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Pentecostal pastorpreneurs and the global circulation of authoritative aesthetic styles

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This article argues that the rise of ‘pastorpreneurs’ in global neo-Pentecostalism calls for an aesthetic perspective on religious authority and leadership in the context of new media. Different from mainline churches, religious leadership in neo-Pentecostal (In many parts of the world, neo-Pentecostal or new Pentecostal churches have emerged since the 1980s. They are usually independent churches, organized in loose national or transnational networks, Anderson 2004) churches is not legitimised by denominational traditions and the ordination of clergy but by ‘pastorpreneurs’, (Twitchell uses the term pastorpreneurs to describe megachurch pastors who by using marketing techniques and other entrepreneurial business skills create stand-alone religious communities that challenge top-down denominationalism (2007:3). The term is also used from an emic perspective. In 2003 John Jackson published a book called *Pastorpreneurs, Friendswood: Baxter*) pastors who combine entrepreneurial business skills and an orthodox Christian message, fostering a neo-Pentecostal style of spirituality. The emergence of this new mode of religious leadership described as ‘pastorpreneurs’ is investigated in a thriving Pentecostal megachurch located at the heart of the Dutch Bible belt. As the Dutch case demonstrates, the rapid development of new media technology creates and facilitates a rapid spread of performative authoritative modes of leadership on a global scale. Pentecostal megachurches in different parts of the world, because of their size and success and presence in the online world, operate as authoritative centres of divine blessing, inspiration and even God’s presence. So, it is not doctrine that binds people together but rather shared aesthetic forms that have the capacity to evoke religious experiences and the tangible felt presence of God.

Keywords: aesthetics; religious leadership; megachurches; Pentecostalism; globalisation; new media

Introduction

March 2012, I received an email from a journalist of a Dutch national newspaper. He asked me – an ‘expert’ on Dutch evangelicalism – to accompany him to a Sunday church service of DoorBrekers¹ church, one of the fastest growing churches in the Netherlands, located in a small town Barneveld, known as the

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centre of the Dutch Bible belt. I agreed to go as the remarkable growth of this new church already had caught my attention. We spent a Sunday morning in church, attended the service and talked to a number of visitors. A few days later, we interviewed the pastor and his wife in their home for more than two hours.

In the rural, conservative orthodox Christian town, the rise of a neo-Pentecostal church with theatrical style services, a vibrant worship band playing the latest releases of contemporary worship songs, the hip dressed pastor moving like a performer on stage, the media-saturated hall including screens and lights seems out of place. How is it possible that such a church has developed in a short period of time? What type of religious leadership do we encounter here and how are we to understand this new mode of religious authority and leadership in the local context of Barneveld and a globalising world?

In this article, I will start with a brief history of DoorBrekers church and situate the church in its local context. Next, a theoretical discussion of the importance of an aesthetics approach in relation to larger debates on authenticity will be presented. From the pastor's story, I will analyze the emergence of global neo-Pentecostal networks of pastors of megachurches and the role of new media in creating dynamic relationships between the local and global resulting in a global circulation of Pentecostal authoritative aesthetic styles.

The rise of a Pentecostal megachurch in the Dutch Bible belt

In 2005, the Dutch couple Frank and his wife Iris founded a new independent non-denominational Christian church called DoorBrekers in Barneveld, a town of approximately 30.000 inhabitants. Seven years later DoorBrekers is now attracting an average Sunday service around 1500 visitors. The rapid growth of the church has encouraged further expansion: in 2011, a second church was started in the nearby city of Amersfoort, about 14 miles from Barneveld. More new churches are expected as DoorBrekers announced in 2013 its plans to start new churches in two other regions in the Netherlands. The selected geographic areas reveals DoorBrekers strategic plan to remain within the boundaries of the so-called Dutch 'Bible belt', a region from southwest to north east across the country, with a relative high concentration of orthodox Calvinist churches.²

