Going to 'Pentecost': how to study Pentecostalism – in Melanesia, for example

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In this article, I question regional context as primary context in anthropological analyses. I argue that the idea of historical continuity in a geographical locality/region might prevent us from understanding not only radical change, but also more gradually emerging social patterns that connect the ethnography to very different kinds of histories and places. Concretely, I focus on the global Charismatic and Pentecostal movements, and as an experiment, I ask whether it is possible to go to 'Pentecost', instead of going to Melanesia. With 'going to Pentecost' as a heuristic device, I suggest it is possible to overcome methodological challenges in the study of global religious movements. In this article, I thus trace the practices and articulations of my interlocutors as part of a wider Pentecostal universe. I show how notions of seeing, borders, separations, and protection are crucial in 'Pentecost', and I connect this to key Christian ideas and values.

Introduction: un-siting and re-siting

'Did you see the wall of clouds descending over the Bauerfield airport yesterday?', asked Ellen, one of the leaders of a Pentecostal inter-church prayer group in Port Vila, the capital of the South Pacific nation Vanuatu.[1] 'We were there, the prayer group', she continued. She told me how the group had gathered at the outskirts of the airport just before the scheduled arrival of a plane from Brisbane carrying Reverend Moon of the Korean Unification Church. In a prayer meeting a couple of days previously, there had been much talk and speculation about the arrival of this man, who many were sure had dubious motives and represented values that were not truly Christian. Rumours about performances of mass-weddings and his jail sentence for tax fraud made people especially sceptical. Several in the group confirmed that his intentions were not pure and that his alliance with business interests around Port Vila would surely damage the nation. 'We stopped him', Ellen said. 'Our prayer caused the clouds'. 'Planes can often land in spite of clouds', I pointed out. 'These were powerful clouds', she said. 'They stopped the plane. It had to turn around'.

The aim of this article is twofold. Firstly, it is to understand what Ellen is talking about, the significance of what I call 'borders'. These borders are erected to protect. Secondly, in

order to discuss 'borders' as analytically significant, I suggest we need to challenge our contextual methodologies. Pentecostal Christians have developed technologies (often through prayer, so-called 'spiritual warfare' and 'prayer wars') through which they create 'safe spaces'. In order to grasp analytically what these 'safe spaces' are, I suggest we 'go there': we 'go to Pentecost'.

The core of the definition of Pentecostalism is the immediate experience of the Holy Spirit (Robbins 2004b; Yong 2005). There are different variants of Pentecostalism, but the main distinction is between older and newer forms, the latter often referred to as neo-Pentecostalism, where spiritual warfare, healing, and (in some cases) the prosperity gospel are central. When I talk about Pentecostalism in this article, I mainly refer to the neo-Pentecostal wave. A central question is: how do we, as anthropologists, study this kind of religious movement? Do we need to understand this form of Christianity as a global phenomenon before we seek to understand how it operates in a local context? Is it primarily a de-territorialized movement (see also Roy 2014)?

To clarify this point: usually regional context is primary in anthropology. This is also the case in studies of Pentecostalism. This can imply both a historical and a cultural dimension; one often looks for historical and cultural continuities when understanding Christianity in general and Pentecostal movements in particular, perhaps more so in Melanesia (Eriksen 2005; 2009; Mosko 2010) than elsewhere. This is part of what I see as a regional contextual methodology, or what one also might call the 'siting methodology'. In Melanesia, for instance, new religious movements are often compared to early cargo cults or to other ritual cults formerly known in the area (myself included: see Eriksen 2009).

Part of this is tied to what Robbins (2007) has identified as 'continuity thinking', in that we as analysts are unwilling to recognize cultural breaks because we tend to look at cultural and historical continuities. But I will claim that it is also related to the question: what is context? As Dilley (1999) has pointed out, the mantra of placing a phenomenon in context has been foundational for anthropological analysis since Malinowski. As he emphasizes, however, rarely do we ask what this context means. What is the context for the selection of context, for instance? We seem to privilege the idea of a specific, geographical frame, or at least when a specific geographical frame is selected, this rarely needs an explanation. It remains a taken-for-granted context.

One might claim this is foundational for anthropology as a discipline, because of its methodology of fieldwork. To do fieldwork, one needs to go some*where*. It is exactly this place we can experience, and this often becomes the contextual frame for any analysis, whether of Pentecostalism or anything else. However, this is only partially true. We usually go to study some*thing*. Thus, the context is also one of (in the case of Pentecostalism) a global religion. As Dilley (1999) also points out, being conscious of what and how we frame the analysis – of the connections we highlight and the connections we 'disconnect' – is crucial. Going to Melanesia to study Pentecostalism challenges our hermeneutical habits and the relationship between the site of fieldwork and the object of study, as one does not usually go to Melanesia to study Pentecostalism (see also Heywood 2015). Thus we need to re-think both what place means and what the idea of a global religion implies.

Multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) was a methodological approach tailored to deal with these challenges. This approach was based on the assumption that contexts are connected, and this is increasingly the case the more 'globalized' the world becomes. Thus, by following the object, the analyst can get access to a fuller image of the

phenomenon/object in question. As Cook, Laidlaw, and Mair (2009) have pointed out, multi-sited ethnography assumes that there is a transcendent, global scale that is graspable if we do not remain locked within a partial (local) perspective. In the case of a global religious movement, this methodology assumes that there is a 'higher level' of religion, as if we get access to a truer, or fuller, version of the religion if we move in scale from local to global. Detached from local context, religion can thus be understood in its 'pure' or absolute form. However, as Cook *et al.* ask, what if there is no such scale? What if we cannot take the higher level of the global for granted?

