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<PQ>The trajectories of Pastor Schadrac and Mama Kati show how building a career as a pastor is a matter of becoming an entrepreneur—of being able to mobilize social relationships and maximize one’s opportunities within a specific socioeconomic context.

<AT>“We Make the Voice of These People Heard”: Trajectories of Socioeconomic Mobility among Congolese Pastors in Kampala, Uganda

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<ABS>This article focuses on religious entrepreneurship in a context of displacement, specifically among Congolese refugees in Kampala, where becoming a pastor is one of the few opportunities available for social mobility. I analyze the social trajectories of two Congolese pastors. However different they may be from each other, they highlight ideas of success and prosperity that encourage us to rethink the socioeconomic role of Pentecostalism in Africa, analyzing the entanglements between the religious and the economic spheres from a multidimensional and a relational perspective. The article shows that entrepreneurial trajectories are instruments of mobility, but at the same time they need to be understood in terms of social becoming, the success of the two Congolese pastors being judged by the moral value that other people grant them, and in relation to their role within the Congolese community.

<H1>Introduction

A few weeks after I had started my fieldwork on Congolese churches in Kampala, I began to wonder why there was such a large number of these congregations;¹ in response to my inquiries, one of my refugee friends said something that at the time seemed to be a sarcastic comment on my research: “If a Congolese wants to become someone here in Kampala, he has only two choices: become a Pentecostal pastor, or become a musician—and not everyone is good at playing music.” As my research proceeded, I realized that his words, although ironic, had a basis in the everyday

reality experienced by Congolese refugees in Kampala. In their situation—which I briefly describe in the next sections—structural constraints strongly restricted their opportunities to achieve social mobility and access the formal job market. A large majority of them faced daily challenges, while navigating urban life mostly through informal networks.

Encounters with Congolese pastors living as refugees in Kampala helped me identify the entrepreneurial dimension linked to the spread of so-called refugee churches and other religious activities in the city. Two of these pastors are the main characters on whom this article is based. As I show, their trajectories highlight how the aspiration to “become someone” among the community of Congolese refugees in Kampala can be realized by investing in God. In particular, the first of these characters, Pastor Schadrac, explained his becoming a pastor after arriving in Kampala in terms of a real enterprise, an activity based on a vision (although in this case, the vision came from God, in Pastor Schadrac’s narrative), which required taking personal risks to be achieved. This is what he did, leaving a well-established church, where he had become the main pastor after the resettlement of the former leader, to build his own congregation.

The second character, Mama Kati, exemplifies a different dimension of entrepreneurship among Congolese Pentecostals in Kampala; at the time of my fieldwork, she was not a pastor in a church, but had gained high status among the local Congolese community through her charisma as a preacher, and even more through her reputation as someone with the gift of deliverance and healing. Her case shows the importance of networks for developing a religious enterprise in the context of refuge: it was through the relationships she had established, especially with some women’s groups in Congolese churches, that she turned her charisma into a real business.

This article focuses on the link between Pentecostalism and social entrepreneurship in a context of displacement; it does so by describing and analyzing the religious and life trajectories of Pastor Schadrac and Mama Kati in Kampala, where they had both arrived after fleeing from the insecurity and violence then prevalent in the Eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). For them, as for other Congolese I met in Kampala, the religious trajectory is a

process of social becoming, which reframes personal stories to give meaning to refugee life in the new context, and through which pastors gain social status and recognition in a local community of Congolese refugees.

On the basis of my work with Congolese born-again Christians in Kampala, I argue that the representation of the socioeconomic role of Pentecostalism in Africa as part of neoliberal expansion is based on a narrow view of the prosperity gospel, and does not take full account of the complexity and heterogeneity of the phenomenon. This representation differs considerably from what I observed not only in most of the Congolese churches in Kampala, but also in several small- and medium-sized Ugandan churches of a sort found all over the city.

The present article aims to contribute to the growing body of literature that looks at prosperity and at the entanglements between the religious and the economic spheres from a multidimensional perspective.² It does so by highlighting the specificity of the meaning of religious entrepreneurship, success, and wealth for born-again refugees living in Kampala. Pastor Schadrac and Mama Kati, as well as other Congolese pastors I met in Kampala, used their charisma to start their own religious enterprises, achieving social mobility more rapid than that experienced by most of the Congolese living in Kampala. Through their entrepreneurial trajectories they “became someone” within the Congolese community, acquiring a good reputation and social status.

Based on six months of fieldwork carried out in Kampala in 2013–15, the article analyzes the presence of Congolese Pentecostal churches in the capital city of Uganda; it reflects on the meaning of prosperity and on the link between Pentecostalism and entrepreneurship in a context of refuge. The second half of the article presents and discusses the entrepreneurial trajectories of Pastor Schadrac and Mama Kati, showing how these have been shaped by the relationships these pastors had established within the Congolese community in Kampala. Their success has to be judged not so much in relation to the wealth they had accrued, but to the social recognition they had gained through their pastoral work.