When Pastor Frank and his wife began their ministry, they launched the 21st church of Barneveld. The town has a large number of Protestant denominations and displays the diversity of Dutch religious subcultures of the past. Most remarkably, the town holds two megachurches, both belonging to orthodox pietist Calvinist Reformed denominations: the Gereformeerde Gemeente with 3500 members (divided over two church buildings) and the Gereformeerde Gemeente in the Netherlands³ which has recently built a new church building with 2550 seats in Barneveld. The growth of DoorBrekers church also resulted in the need for a church building. In 2013, a large conference site in Barneveld is being planned that includes an auditorium of 2000 seats, a joint project of

DoorBrekers, a Christian project developer and the local municipality of Barneveld.

The contrast in church services between these pietist Calvinist megachurches and DoorBrekers is astounding. The sober and modest traditional church services where Genevan Psalms are accompanied with organ stand in considerable contrast with the hip, festive and expressive contemporary worship service of DoorBrekers church. In the large pietist congregations, pastors, like all other men, wear black suits and dark ties. And characteristic for the dress code of women, they wear modest skirts or dresses and hats, as head covering is customary during the church service.

In the DoorBrekers church, informal dress dominates, presenting latest fashion styles such as jeans, sneakers and colourful outfits. Pastor Frank's black leather jacket, dark shirt and jeans and fashionable glasses and his wife's tight jeans and knee-high leather boots underscore the contemporary and hip feeling of the church representing a popular cultural style. As a regular visitor of the church commented on an online forum where the DoorBrekers church was discussed:

When you enter the DoorBrekers church you can feel the warmth and sincere interest of people, from the beginning to the end. The music, the use of multimedia and contemporary presentations make the church very accessible. The man who on Sundays comes to the front, called a pastor, just wears nice jeans and a sporty jacket, so visitors can identify with him. Next to that, there are many small groups where people are known, and help and support each other.⁴

DoorBrekers church meets at a large hall in the centre of the town that during the week is used for large sports events. Every Sunday morning, starting at 6 am, the hall gets a total makeover: the walls are covered with black cloth, theatre lights are hung to the ceiling and extensive multimedia technology is being installed. A stage is built and filled with three large screens and full band equipment. At 9.30 am the hall looks like a large auditorium where a pop concert is about to begin. Next to the transformation of the gym, other premises in the building are changed as well: for all different age groups kids' programmes are offered, including a nursery. Most striking is the large amount of volunteers involved in preparing the Sunday service, all part of effective and well-organised teams. When the service is about to begin at 10 o'clock more than 1500 visitors enter the prepared worship hall. On the large screens colourful moving images are displayed including a digital countdown clock. Combined with an intensifying soundtrack played through sound system a sense of urgency and anticipation is enhanced during the waning moments building up to the beginning of the service.

The church services have an event like character and rely on the combination of media technologies, large video screens, musical and theatrical performances and expressions similar to popular culture. All these elements are used to amplify and punctuate what happens on stage: the music during the time of worship and the pastor preaching his sermon. As Sanders (2012) has argued in the situational analysis of non-denominational Christian megachurches in the USA, the worship setting can be characterised as a spectacle as the awe of grand spaces, visually

captivating screens, layered soundtracks and the overall effervescence of the group setting are contributory in creating a media-saturated event.

The order of the church service follows a predictable script of Pentecostal/evangelical worship: about 40 minutes of praise and worship, announcements, offering, prayer, sermon of about 40 minutes followed by responsive prayer and closure with a final song.

DoorBrekers church presents itself as a non-denominational church. But visiting pastors from megachurches in other parts of the world and the alignment of DoorBrekers with the Hillsong network,⁵ having its basis in the Hillsong megachurch in Sydney, reveal the transnational neo-Pentecostal identity of this church. DoorBrekers, therefore, can be characterised as an example of the global spread of neo-Pentecostal churches that display a new form of Christianity, relying on a combination of theatre-style church services that offer intense multi-sensorial experiences via the importance of the worship music resembling popular music and the use of media technology. They are inclined to incorporate popular culture into the religious sphere, blurring the boundaries between entertainment and Christian religion.