The authors propose 'that by conceptualizing the ethnographic field in a way that detaches it from the concepts of space and place, and thus making available the concept of an un-sited field, we can rescue the possibility of comparison across theoretically relevant boundaries in space' (2009: 48). In other words, by not localizing the object of study in the first place, we can move beyond the idea of multi-sitedness, and towards the idea of an un-sited field. Un-sited refers to ideas, values, and concepts that do not necessarily have a single or multi-sited origin, but (seem to) exist in a separate 'ideational domain', or, put differently, in a de-territorialized form.

This is a useful first step in my approach to the study of Pentecostal forms of Christianity, in order to avoid the 'siting strategy'. It allows us to overcome geographical distance. Instead of seeing the relation between what is going on in Nigeria or the United States and Fiji or Vanuatu for our understanding of Pentecostalism, we can see it as the same field. However, I also think it is necessary to add a second methodological step to the un-siting strategy: a re-siting. The field is not 'anywhere' (i.e. 'un-sited') but 'somewhere' in a non-geographical sense. It happens in a *place*, but the geographical location (Melanesia, Africa, etc.) is not of primary significance. It is a *place* with specific people and specific everyday lives. Ellen and her prayer group (referred to in the opening vignette) are, through their prayers, creating a safe zone around their city. This city is not, as they see it, significant as a Melanesian capital. Rather it is significant as a Christian place. They are creating a place.

We need to overcome a paradox negating and confirming place. I suggest that we can turn the object we study into the context, thus making 'Pentecostalism' into 'Pentecost' as a place. This allows for an overcoming not only of geographical distance, but also of a distance (or a differentiation) between 'the real' and 'the non-real' (or imagined), and thus the possibility of taking a 'religious space', or a 'religious reality', seriously as an ethnographer. The context of 'Pentecost' is thus, of course, not a 'place' in the conventional sense. It is not a reference to a geographical location, although of course the island of Pentecost is a very real place just north of Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila. 'Pentecost' (in quotation marks) is an analytical construction. This is a 'place' where the immediate experience of the Holy Spirit is a defining feature of everyday life. Here, I can see the world as fully Pentecostal, as my interlocutors do.

In this world, it is not only the believers who can see and feel the Spirit. Rather, the Spirit is already there: it is a taken-for-granted part of this 'place', and some engage with it and others do not. Thus, the 'distance' between the materially 'real' and the spiritually 'real' is negated analytically. In this world, I find Pentecostalism in a different way, because I do not need to define the religious affiliations of those I engage with beforehand: my only 'map' to 'where' 'Pentecost' lies is people's talk and experience of the Holy Spirit (which in Bislama is called *Tambu Spirit*/taboo spirit). I think this approach is methodologically and analytically useful in order to be able to study this elusive religious movement. I see this religious movement as rhizomic in its character:

it grows outside of established church hierarchies and takes a number of different local forms. The 'going to Pentecost' experiment allows for an analytical openness towards such a phenomenon. As the ethnography in this article will reveal, in 'Pentecost' 'seeing' is important, especially seeing where and what 'evil' is. Furthermore, protection from evil, in the form of demons and witches, is vital. Protective borders are therefore important, and spiritual warfare often aims to establish absolute borders between good and evil. By making 'Pentecost', and not Pentecostalism or Melanesia, the context for this study, we can understand both Pentecostalism and Melanesia in new ways.

In this article, I will present ethnography from the Melanesian city of Port Vila, in Vanuatu, in the southwest Pacific, and make an effort at understanding this as 'Pentecost'; I thus make the phenomenon I study (Pentecostalism) the primary context for the observations I do.[2] Taking the point of view of the healers in Port Vila, and applying the context and models they rely on for making sense of the world, I aim to 'see' the world as they do, in order to develop my anthropological understanding. Others have also made parallel analytical moves: for instance, Meyer's study of mediation (2004; 2015), Daswani's (2013) work on ethics, and Bialecki's recent call for a Latourian turn in the anthropology of Christianity (2014).[3] All of these approaches aim for a better analytical and methodological access to the religious field. To sum up, the goal with this experiment ('going to Pentecost') is twofold: firstly, to get beyond regionalism; and, secondly, to get a more direct access to a religious perspective (overcome distance between 'imagined' and 'real'). I will now give a short introduction of 'Pentecost' before I introduce the healers: women who have a special capacity 'to see'. They see what others cannot, such as the hidden and dangerous mobility of evil spirits. Through the healers' gaze, I argue, I gain access to the realm of 'Pentecost'. I show how the healers detect, erect, and strengthen what they perceive as protective borders, and I argue that borders are significant for social life in 'Pentecost'.

Pentecost

In Fresh Wota, a neighbourhood just on the outskirts of city centre Port Vila, the Holy Spirit is everywhere. This is a place that could as easily be in Papua New Guinea (MacCarthy 2016; Robbins 2004a), or in Angola (Blanes 2014),[4] or perhaps anywhere where Pentecostal forms of Christianity are growing rapidly. In Fresh Wota, the 'impact' of the Holy Spirit can be observed while walking along the streets where signposts such as 'Holy Spirit church meets here', or 'AOG church of Fresh Wota', or 'Living Water church being built here', or 'Second-hand store of the Holiness church' are highly visible from the road. However, it is not just in these obvious places that one will find the Holy Spirit: walking into any kind of church on a Sunday morning, one will find healing in the Spirit, as much in the Presbyterian as in the self-declared Pentecostal churches.

