed ubiquity of this powerful and dominant metaphor of gentrification in the Global North. The urban settings of this study in Neukölln, Hoxton, Kreuzberg and Bethnal Green have been framed with the analogy of the 'frontier', as the dynamics of gentrification and processes of displacement in these neighbourhoods create tensions between territories, with seemingly little chance of encounters between different social groups, for instance between newcomers and long-term residents (> 2.3). Seen from within church congregations, a mid-range perspective in between the larger structural dependencies of 'neoliberalism' and the ideology of fostering 'community cohesion' and social integration through social capital, the local possibilities for people to meet, develop a sense of familiarity and being able to resist change are more numerous than expected, although they may be realised on small scales and through detours.

The globally influential church-planting movement of Redeemer City to City from NYC – whose pastor Tim Keller is a major point of reference for most of the pastors interviewed in this study – makes use of the metaphor of the frontier to point to a reviving opportunity for the urban-based church. Their central claim for a global church-planting movement is directed to the same frontiers as this study: "We help leaders pioneer how to live out the gospel on the new frontier. The new frontier? Our 21$^{st}$ century urbanised world." (Redeemer 2016). The controversies and emerging inequalities rising from urbanisation are, beyond its opportunities for church growth, at the centre of how church congregations view the contemporary urban. And yet, despite the above claim on evangelisation, the local translation of the 'urban frontier' generates spaces of possibility, as shown above. This is an invitation to briefly discuss the theoretical figure of the 'urban frontier' and ask what its implications are for the current view of contemporary inner-city areas in the Global North and if this is an adequate description in the light of this research. This will also tell us why studying urbanity in the realms of 'the usual suspects' London and Berlin is still valuable (> 2.1).

As has been argued at the beginning of this thesis, gentrification as an "open concept" (Lagendijk et al 2014: 359f) is understood as "the production of space for progressively more affluent users" (Hackworth 2002: 815). This definition deliberately argued against a focus on residential 'outmigration' as the universal and inevitable expression of gentrification (> 2.3), because

displacement is hard to measure due to the lack of methods for tracing people who have already left a neighbourhood (Helbrecht 2016) and it is unclear whether gentrification-induced displacement in the form of permanent residential outmigration actually happens at the scale earlier research has suggested (Freeman and Braconi 2002, Hamnett 2003, Freeman, Cassola and Cai 2015).

While some argue, that such a perspective would "evict the critical perspective of gentrification research" (Slater 2006: 747f) this thesis sympathises with the claim that "displacement is only part of the picture" (Freeman 2008: 188). Neighbourhood 'upgrading' results in a variety of effects, threats, potentials and possibilities that people experience as different forms of "pressures of displacement" (Marcuse 1985).


However, this perspective does not deny the existence of displacement (nor does it deny that church congregations may sometimes bring about displacement), but it focuses on the consequences of gentrification for people who stay put. Research on "social tectonics" (Jackson and Butler 2015) and other patterns of "disaffiliation" (Atkinson 2006) of the 'middle classes' increasingly relies on and cements the metaphor of gentrifying areas as 'urban frontiers' (Macleod and Ward 2002, Heidkamp and Lucas 2006, Davidson 2008, Douglas 2012, Colomb 2012a, Hubbard 2016).

The 'urban frontier' is a powerful metaphor for studying gentrification in the Global North and goes back to Neil Smith's book "The New Urban Frontier" (1996, > 2.3). In his reading of the early 20th-century historian Frederick Jackson Turner, the frontier in American history has always marked "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Jackson 1958, in Smith 1996: i). The narratives of the expansion of the American civilisation towards the western parts of North America are filled with colonial fantasies about uncivilised Native Americans. Smith interprets the waves of gentrification and the rise of the "revanchist city" in the same way: his observation of discourses on urban decline in American inner-cities of the 1970s and 1980s leads him to suggest a striking similarity between the hegemonic discourses of the 'wild west' and the stigmatisation of poor populations concentrated in inner-cities across the US, justifying neighbourhood renewal and gentrification. He claims that "the frontier ideology justifies monstrous incivility in the heart of the city" (Smith 1996: 16).