As Meyer (2004) and others have pointed out, these global neo-Pentecostal churches display a 'style of spirituality' rather than a denomination (Da Silva Junior 2011). With regard to leadership, neo-Pentecostal churches depend heavily on the leading pastor, most likely the successful founder or builder of the church. Therefore, this neo-Pentecostal style is not only performed but also personalised and embodied by their pastors and leaders (De Witte 2005; Paas 2013). This style 'offers the narrative structure – and the mood that underpins it – into which lifeworlds and experiences can be inserted' (Meyer 2004, 105). The global rise of neo-Pentecostal churches with similar leadership styles is enhanced by the increasing mediatisation of religion, particularly through the development of a shared visual culture around pastors and worshippers. The rapid development of online media facilitates new churches like DoorBrekers church to align with a multidirectional neo-Pentecostal 'flow of religious phenomena – symbols, ideas, practices, moods, motivations' (Csordas 2009, 3), including similar religious formats of shared leadership styles of performance (De Witte 2005, 332).

While neo-Pentecostal churches are usually found in urban centres (Paas 2013), DoorBrekers church shows that the confinement to rural contexts dominated by traditional religious institutions can be transcended through the establishment of global networks of related churches by means of innovative new media technology. In particular, the Internet increasingly facilitates the establishment of global networks of relationships between leaders and followers as well as networks between religious leaders and between communities (Campbell 2012).

Neo-Pentecostalism and the aesthetics of leadership

Current debates and findings in leadership studies on authenticity and charisma offer a promising perspective for understanding religious leadership in the

context of neo-Pentecostalism. In general, leadership in (neo)-Pentecostal churches is authorised on the basis of personal calling and an endowment with special gifts from the Holy Spirit, which is described in the New Testament as charisma. As Weber coined the sociological term charisma as a quality of leadership, which appeals to non-rational motives, he derived his concept from the New Testament Greek word charisma to describe a form of leadership based on the perception of a special giftedness between leaders and followers.

In recent leadership studies, the concept of charisma is put forward in theories of authentic leadership as both charisma and authenticity involve follower's attribution towards the leader (Hansen, Ropo, and Sauer 2007, 551). But the concept of charisma is not without its difficulties. For instance, little is known about the process by which followers attribute charisma to leaders (Hansen, Ropo, and Sauer 2007, 551). And as Avolio and Gardner (2005) and others point out, authentic leadership does not need to be charismatic since authentic leaders 'build enduring relationships, work hard, and lead with purpose, meaning and values, but are not necessarily described as charismatic by others, which has been defined as the core component of transformational leadership' (2005, 329). It is in times of change and transformation where charismatic leadership as a form of authentic leadership is observed: it points to the specific context in which these leaders operate: a context of crisis (Williams et al. 2012).

A key issue in discussions on authentic leadership concerns the processes of legitimating and authenticating leadership, in other words, how leadership can be performed in such a way, that both leaders and followers experience it as being authentic. These questions resonate with larger cultural debates on authenticity and search for the 'true self', that according to Charles Taylor (1989) were the results of the 'cultural revolution' of the 1960s. The religious focus on the self-endorsed an orientation on the self as the place for reception of the sacred (Ibid). Yet, the 'true self' is enacted within social life and is mediated and expressed through the body. Ladkin and Taylor (2010, 66) suggest that 'in assessing a leader's level of authenticity in the first instance followers will scrutinise their bodily signals'. It is through the embodiment of that 'true self' that leaders are perceived as authentic or not (Ladkin and Taylor 2010, 64). Hansen, Ropo, and Sauer (2007) argue that aesthetic leadership brings in a relational and embodied perspective on leadership that is largely overlooked in leadership theories as 'it focuses on the felt meaning, tacit assumptions and the emotions as integral to leader-follower relationships' (Hansen, Ropo, and Sauer 2007, 553).