Furthermore – and this is perhaps the main point in the 'going to Pentecost' argument – the 'Holy Spirit' is 'in the streets'. It is on the street corner where the ghetto blasters play American gospel music while a new, self-declared pastor talks about his congregation. It is in the backyards where women listen to popular Christian radio talks broadcast from the New Apostolic church as they do their cooking or laundry. It is in the market house where women, while they are waiting for customers to buy their garden produce, gossip about the latest story of miraculous healing and which church seems to have the most efficient healers. They discuss where 'the power' appears to be strongest at the moment. Or it is in the local grocery store where there is a chair in the back room for customers to be healed after paying for their shopping.

Everywhere, to a smaller or greater degree, people relate to the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal ideas are thus present in the social itself; it is not 'only' a 'religion' of the single individual, convert or not, as if we could demarcate a specific Pentecostal context. Rather, the whole city has a Holy Spirit context. Whether one is a convert or not is insignificant. One needs to relate to the presence of the Spirit everywhere, and its effects. Even the self-declared non-Christians (and there are very few of them here!) need to relate to this presence. For instance, an older, male *kastom* ('traditional') healer I know, rumoured to be one of the most dangerous sorcerers in the city (or even the country), needs to relate to the presence of the Holy Spirit; everyone talks about it. As he explained to me, 'People talk about the power of the Holy Spirit. I have my own power. It is very different'. In many ways he defines himself as the opposite of what the Holy Spirit is and does. Thus, he is as much a part of 'Pentecost', as a negative counter-image, as are the self-declared converts.

A key question is: what is social life in 'Pentecost' about, and how can we understand it? What does the Holy Spirit tell us, as analysts, about the key dynamics of this sociality? In order to answer this question, I will focus on the healers, who are more articulate than others about what the Holy Spirit is and how it works. In the neighbourhood of Fresh Wota, there is a healer, or in local terms a 'woman who prays', in almost every second house. There are a few 'men who pray' around too, mostly adolescent boys, but they are in the minority.

I have done fieldwork in Vanuatu, on the north central island of Ambrym, and in the capital Port Vila for several periods since 1995 on different projects to do with politics, Christian movements, and gender, and for six months in 2010 and in July and August 2014 I followed the work of five healers in Fresh Wota. The healers were all women who had received their healing power through God. They had all experienced a remarkable turning-point in their lives, recovering from severe sickness or facing other major problems. Finding the healers was not hard. People frequently talk about them, and therefore some of them are well known, almost 'famous'. I heard about Mary from one of my Ambrym friends whose brother had been healed by her a couple of months earlier. As I entered Mary's yard, a young woman was hanging laundry to dry in the sun. 'Are you here to see my mother?' she asked at once, obviously used to strangers arriving. 'She is inside but I will get her for you', she said, and asked me to wait inside her 'prayer room'. This tiny room was next to the main house, which was not more than a shed with a corrugated iron roof. There were two extensions to the shed: the prayer room and a small store facing the main street. The house was separated from the street by a large hedge. You could hear the noise from people and cars passing by, but all you could see of them through the barred window of the store were glimpses via an opening in the hedge.

Mary arrived. As she saw me, she smiled and picked up her Bible. I quickly said that I was not there for healing, but just to talk. She was very interested in talking to me about her gifts and her work. She immediately started explaining how she had received the special ability to heal after she had been seriously ill with cancer. Her miraculous recovery had followed her spiritual rebirth. She was to work for God, to break with her sinful past, and to use her heart to 'see' other people. Mary was very clear about the gift she was given during her miraculous recovery; she was able to see what others cannot.

On seeing

All the healers I worked with talked in some way about their ability 'to see'. The concept they use to describe this process of seeing is, in Bislama (Vanuatu pidgin), *disernmen*

(discernment).[5] The ability to discern is in itself a special gift from God. It enables the healers to sense, such as in dreams, when danger is approaching. It also enables them to see what is wrong with a patient. Mary says that she needs to make the person talk, to 'open up'. However, very often the person 'hides' what is really wrong, or what he or she truly fears. The patient might come for one problem, but end up admitting that something completely different is the cause. Thus, the ability to see past the fake cover and identify the real cause, the 'truth' (*tru samting*), is crucial for the healers' work.

Although the healers use slightly different techniques, there is a clear pattern: they either hear God speaking to them while the patient is talking, or they see images or receive specific sensations. Another of the healers I talked to, Sarah, can in certain cases when the patient has caused someone harm, feel a throbbing pain in her forehead and in her palms. This reflects her special connection to Jesus (which I have written about elsewhere: Eriksen 2014). When a patient is talking, the healers, through their bodies, sense what the cause of illness or misfortune is. The patient is 'covering up' (*kaveremap*), in his or her talk, usually afraid of telling the real truth, Mary told me. Therefore, for the healer, 'seeing' is crucial. One of the healers in Fresh Wota has, for instance, a specific version of the gift of discernment. She has the gift of 'X-ray sight'. She can see 'through' things, not only through the patient's body and mind, but also through walls, underneath the ground, and so on. This makes her a particularly efficient healer for detecting sorcerers and the means they use, hidden out of obvious sight. As West (2005) has pointed out in his analysis of sorcery as a discourse on power and governance in Mozambique, making the invisible realm visible is a powerful technology for gaining power. However, in 'Pentecost' this is not only a technology that potentially can create forms of governance but also a technology that can help us 'see Pentecost'. By taking the perspective of the healers, we see a world that is otherwise invisible. The healers can articulate the sociality of 'Pentecost', a sociality wherein the Holy Spirit is the key agent. This sociality is driven by an idea of what one of the healers expressed as 'the roaming danger': the presence of predatory spirits. The work of the healers involves not only the seeing of this, and thus the warning about and protection from these dangerous spirits through the Holy Spirit, but also the treatment of the victims of these 'dark forces'. In my search for the key to the sociality of 'Pentecost', I have relied on the rich descriptions given by the healers.