Such an urban frontier implies a powerful ('uncivil') enemy for the social spaces of the city. For Smith though, gentrification at frontiers "is advanced not so much through the actions of intrepid pioneers as through the actions of collective owners of capital" (Smith 1996: ii). Although Smith focuses on capital rather than on people, many studies focusing on the middle-classes

moving into the city, as shown above, often operate with the same tough territorial metaphors that Smith uses for capital (i.e. 'bunker', 'disaffiliation', 'colonisation') and then link those spatial separations to a group's behaviour (be it 'artists', 'middle-classes', 'students' or 'hipster').

This suggests that socially mixed environments inevitability lead to processes of exclusion, and that encounters of difference either lead to a fortification of boundaries or are not happening at all. This, as the discussion in this thesis suggest, fails to recognise the relational ontology of difference. Merely focusing on exclusion,

> results in an attenuated account of agency which leaves unexplored how individuals are endowed with the capabilities for independent reflection and action such that their response, when confronted with difference and paradox, may involve accommodation or adaptation as much as denial. In other words, it leaves unexplained the capabilities of individuals to respond to difference in a less defensive and even, at times, a more creative fashion. (McNay 2000: 3)

The fact that encounters with difference also lead to new social and spatial "ways of relating" (Barnett 205) as a consequence of hospitableness, is barely present in studies on gentrification. The brutality of the spatial 'frontier' underestimates its 'frontlines', to stay in the picture, as gentrification also consists of contestation. 'Urban frontiers' as a spatial constellation does capture quite well the hegemonic power of gentrification, as it highlights the spatiality of the process, "where neoliberalism quite literally 'comes to town'" (Leitner et al 2007: ix). But the 'urban frontier' is also defined by resistance, by permanent struggles and contestation, by inconsistencies and ambiguities, sometimes even by rapprochement and pleasure.

The dominant picture in research on gentrification, symbolised by the 'urban frontier', is more or less motivated by a perspective that can be aligned to political economy or at least a critical impetus studying the consequences of 'neoliberalism' and cultural reproduction (Lees 2012, Slater 2009). Whereas there is nothing wrong with critical examinations of the consequences of 'neoliberal' policies, all too soon, the analogy of the frontier – which has become a powerful spatial metaphor – classifies gentrification as a global force that more or less overrides neighbourhoods similarly to the way a colonial power overrides countries and displaces local ('native') populations.

Although many other studies point to the moments of contestation and local differences of gentrification (e.g. Bunnell et al 2012, Safransky 2014, Lees 2016), the underlying assumption in gentrification research predominantly remains one of a territorial war ('frontline') between different areas or within one neighbourhood and between different logics of living together. Focusing on the different scale of effects of the spatial separation of

populations – from the physical displacement out of sight (Holm 2011) to an incremental loss of familiar infrastructure (Hubbard 2016) – is often the more obvious way to dissect the complexities of gentrification. And yet, this comes at the cost of overlooking the variegating local responses to a globalising phenomenon.

Instead of understanding urban frontiers as a metaphor for a process solely serving neoliberalism to segregate the civil from the savage, the capital from the people, the good from the bad, it is instead a passage of urban change that is permanently contested, and through which, on some levels underneath the larger structural dependencies that drive gentrification, spaces of solidarity and mutuality emerge. This study argues that churches as neighbourhood organisations are able to provide such spaces because they know how to make use of the passages through a hospitality that is not unconditional, but which supplies urban frontiers with the apparently obliged ethics. This study also shows that the habitus of people moving into trendy neighbourhoods is not only formed from disaffiliation but also solidarity and the desire for local connectedness.

The emergence of spaces of possibility does not prevent gentrification from happening, but may actively lower pressures for some involved groups by providing a sense of familiarity, commonness and mutuality, as well as concrete social actions to lower concrete needs, from housing, to food, to relationships. Church congregations are a particular example of neighbourhood organisations that are not free of contestation themselves and whose place in society continues to be questioned and contested. Although often operating under the radar, their activities and production of alternative spaces can nonetheless be made visible. This comparative study of church congregations in London and Berlin has been an attempt to do so.

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# Appendix