A focus on authentic leadership draws the attention to the body and affirms that affect and emotions are deeply intertwined with the process of leading (Goody et al. 2010, 979). Authentic leadership is therefore not described as the personality traits of gifted persons, but is acted out and 'produced' in performance in the context of potential followers.

Furthermore, an aesthetic perspective on leadership implies a recognition for the legitimate value of knowledge that is based on followers' sensory experiences during interactions with the leader as 'aesthetic knowing corresponds to the

embodied, tacit knowing that is often contrasted with intellectual/explicit knowing' (Hansen, Ropo, and Sauer 2007, 552). Therefore, an aesthetic approach to leadership brings in a focus on the experiential and the engagement of the senses (Hansen, Ropo, and Sauer 2007, 553), on sensory experiences and the aesthetic judgments that follow, affirming an affective epistemology (Klaver 2011, 405).

In the case of neo-Pentecostal leaders and pastors, their authority depends on their ability to raise sensibilities that invoke divine presence in such a way that is recognised and persuasive (Meyer 2010, 757). Therefore, an aesthetic approach of pastorpreneurs draws the attention to the ways pastors authenticate their leadership through their bodily performances, observed on stage and screens during church services and in the online world. The life story of Pastor Frank reveals a number of insights into how a neo-Pentecostal embodied authentic leadership style can be created and authorised.

From entrepreneur to pastorpreneur: the pastor's story

Before he became a pastor, Frank held a high management position in a Dutch IT company. The company started in the 1980s and became one of the leading software development companies in the world in the 1990s. Noteworthy to mention is that the founders of the company were members of one of the earlier mentioned pietist Calvinist Reformed church. But also most of the employees were recruited within this religious subculture. Also Frank and his wife were both born and raised in a pietistic Calvinist church.

Because of his management position, Frank travelled all over the world. Yet, he was always home by Saturday in order to be in church on Sundays, as the company observed a strict rest on Sunday. While Frank's career moved forwards, his marriage ran into a crisis. During this time his wife Iris met Christians from an evangelical church in a town nearby. After she started to attend Bible study meetings her 'traditional faith was transformed into living faith', as she said. Different from her pietistic Calvinist church, she experienced 'the assurance of the forgiveness of her sins and received the promise of eternal life'. Because of his wife's conversion experience, Frank accompanied her to the evangelical church. Six weeks later Frank made a radical decision as he decided to leave his traditional church. 'It was like everything fell into place', he said. Rather than passively waiting and hoping for God's election and salvation as is taught in the Calvinist church of his youth, in the evangelical church he learned that he was responsible for his decisions and could choose to become a believer.

That night, I heard the story of Philippi and the man from Ethiopia who went to Jerusalem. He was busy with his career, he had made it, and for instance, he had a car with a chauffeur. But he was looking for something more in life. I recognized that, I realized that all I was living for was becoming rich, but this man went home with joy. Something like scales fell from my eyes, I felt a sense of urgency, and I was in need to know God. You realize that something is missing, I cried, I live but I have nothing. By prayer I laid down my life for God and then you experience that you have found God. What a joy!

Before his conversion in the evangelical church, Frank had been a pious and devout religious man. He read his bible regularly and enjoyed reading theological books. Also, about seven years earlier, he had a religious experience where he felt called by God into ministry. As he was reading his bible, a few lines of a bible verse seemed to jump out of the page that spoke to his heart. For a moment he considered studying theology but his successful career was an obstacle. Yet, after his conversion the calling to ministry returned.⁶ Frank decided to quit his job and became the associate pastor in the evangelical church. Financially this meant a big cut back in his income, but because he had made good money in the IT business it was possible to live on a basic income. Three years later Frank felt led by God to start a new church in his hometown Barneveld although he was willing to go all the way to Australia if that had been God's plan, he said. The new way of 'doing church'⁷ in a contemporary style resulted in a rapid growth of DoorBrekers, not only attracting local people but also from other parts of the Bible belt. In the local orthodox Christian community Frank's initiative was received with suspicion as he added yet another church to the many churches already in town. A local reformed pastor expressed his negative opinion online by calling DoorBrekers' degradation for the church'.⁸