Eve, for instance, told me that seeing is her greatest gift. It enables her not only to heal physical pain and sickness, but also to solve other kinds of problems: marriage difficulties, employment issues, or lack of success in business. The Holy Spirit enables her to see the cause. However, she pointed out that seeing demons is her most useful ability. 'People see the faces of their loved ones, but I see the face of the demon that has possessed the person', she said. She gave an example: She had been called up in the middle of the night by a terrified mother from the island of Aneitium, south of Efate and Port Vila. Her son was acting crazy, like an animal. He was screaming and hallucinating, emitting strange sounds, and not making sense. Eve told the mother to bring him to her. The next day they pulled up in front of Eve's house (which is next to the church and her healing room). They had to fight to get the boy out of the car and move him towards the entrance of the church. He was screaming and fighting. Eve saw the face of the demon at once; she could not see the face of the boy, only the demon. It had horns and it was ugly, she explained. She had started praying, loudly calling for the Holy Spirit to cleanse this boy of the demon that had possessed him. She had done nothing else, just pray, she said, and immediately the boy had become weak,

as if his legs could no longer carry him. He had stopped fighting and cursing and just collapsed on the ground. The demon had departed. He was unconscious for a couple of minutes, but as he woke, he asked, 'Where am I? What happened?' He did not remember anything. However, as Eve started talking to him, he gradually remembered his friends persuading him to drink animal blood as part of an effort to gain special kinds of power.

This idea of drinking blood is part of a growing mythology in 'Pentecost'; it has also caused fear and suspicion of vampires (see Rio 2010). Eve explained that drinking animal blood implies opening the way fully for demons. Had the mother not brought him, the boy would have been fully destroyed by the demon. She also explained that demons are becoming a great problem. She can see demons everywhere (whereas others only see the faces of ordinary people). People do not realize, she told me, that they invite demons in, and their family and friends cannot see it. People follow the advice of so-called 'clevers', people with knowledge of traditional medicine, and of so-called '*kastom* medicine'. They will prescribe herbal drinks, or the use of a specific leaf to alleviate different kinds of pain. These leaves or herbs are, however, mediums for evil, and they open the way for malignant spirits to enter their bodies.

Eve told me about a young girl who had sought her help against recurring stomach pain. Eve had seen the cause at once when the girl entered her prayer room. She was wearing a specific herb on a string around her neck. 'This is nothing', the girl had said when Eve asked her about it. It was just something '*oldfella*' (her grandmother/grandfather) had recommended for keeping away love magic. For young girls, the fear of being seduced by the powerful lure of this specific body of magic is strong. This is also the 'welcome-sign' for evil demons, Eve explained. She elaborated: it means that you do not trust God. If you do, then this protection would not be necessary. The girl's stomach pain was caused by demons trying to enter her body. This is typical.

'Seeing' is also useful for preventing conflict and for avoiding death during a catastrophe. Rebecca, another of the healers I worked with, who is also the priest, or the *pere*,[6] of her own small Catholic congregation (around thirty members), regularly during mass on Sundays tells her congregation about the upcoming week. She has the specific ability to see the future and she can read signs. She sees the significance, for instance, of a wind blowing in the treetops while she prays. The Holy Spirit talks to her and gives her messages. She has predicted tsunamis, earthquakes, the collapse of a bridge, and traffic accidents.

The common pattern in the process of 'seeing', whether it is the future, demons, or sickness and pain, is first to read the signs (be it a wind, wearing a 'leaf', or the face of a demon, or something else). Then the healer identifies the problem, the initial cause, and the consequence. Finally she acts; she heals. The healing always involves a division: to extract the demon from the body or to remove the *kastom* medicine, for instance. The healers emphasized the importance of this step in the healing process: the separation of the evil from the body. Healing thus implies the division between good and evil, and the creation of a strong border between them. Prayer and trust in God create this protective border and are the best prophylactics against any kind of evil. Prophesying is slightly different because it involves not healing but warning; but it still involves the creation of borders, between those who will trust the prophecy and follow the advice (not to cross the bridge, not to venture close to the seashore, etc.) and those who do not. In 'Pentecost', borders are essential.

On borders

Borders are both spiritual and physical. I turn to the spiritual manifestations first.

On the level of the neighbourhood, borders involve a prayer campaign, or spiritual warfare, as it is also called. It usually happens at night, preferably around midnight. It is often organized through a church or a congregation, and it is initiated by a group of people who feel that there has been too much sickness, too much death, too much misfortune, and who want the place 'cleaned' of evil. Thorarensen (2011) has described how a prayer party arrived in the neighbourhoods of Ohlen and Fresh Wota, bringing Bibles and prayer as weapons. They walked the borders of the neighbourhood praying and holding their Bibles, as if erecting walls against evil spirits. Eve explained to me how she heals not only people but also areas, especially living quarters.

During the Mayoral Elections in Port Vila in 2009, a prayer group was called to rid the town of evil forces; they prayed at key points around town, so as to protect the area from spirits that would corrupt the politicians. Strategic points included the Wharf and the corner on the highway from the airport where the road turns into Port Vila's city centre. Again, it was like a border was being secured, wherein only the Holy Spirit could operate and where the malignant spirits would not gain access. In spiritual warfare, the Pentecostals in a very concrete way create 'Pentecost' as a place, by creating borders that protect from evil. In other words, in spiritual warfare the Pentecostals do literally what I have suggested we can do analytically: they turn Pentecostalism into a place. They create places where the Holy Spirit is present and evil is kept at a distance (but nevertheless always there, just outside the border, lurking around the corner).