Pastor Frank, however, was not so concerned with the outlook of local or other Dutch churches on his mission. 'There are no examples of successful churches in the Netherlands I could learn from', as he expressed during the interview. From the early days of Doorbrekers on, he developed his vision far beyond the boundaries of Dutch evangelical churches. He visited several Christian conferences abroad – among them the *Abundant Life Church*,⁹ Bradford (UK) – where he spotted successful pastors of charismatic and Pentecostal megachurches. Afterwards he followed their transnational networks of related churches through the Internet: he checked out their websites, listened to their online sermons, studied their church models, and contacted them. Pastor Frank made several mission trips around the world, investigating the successes of other churches and establishing new relationships. This resulted in an extensive network of relations with churches, among them: Pastor Prince, senior pastor of the *New Creation Church*, Singapore, Jeffrey Rachmat, senior pastor of *Jakarta Praise Community Church* (JPCC), Indonesia, Kevin Loo of *City Harvest Kuala Lumpur*, Malaysia, Frank de Jong, senior pastor *Life Church Auckland*¹⁰ and Brian Houston of the *Hillsong Church* in Sydney.

All these churches display the neo-Pentecostal style with entrepreneurial pastors, who think in opportunities, have a global vision for church growth and lead churches where fun, excitement, entertainment and an orthodox message are found. Over the years, several pastors of these and other megachurches from different parts of the world have preached in the Sunday worship services and church conferences held by DoorBrekers church in Barneveld.

Transnational networks and new media

Frank's story is not unique but remarkable in light of its location. The cosmopolitan urban centres of the related churches in Frank's network stand in stark contrast with the quiet rural town of Barneveld. Yet, the rise of Doorbrekers church illustrates the emergence of a mode of religious leadership that is found in independent neo-Pentecostal churches connected on a global scale through loosely connected networks. Yet, these pastorpreneurs no longer can authenticate their position by tradition but adopt a performative style in such a way that followers recognise their position as authoritative as Frank's story designates.

First, Frank's conversion narrative demonstrates the importance of calling in legitimating his position as a religious leader. His conversion experience, his identity as a businessman and the calling for ministry are all intertwined in his interpretation of the biblical story of the eunuch from Ethiopia. By describing him as a businessman the analogy made between the Ethiopian and his own life is self-evident. Cultural differences and a historic gap of 2000 years are bridged as he situates himself into the biblical text, which serves as a strategy of authentication of his experience. It paves the way to accept the earlier sense of calling for ministry and leave the IT business. It remains however unclear how the decline of the IT company in that same period of time provided a context for his conversion and decision to leave his business career.

Second, Frank's narrative reveals a remarkable parallel between his professional career in the IT business and his 'religious' career. Like many other successful pastors of megachurches, Frank's entrepreneurial qualities contribute to his development from entrepreneur to becoming a pastorpreneur (Twitchell 2007). His search for new church opportunities was facilitated through the easy possibilities of travelling and the online presence of churches on the Internet. Especially the extensive possibilities of new media enhanced his access to successful churches in terms of size, numbers, strife for excellence and growth rather than theology of denominational affiliations on a global scale. It demonstrates that that the Internet facilitated access to these church networks and was therefore instrumental in the expansion of similar churches on a global scale. It raises the question of how to value the impact of new media on the rise of transnational networks of related churches. In the past, before the widespread access to the Internet, similar examples of large churches that played a key role in modelling new ways of doing church have been observed. But in terms of time and space a profound change has taken place. No longer do pastors have to travel to large conference sites or churches that experience a revival (for instance in the mid-1990s with the so-called 'Toronto Blessing', Percy 1998). The online presence of many revivalist centres in the world like the megachurches offers a 24/7 window to sites where revival, renewal and a new style of spirituality is visually displayed and can be watched and heard, observed and experienced. For example, the Hillsong megachurch in Sydney presents a weekly programme of Hillsong TV on their website which according to Hillsong is watched around

10 million people each week and broadcasted into over 180 countries around the world.¹¹ This programme not only contains a sermon preached by the senior pastor Brian Houston in the Sydney megachurch but also includes a personal life story, scripted along a conversion narrative and two live-recorded worship songs. Therefore, new media technologies, especially the Internet (to a lesser extent also satellite TV) plays a crucial role in the global spread of aesthetic styles of religious leaders and audiences. Through extensive online multimedia tools like podcasts and video clips performative styles of religious behaviour and expression are modelled and displayed on a global scale. But next to the important presence of megachurches online, pastor Frank's story also demonstrates the importance of building relationships offline. In fact, what his story reveals is the dynamic interaction that is emerging through the presence of religious communities online as an extension of religious communities offline. It facilitates, activates and brings about the spin-off of new religious communities that are connected on a global scale by relationships between religious leaders and are based on a shared aesthetic style of bodily practices rather than doctrine or other observable forms of commitment (BBB).

Third, Frank's narrative demonstrates how traditional religious authority structures and roles lose their saliency in contemporary society. Here, we see how entrepreneurial pastors use new media, including the Internet, as a platform to expose and market themselves, their churches and ministry. As these pastorpreneurs use the new media as a tool for empowerment, they challenge established religious roles and hierarchies (Campbell 2012, 74). The dynamic interaction between the online and offline environment creates a distinct domain where traditional religious authority structures are being negotiated and reformed. For Frank, having his roots in one of the most conservative Dutch Reformed churches, the representation of megachurches in different parts of the world through the Internet is a source of power which enables him to radically break with mainline denominational Protestantism and empowers him to establish a totally new concept of church in the local context of the Bible belt. Supported by an extensive network of megachurch pastors, Frank is able to transgress official religious structures and to confront traditional institutional religion with a new alternative mode of global Christianity that flourishes in different parts of the world.

Fourth, not only ambitious pastors like Frank can strategically use transnational networks in establishing new relationships and using megachurch pastors' formats of performative style, but also his followers have access to the same sources. The alignment of their pastor with successful megachurch pastors creates an awareness of being part of a global movement of places where 'God is at work and present'. This feeling is mobilised when megachurch pastors visit and preach in DoorBrekers church but is can also be evoked by visiting the websites of the megachurches where the same pastors are available online. Yet, more research¹² needs to be done to understand the dynamics between the offline 'real life' presence of megachurch pastors and their online presence on demand in

churches that are affiliated with or connected to transnational networks of churches. This online–offline dynamic involves several sets of relationships: between the megachurch pastor and other pastors in the network, between the megachurch pastor and his own congregation, between leading megachurch pastors and other congregations in the network and relationships between congregations within a network. The dynamics and complexity of these relational networks come for example to the surface during conferences as I observed during the Hillsong conference in The Hague, October 2012.

Due to the summer Olympics in 2012, the annual European Hillsong Leadership Conference moved from London to the European mainland and was held at The Hague in the Netherlands on 3–5 October. The DoorBrekers church and also the City Life Church (CLC) of The Hague were the two local Dutch partnering churches for the Hillsong conference. Next to 800 volunteers from Hillsong London, more than a 100 volunteers from these Dutch churches were involved. Furthermore, DoorBrekers church supplied hundreds of chairs to fill the ‘field area’ of the ice hockey stadium where the conference was held. During the conference, Pastor Frank and his wife were seated in the designated area for partners of the Hillsong network, right in front of the stage.