It is important to understand that in 'Pentecost' evil is always potentially there, and it has a physical presence. Satan and the demons are literally walking the streets in 'Pentecost' if they can find a way in, if the borders are not strong enough. Evil is 'roaming', as Eve phrased it. Spiritual warfare turns a battle between spiritual forces into a battle of territory. By creating borders, spiritual warfare aims at a safe place – a 'Pentecost' without evil.

Mary articulated the importance of creating these protective borders and safe places in the following story.

One night a man came by Mary's house. He complained about a series of incidents that had made his life very difficult lately at work, at home, and also with his physical health. He had been sick for a while and had seen a number of doctors, but no one could find anything wrong. As he sat in Mary's small prayer room, the Holy Spirit revealed to her that the man was a victim of sorcery. His neighbour was jealous and had planted bones of a dead person outside this man's house to make him sick. In these cases, Mary said, it was not sufficient to pray for someone in her prayer room. She needed to be present at the place where the black magic (*nakaimas*) had been effected. Thus, she accompanied the man to his house. They had to wait until midnight, because it is only at this hour that the evil spirits will reveal themselves ('*Long day oli slip nomo, long midnaet oli wokabot*'). During the night they become active, and only then can one deal with them, neutralize them. As she predicted, she found buried bones of a young child at the entrance of the compound. As they got rid of the bones, the dogs started barking around them, and Mary knew they were feeling the evil spirits roaming around. She then started praying, loudly and strongly, thus ridding the place of the malevolent influence. She walked around the man's yard, his house, praying and calling for protection from the Holy Spirit. This man was defenceless against this kind of sorcery, she said. There

was nothing to protect him, nothing that would stop the evil from entering his yard, his house, and ultimately his body.

Sorcerers understand that in order to attack 'Pentecost', one needs to attack the borders: it was therefore at the entrance of the house where the bones were found, not just inside the house, or just outside of it, but in the entrance. The work of fighting evil also therefore takes place in and on these borders. By erecting spiritual borders around the town, the neighbourhood, and the house, the healer protects against what is perceived as the omnipresence of evil forces. Borders are thus crucial for social life; they are what maintain normality. Without these borders there is no predictability and no security. Ellen, a healer from the Presbyterian Church, invites all the children and mothers in the neighbourhood to pray every night before bedtime in her small prayer room next to the grocery shop that she and her husband run. Here she asks the Holy Spirit to protect their neighbourhood and their houses. Inside her prayer room (which is truly small, with no windows and with only mats on the floor), she gathers a dozen mothers and children. These nightly events create a feeling of security among the mothers and they feel protected. One of the mothers told me that it also gave her a sense of comfort and community, being present in this group in the small prayer room while (many) husbands and fathers spend the evening in the kava[7] bar.

These spiritual borders that are created in 'Pentecost' to protect against evil can also be seen in their material manifestations when one walks around in 'Pentecost', constantly confronted by hedges and wire fences. Notices such as 'Keep out' and 'Private' are often painted on the fences and written on pieces of wood nailed to trees at compound entrances. The spiritual danger, the forces that can attack 'Pentecost', have a physical translation as well: evil spirits possessing people who might attack in order to harm, to steal, to murder, and so on. My Ambrym friends in Fresh Wota, for example, were particularly upset one morning in July 2014 when they heard that a woman and her child had been murdered in one of the local kava bars during the night. No one should be outside their yards and their houses at night, they pointed out, and in particular not women and children (see also Eriksen 2016).

Borders are fundamental for how the world in its material, social, and spiritual dimensions is understood in 'Pentecost'. They signal a form of belonging, signalling where and who one is. To clarify, I offer a brief comparison with a place that is *not* 'Pentecost', namely a village to the north of the Vanuatu archipelago, on the island of Ambrym, where I did my initial periods of fieldwork about twenty years ago. In the beginning, I had great trouble detecting any kind of borders there, metaphorically and materially. What was a group? A kin group? Who lived where? People seemed to move around a lot, and it was difficult to define who belonged to which household. Drawing a kinship chart, for instance, was close to impossible. People had multiple relations: a person could be someone's father and uncle at the same time. These relations were not mutually exclusive; they just depended on which relation you took as primary in the given situation. Thus, there was no clear idea of belonging to a clearly defined group, such as a patrilineal one (Eriksen 2008). In other words, there were no social boundaries of inclusion within and exclusion from a group. This lack of conceptual boundaries was also reflected in the lack of clear physical boundaries (between houses, for instance, there were no hedges, no fences). By contrast, this is not the case in Port Vila and in Fresh Wota. When walking through the streets of the urban neighbourhood where I now work, wire fences and hedges separate

one household from another, and come between people who eat from respective kitchens, and between one person's property rights and another's. They also signal that membership of a specific household is significant. Movement between houses is not as free and open as in the village. Thus, in town, the physical borders (fences, hedges) signal conceptual borders (groups): fences between two houses also refer to a boundary between two different groups. These distinctions are absolute. Furthermore, this border also has a moral dimension: borders keep evil out. In spiritual warfare, for instance, borders protect against demons and witches, and corruptive influences in general.

Borders are thus present in a number of ways: spiritually (in spiritual warfare, for example), materially/physically (in fences and hedges), morally (keeping good from evil), and conceptually (distinguishing between people in different groups). In all of these dimensions, borders are highly valued, both for their protective capacity and for their capacity to create order, morally and materially. In this sense, borders also have an ontological significance, as they create the world, they create the landscape, they create kin groups, households, and families, and they create a moral map. In 'Pentecost', there are absolute distinctions between good and evil, between who belongs to which household, but also between one person and the next. Borders create selves and bodies, and one of the most essential borders of them all, the border between the inside and the outside of the body. It is this border that defines a person.[8] The body reflects an internal space that needs protection, in the same way as do the house, the yard, the neighbourhood, the city, and even the nation.

So far I have argued that 'seeing' and 'borders' are key concepts in 'Pentecost'. One might say that these ideas structure everyday sociality in the neighbourhoods where I have worked. Let us now turn to literature from what we might call 'elsewhere in Pentecost', to see if we can find 'echoes' of these mechanisms there as well. Jorgensen (2005) has described, from Papua New Guinea, a prayer campaign called 'Prayer Fence', which secured the nation's borders against evil influence, involving an aeroplane and a navy patrol boat. Hackman (2015) describes 'spiritual mapping' in Cape Town, which in similar ways draws up boundaries between places that are 'infected' by evil and areas that are safe. O'Neill (2010; 2011) has described the work of spiritual warfare conducted by neo-Pentecostals in Guatemala City. His ethnography shows the ways in which what he calls 'monastic practices' are taken into the street in order to save the nation of Guatemala. The neo-Pentecostals of Guatemala City move around town praying and crying at cardinal points in order to handle the main social challenges such as preventing crime or improving the (national) economy (2010: 4). O'Neill develops the metaphor of 'weight' in order to grasp analytically the sentiments of Christian citizenship. Weight, he points out, reflects the responsibility a neo-Pentecostal citizen feels towards the future (as opposed to guilt, which reflects action or lack of action in the past). It lies heavily upon the Pentecostal citizen to take to the streets, not to protest loudly in marches or demonstrations, but rather to pray and, in conversations with God, extend the saved 'space' of the self onto the city (see also Coleman 2004). O'Neill's ethnography points to the significance of protection, or what he elsewhere talks about as 'securing the city' (2011), which clearly echoes the idea of borders. In many ways, we can see O'Neill's ethnography as a demonstration of how the 'saved spaces', or what I call 'Pentecost', are created. Whereas the healers I describe work with the technology of 'seeing', the 'prayer warriors' in Guatemala City feel the 'weight' of the future heavily on their shoulders. In the same way as the healers, however, they seek to create borders, spiritually in prayer

campaigns and physically in their churches and in imprisonment of the morally corrupt (O'Neill 2014).

Thus, also in descriptions from Guatemala City we can see the fundamental significance of borders in 'Pentecost'. Through prayer, fasting, and moral campaigns, people seek a future as a saved nation. In the 'Pentecost' of Guatemala City as in the 'Pentecost' of Port Vila, God insists on divisions and borders between inside and outside, good and evil, that which is saved and that which is not. As O'Neill (2010: 6-7) also points out, God operates by making distinctions, by choosing a nation and choosing a people, in other words by creating division between the included and the excluded. Other authors also, such as Austin-Broos (1997) in her work on Pentecostalism in Jamaica, emphasize the ways in which Pentecostalism powerfully encourages the idea of being chosen, emancipated, and saved, perhaps in particular in relation to anti-colonial and post-colonial movements. In 'Pentecost', this 'border work', the creation of the saved spaces, is something that lies heavily on everyone, not just the priest or the religious leader. It is the very core of what life is about.

Here let me briefly return to the question: why is 'going to Pentecost' necessary as a heuristic device? If we can see the significance of borders also in other ethnographers' work, why do we need to 'go to Pentecost'? Firstly, I think that borders might be implicitly present in analyses of Pentecostal practices, but the concept in itself has not been unpacked analytically before as part of a Pentecostal culture. Rather, the dominant understanding of Pentecostalism is based on concepts almost the binary opposite of borders, as 'flows' or 'unbounded'. The significance of the Holy Spirit as a non-contained force creates Pentecostalism as a 'democratic' and anti-hierarchical movement. Anyone can feel the presence of the Spirit, it can flow to whomever and wherever, and it has an ability to adapt to a number of different local contexts, turning the traditional spiritual cosmos into a Pentecostal (spiritual) cosmos, and so on (see Anderson 2013; Martin 2002; Meyer 1998). Although prayer campaigns and securing areas have been described previously and also discussed as significant in relation to 'security' and the idea of being 'chosen' (as in O'Neill's and Austin-Broos's works mentioned above), it has not been seen as primary to what Pentecostalism is about. By shifting context, and by making Pentecostal practices part of a wider field, other dimensions emerge. By 'going to Pentecost', we achieve three main results. Firstly, we can 'see' the world as the Pentecostals do, taking seriously their perspective and practices, as borders and border-making. This will also enable us to see Pentecostal practices as part of a wider sociality in a much more direct way than previously. Secondly, we can see the significance of these borders not only for spiritual warfare, but also for such areas as kinship, architecture, and understandings of bodies and personhood. Lastly, by 'going to Pentecost', we can connect ethnographies that might not have been connected if we did not explicitly look for echoes of these new concepts we introduce as 'borders'. There are rich descriptions of spiritual warfare from around the world, but it has not been understood, for instance, as part of border-making. Connections between prayer campaigns, ideas of security, and healing can be explicitly drawn when we recognize that the Pentecostals operate in the same landscape; they are part of the same imaginary. The idea of 'weight' which lies heavily on Pentecostal in Guatemala City, according to O'Neill (2010), is connected to hedges and fences and prayer rooms in the neighbourhoods of Port Vila; it is a response to the same world: to 'Pentecost'. They all reflect processes of internalization that are crucial for border-making. But what do borders do? What kind of sociality do they create?