During the opening night Brian Houston mentioned how grateful Hillsong was for the Frank and his wife’s participation in the conference saying ‘they have a special ministry here in the Netherlands, I have preached in their church and they are brilliant’.¹³ The last day of the conference a round table session with church leaders took place on stage, hosted by Brian and Bobby Houston. Seated at the table were pastors from the Hillsong churches in London, Paris and Amsterdam and pastors of befriended churches among them Jeffrey Rachmat from Indonesia and the Dutch pastor from CLC The Hague and pastor Frank from DoorBrekers. From my conversation with several participants¹⁴ of DoorBrekers church during the conference, pastor Frank’s presence on stage was felt as a special and moving occasion and experienced as a public (and global) recognition of the pastors’ calling as it demonstrated and God’s favour upon the pastor and their church.

Circulation of aesthetic styles and the ‘mega’

An investigation of a number of websites of charismatic/Pentecostal megachurches around the world reveals a remarkable similarity in terms of a shared performative style of neo-Pentecostal pastors. Usually, church websites present the pastor and his wife together as the leading couple of the church. They always look very happily married; have both a sparkling white set of teeth; the pastor’s wife is, usually good looking, thin, blond (Asian pastors’ wives are usually not blond but appear to have their hair dyed in lighter colour). In video clips on the megachurch websites the performance of the pastorpreneurs, from Australia to Indonesia to the USA, present themselves on stage in a similar performative style: successful pastors are not primarily preachers or teachers but

rather performers who embody their message and posit a resemblance between message content and material body image. It is a mixture of roles, being a preacher, performer and entertainer, but at all times the authoritative voice that is being listened to by the masses. The emphasis is not only on *what* is being said but *how* it is being said.

An important element in attributing charisma of the religious leader by the audience is evoked through the presentation of the moving image of the body of the preacher. Here, a clear connection between the Pentecostal understanding of the believer being a vessel of the Holy Spirit power is demonstrated by the visual rhetoric surrounding Pentecostal pastors. The presence of God is foremost demonstrated through the body, meaning that the preacher's body becomes an index or sign for the presence and power of God.

It is striking to observe that the Dutch mega church similar to other megachurches like the Hillsong church in Sydney uses the large screens not to display lyrics of bible references as is often the case in local evangelical charismatic evangelical churches but use them for real-casting of human bodies, the preacher, the worship leader or other persons. The bodily postures and expression seem to point to the invisible God manifested or embodied not only in the message but in the speaker also. As such, the image of the divinely touched human body tends to facilitate a direct and even tactile experience of God. One could argue that the Word is 'literally made flesh'. A critical question is therefore how this emphasis on the body, which is facilitated and supported globally through the use of new media technology, changes the authoritative role of scripture as it distracts the attention from hearing the Word to seeing the Word. Screens, from the computer screen of the person watching online, to the screens in the worship space seem to be crucial in connecting pastors and worshippers into 'a transcendent, trans-temporal and trans-local reality' (Sanders 2012, 11).

In his study on megachurches Goh points out that the rise of megachurches as a global phenomenon carry unique features that exhibits particular meanings in the Protestant tradition. He draws attention to the meanings attached to what he describes as the 'performance of the mega'. In his words, megachurches might be seen as

... institutions whose practices signify and rehearse a material "greatness" which not only registers with and attracts adherents at a fundamental cognitive level [...] but also interpose that material greatness as a seemingly tangible and concrete "body" of Christ – a particular loaded area for charismatic Protestantism with its emphasis on the (invisible and intangible) Holy Spirit and the individual's experience. (Goh 2008, 288)

This implies that the mega is not about size only. On the one hand megachurches deconstruct church traditions by their architecture, their pop liturgy and ritual practices and place the emphasis on the personal encounter and relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, these churches must also foster and facilitate that relationship as to distinguish themselves from the life outside of Christianity but as well as from less effective churches (Goh 2008, 292).

The evangelical Protestant megachurch's best and most concrete resource is to refer to its own body – its size, dynamic, rapid growth and ambitions – as its chief proof of its embodiment of God's power and presence (Goh 2008, 296).