On autonomy and order

Blanes (2017), working in Luanda, Angola, has described the ways in which ideas of order are brought into Pentecostal life. By setting in operation important distinguishing mechanisms, both spiritually and socially, order emerges out of what people conceive of as chaos. In the multi-ethnic and linguistically plural context of Luanda, groups emerge as more distinct through the border dynamics of 'Pentecost'. In Port Vila as well, neighbourhoods are ordered and people feel 'secured', like the mothers who meet every night in the prayer rooms. Furthermore, the borders need to be worked on, to be maintained. It seems to me that 'Pentecost' is a highly ritualized context. The focus on borders implicates a continuous effort at making order through casting out demons, dividing between good and evil, outside and inside, and past and future. This order is necessary for everyday life to continue. 'Pentecost' is thus a place where borders need to be erected and protected in specialized and repetitive ways. Healers are essential because they see that which penetrates and threatens the borders. Furthermore, as my ethnography and analysis of the healers above show, borders create distinctions and divisions on different levels. They separate not only good from evil, but also one person from another person and one group from another group on the level of household, neighbourhood, or nation.

These articulations of the significance of borders in Port Vila and elsewhere (Luedke & West 2006; O'Neill 2010) all reflect a concern with order and control (or as one of the healers in 'Pentecost' articulates it: control of the 'roaming danger'). This concept of borders is similar to the idea of autonomy: it creates separate entities that are self-governed and self-responsible. It divides between different parts. It creates in many ways the opposite effects of holist ideologies as they have been described by Dumont (1980). Here a part is only meaningful in its relation to the whole. Separations are also important in holist contexts, such as that expressed in the South Asian caste system, but the individual castes are not meaningful without their relation to the totality of the Hindu cosmos. Thus, separations reflect only a temporary division, wherein the part needs the whole. The separation and divisions the healers articulate are of a very different kind. These divisions are absolute; they separate one person or one neighbourhood from another. Prayers around the borders of neighbourhoods or cities create borders that reflect entities that are in opposition to their surroundings: the protected areas wherein the Holy Spirit operates on the inside, and the outside as an unprotected and dangerous place. In separating between good and evil, inside and outside, the healers do not so much articulate the importance of a totality (a whole) as express the key value of separateness.

Returning to context: Pentecostal and egalitarian thinking

If borders are crucial in 'Pentecost', and borders create order and highlight the value of divisions, what kind of sociality is this? Where do we find its genealogy? A natural question to ask, in the context of Pentecostalism, is whether the concept of border is indicative of individualism. The fundamental significance of individualism for Christianity generally and for Pentecostalism more specifically has been argued by a number of authors, but perhaps most forcefully by Robbins (2004a; 2007). Robbins (2004a) has given a very convincing ethnographic description and analytical argument showing how Urapmin in the Highlands of New Guinea, after being collectively converted to Pentecostal Christianity, emphasized the value of individual belief. One of Robbins' interlocutors phrases it like this: 'I cannot break off part of my belief and

give it to my wife'. Belief, then, is a key concept in the development of this specific form of Christian individual. It is belief that must be produced as a specifically individual quality, a quality that is unshareable and undividable. It belongs to the autonomous person. As my ethnography outlined above indicates, also in Port Vila the idea of individual personhood is articulated. However, borders also signify something more than individualism. It is the 'entity-making' which is crucial; it is the creation of divisions and separations between distinct persons, groups, neighbourhoods, or nations. This is a key dynamic of a Pentecostal sociality. When looking at the ways in which the healers describe the process of becoming the victim of 'evil' and the subsequent healing, it is the processes of separating, of creating borders, which are crucial. Within the healers' Pentecostal universe, separation and divisions have become essential.

Following the logic of 'Pentecost' as context, this analysis of borders and separations is not a product of regional historical continuity. However, these ideas have a specific genealogy; related ideas and concepts are also articulated in European egalitarianism. Concepts that stress the process of separations, division, and 'individualization' can be found in genealogies taking us back to the French Revolution, for instance, where the ideas of freedom and brotherhood, so central to ideas about equality, were violently expressed (Buck-Morss 2009; Dumont 1977). As Dumont (1977) has pointed out, theologians and philosophers through the Enlightenment period gradually expressed ideas about the value of thinking as separate from God. This idea of a person, as an individual *in* the world, an entity in him- or herself, as distinct and as detached from God, is crucial in egalitarian thinking because it generates the logic within which entities can be compared and set in relation to each other outside of any encompassing whole.

These ideas, articulated in European philosophy, cannot, however, be understood as emerging only from their 'European source'. This again returns us to the point about moving beyond regionalism: 'Pentecost', the 'place' from which this study emerges, is not a product only of European ideas spreading out to the world through colonial and post-colonial history. I do not claim that 'Pentecost' is a result of European colonial machinery, or the globalizing social movement, having their origin in European history. Rather, I will claim that European history is *part* of 'Pentecost'. Roots are also elsewhere, and 'Pentecost' develops in its own way. What we can see, however, when we 'go to Pentecost' is that there are connections between perceptions of individual, groups, nations, and so on, and the borders created in spiritual warfare. Furthermore, when we 'go to Pentecost', we can see how the wars against demons and witches, against evil, in short, are defining features of everyday life. We can also see that this is not only what some do, but that this is a defining feature of the place; 'borders' as divisions and separations are crucial for the way in which people live, for the place they make. Would we have seen this if we 'only' went to Port Vila, a Melanesian capital city? Analytically, it would perhaps have been difficult to make direct connections between, on the one hand, Pentecostal activities, such as healing practices, talk of demons and evil, and the everyday lives in the neighbourhood, and, on the other, wire fences and new family structures. It would be more challenging to connect the work of a still marginal, but growing, religious group emphasizing spiritual warfare, which is very specific to the neo-Pentecostal wave, with key cultural values. 'Going to Pentecost' opens new methodological potentials because we need to define 'place' differently. It also gives us new analytical possibilities, making visible connections between (what we would have seen as) a specific religious context, on the one hand, and wider social phenomena, on the other.

Reflections on an experiment

Understanding and explaining are often seen as distinct but complementary forms of scholarly inquiry (see, e.g., von Wright 2004). Most will agree that anthropological knowledge is based mostly on interpretation and understanding and less on scientific explanations. Many will also agree that anthropologists seek to understand human perceptions and interactions – cultural and social life. Anthropologists have developed methodological tools for understanding that which is not directly observable, such as methods of fieldwork, but also analytical tools, as comparison, to push our understanding beyond an immediate or taken-for-granted understanding. Some have urged for even more radical methodological tools: for example, new ways of doing comparison (Strathern 2005 [1990]), or 'recursive' methods (Holbraad 2012) designed to challenge our preconceived understanding and to push our interpretations in new directions. In anthropology, it has (traditionally, at least) been regional differences that have pushed this need not to take for granted, and to challenge our immediate perceptions. People *elsewhere* are different, think differently, and act differently. In this article, I have tried to develop new tools to challenge our thinking and our interpretations, by not emphasizing geographical distance. Although working in a region that has, perhaps traditionally in anthropology, been exactly a place that has challenged anthropologists to think differently (Strathern 1988, for instance), I have argued in this article that there might be other reasons for developing our tools for interpretation. Cultural change and religious life are two categories that anthropologists might need to think differently about. The 'going to Pentecost' experiment gives a methodological push to look for 'places' and connections in new and different ways. Religious life, especially perception of what we see as spiritual landscapes, demons, sorcerers, witches, and the Holy Spirit, creates a world that is not easily accessible with our established concepts and methods. If we want to understand this 'world', the context might not be Melanesia. Roy (2014) has argued that new forms of religion, such as Pentecostalism, are radically de-territorialized. This is similar across very different contexts; new forms of religion do not adapt to local situations. Understanding demons and spiritual warfare anthropologically requires more than going to Melanesia. We thus need to connect thinking which, in geographical terms, is usually separated in our analysis. The idea of 'going to Pentecost' sheds regional context but gains the perspective through which we can understand new connections. The comparisons we need to make, if we want to achieve a contrast, are not so much between Melanesia and Europe, or Melanesia and Africa, as they are between 'Pentecost' and somewhere else, such as the village in Ambrym only a couple of hours from the city where I have done fieldwork previously. In spite of this, as anthropologists, we seem often to privilege geographical proximity and cultural continuity to a greater extent than cultural connections across large distances. In this article, I hope to have made an argument to entertain the contrary, at least sometimes.

project, where I was able to develop aspects of this article. Lastly, I want to thank the Editor of *JRAI* and the reviewers for excellent critique, comments and suggestions.

[1] This was during fieldwork in Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu, in the latter part of 2010. I have changed names and to a certain degree neighbourhood details in my presentation of all the healers in this article.

[2] I am aware that this framing of 'Pentecost' as a non-regional space runs the danger of overlooking important regional variations and the significance of the pre-Christian ontology (see, e.g., Scott 2005). However, this is not an argument to totally abandon analyses that emphasize regional variation. Rather, it is an effort at arguing that one should not *only* do this.

[3] I find them all analytically imaginative, but perhaps the latter has a specific relevance here. With the aid of Luhrmann's (2012) ethnography of Vineyard Pentecostals in the United States and their specific methodology of making God audible, Bialecki opens a new approach to the ethnography of God. When God is seen not as a specific construct, and a representation of collective consciousness, and approached through the traditional methodological atheism, but rather as an 'actant' producing specific effects in the world, anthropology can potentially open to new ways of understanding other worlds. This approach in effect bridges the gap between anthropological analysis and the perspective of charismatic Christians; it opens a way *in*, so to speak, for anthropology in religious worlds. In this article, I seek to do something similar, not based on a Latourian analysis but rather by including the perspective of the believer within an analytics of 'Pentecost'.

[4] At the University of Bergen we have a research team working on comparison and Pentecostalism, and the researchers work in Vanuatu (myself), Papua New Guinea (Michelle McCarthy), and Angola (Ruy Blanes). These sites are thus intentionally mentioned.

[5] She was ordained by St Peter himself during a dream. She is not part of the official Catholic Church in Vanuatu.

[6] Kava is an intoxicating drink made of the root of the *Piper methysticum* plant. It is mainly a male drink, although increasingly, in particular in uban areas, women are also enjoying it. In Port Vila, drinking kava in bars especially dedicated to this drink, and usually in an outdoor setting, is very common.

[7] See Eriksen (2016) for an elaboration of the significance of the skin as a border and on ideas of femininity as 'contained' in the body.

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Aller « en Pentecôte » : comment étudier le pentecôtisme, par exemple en Mélanésie

Résumé

Le présent article remet en question l'utilisation du contexte régional comme contexte principal dans les analyses anthropologiques. Selon son auteure, l'idée de continuité historique dans un lieu géographique ou une région peut nous empêcher de comprendre non seulement les changements radicaux, mais aussi

les schémas sociaux émergeant plus lentement qui relient l'ethnographie à des types d'histoires et de lieux très différents. Concrètement, l'article se concentre sur les mouvements charismatiques et pentecôtistes mondiaux. À titre d'expérience, l'auteure se demande s'il est possible d'aller « en Pentecôte » au lieu d'aller en Mélanésie. Elle suggère que ce mécanisme heuristique permet de surmonter les difficultés méthodologiques que crée l'étude des mouvements religieux mondiaux. Cet article retrace ainsi les pratiques et articulations de ses interlocuteurs dans le cadre d'un univers pentecôtiste plus vaste. L'auteure montre comment les notions de vision, de frontières, de séparations et de protection sont cruciales « en Pentecôte » et les relie à des idées et valeurs chrétiennes fondamentales.

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