All the above elements are observed in the context of DoorBrekers church and give more insight in how global networks of churches and befriended pastors are crucial in the authority of Frank's position as a pastor and his style of performance.

Conclusion

In this paper, I discussed the emergence of pastorpreneurs and a global neo-Pentecostal style in the changing religious landscape in the Netherlands. Recently, established neo-Pentecostal churches display a new kind of Christianity that is different from the religious regimes in the past. Due to the emphasis on personal choice and individual experience these new churches resemble voluntary organisations with loose boundaries. Religious leadership is no longer legitimised and guaranteed by denominational traditions, confessions and the ordination of clergy but needs to be continuously performed, renewed and authenticated. The modes of bonding and binding between leaders and followers are being authenticated in bodily performance of leaders in a media-saturated context of worship. In strategic ways, religious leaders operate like entrepreneurs making use of the resources of successful megachurches around the world, accessible through the rapid development of new media and the Internet. New media technologies together with increased mobility offer access to online and offline sites, where pastors and believers can be in touch with the powerful presence of the Spirit, observed in rapidly growing megachurches around the world. Especially through the Internet, local expressions of expressions of faith are infused with globalised aesthetic forms of religious expression of a neo-Pentecostal style of religiosity. Bodily expressions of worshipers, the musical style of worship bands and the performative qualities of preachers as actors and talk show hosts indicate a process of mimicking a global neo-Pentecostal style that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. Through the interconnection between online and offline religion, a dynamic interplay of the local and the global is observed which fosters a distinct neo-Pentecostal aesthetic style of religious leadership in the emergence of pastorpreneurs.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

1. The name of the church 'DoorBrekers' is not found in a Dutch dictionary but an invention based on a bible verse found in Micha 2: 13: The *breaker* is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them' (KJV). In Dutch: 'De *doorbreker* trekt voor hen op; zij breken door en trekken door de poort

- en gaan daardoor uit; en hun Koning trekt voor hen uit, en de HERE aan hun spits.’ The biblical word ‘doorbreker’ is used in a plural form by adding an ‘s’.
2. The orthodox–protestants ‘Bible belt’ emerged in the late nineteenth century (cf. Van Rooden 1996).
 3. Because of a dispute over grace and election, the ‘Gereformeerde Gemeente in the Netherlands’ separated from the ‘Gereformeerde Gemeente’ in 1953.
 4. <http://ikonrtv.nl/kerknieuws/nieuws.asp?old=21720&PageFoundR=15&lastR=237926>, accessed June 8, 2012.
 5. www.hillsong.com.
 6. It was only after the interview that I realised that the period of Frank’s conversion coincides with a serious financial crisis in the IT company. However, Frank did not refer to his job situation.
 7. Interestingly, the expression ‘doing church’ is often heard among evangelical/Pentecostal church leaders. Different from an understanding of the church as something that is (an institution), ‘doing church’ implies an understanding of church that is being performed.
 8. <http://www.refoweb.nl/vragenrubriek/17518>, assessed June 4, 2013. The pastor uses the Dutch word ‘kerkafbraak’.
 9. The ‘Abundant Life Church’ recently has changed its name to ‘Life Church’, see <http://www.lifechurchhome.com>, assessed June 4, 2013.
 10. According to their website the church has a ‘Church Oversight Team covering the leadership consisting of Brian Houston (Hillsong Church Sydney), Bayless Conley (Cottonwood Church, Los Angeles), Robert Fergusson (Hillsong Church, Sydney) and Danny Guglielmucci (Edge Church International, Adelaide)’. <http://lifenz.org/about/leadershipteam/> assessed June 3, 2013.
 11. www.hillsongtv.com, accessed August 30, 2013.
 12. My current research project on the role of new media in transnational neo-Pentecostal churches addresses these questions.
 13. Field notes October 3, 2012.
 14. Like Hillsong church, DoorBrekers church offers a range of possible commitments to the church based on participation but does not use the term membership.

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