<H1>Pentecostalism, Displacement, and Religious Entrepreneurship

Taken together, the trajectories of Pastor Schadrac and Mama Kati, although quite different, show how building a career as a pastor is a matter of becoming an entrepreneur—of being able to mobilize social relationships and maximize one’s opportunities within a specific socioeconomic context. In the case of Congolese pastors in Kampala, the Congolese community has characteristics that make it easier for a young pastor to achieve a degree of social mobility in a context of widespread poverty and stuckness. This is, in fact, mostly a young population, navigating through urban life with little aid from the Ugandan state or from international organizations. It is a deparentalized community, in which most of the old people have been killed or have remained in the DRC, so that the traditional gerontocratic system no longer works. It is a situation of social disintegration and material and existential uncertainty, where religious congregations, especially the Congolese *Églises de Réveil*,³ are spaces in which to build social relationships and construct social networks that can help enrich one’s social capital.

Because of the fluidity and mobility of the displaced Congolese population in Uganda, a pastor’s career can be accelerated because senior pastors are often resettled to a third country (usually in Europe or in North America), and younger pastors take on responsibility for the congregation. Churches thus become instruments of social mobility for young Congolese pastors, who find in them a space for leadership. Some of these congregations do not survive more than a few years, but others are now well established, recognized by the Congolese community and the Ugandan governmental institutions as interlocutors and mediators within the community itself, as well as with local institutions.

In this article, I analyze how some Congolese pastors have made the most of the chances that these specific social conditions generate, yet in the situation of uncertainty and socioeconomic fragility that marks the existence of most Congolese living in Kampala, ideas of success and prosperity take on a different meaning, as people often react to socioeconomic hardships by looking

for networks of trust and mutual help to start small businesses, rather than for a neoliberal momentum toward individualism and the accumulation of wealth.

These pastors' trajectories push us to analyze carefully the socioeconomic role of Pentecostalism in Africa. Early works on this topic saw the rapid growth of this religion in the continent as a propagation of the neoliberal individualistic model of money accumulation (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). From this perspective, Pentecostalism was conceived as well suited to addressing the challenges of neoliberal capitalism and taking advantage of the opportunities it offers (Meyer 2007).

These dimensions are admittedly part of the expansion of Pentecostalism in Africa, but different models and ideas of religious entrepreneurship and success coexist, as well as different ways of conceiving prosperity, so it would be misleading to conceive the prosperity gospel as a collection of preset principles (Lauterbach 2019, 113) and as a standardized discourse. The Ugandan media often portray the economic impact of the Pentecostal movement in the country by referring to a few successful figures of highly mediatized pastors, with Pastor Robert Kayanja—founder of the Miracle Center and today leader of a religious enterprise called Kayanja Ministries—as a major example of this kind of religious entrepreneurship. In opposition to this image, the Congolese churches and pastors examined in this study are part of a constellation of small congregations that form the large majority of the Pentecostal churches in Kampala.

In their first phase, studies on prosperity theology emphasized its strength within the context of neoliberal economies and the promise of wealth to the believers (Gifford 2004; Maxwell 1998). A number of works investigated the correlation between the growth of the Pentecostal movement and capitalist (neoliberal) expansion in Africa. Richard Banégas and Jean-Pierre Warnier argued that in response to the dramatic changes that most African societies had experienced in the last decades of the twentieth century, new religious expressions, especially recently founded Pentecostal churches, had become the main medium for the spread of the “spirit of capitalism” (Banégas and Warnier 2001), providing people with new models to follow based on the capitalist idea of personal

accumulation. Central to this interpretation of the link between Pentecostalism and neoliberalism has been the concept of “occult economies” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), which positioned the rise of Pentecostalism—especially of the prosperity gospel—as part of a wider response to the economic crises and inquietudes generated by participation in a global capitalist economy.

These studies made significant contributions to understanding the role of Pentecostal religion in rapidly changing socioeconomic contexts, but on the basis of my fieldwork on Congolese refugee churches in Kampala I argue that the studies showed only some of the facets of Pentecostalism in Africa, and may have overemphasized the irrational, thus representing Pentecostalism as a mere response to the neoliberal market and accentuating the passivity of believers in the face of the harshness of economic conditions.

In this way, I situate my work among anthropological perspectives that have recently distanced themselves from this interpretation, analyzing the prosperity gospel, and more generally the Pentecostal economic discourse, as it is practiced in particular African contexts. These studies have examined local entanglements among the economic sphere and Pentecostal practices, highlighting different and more nuanced ways of defining prosperity (Haynes 2012). Several authors have stressed the importance of taking account not only of the individualistic dimension inherent in the Pentecostal discourse, but also of how relational and individualistic orientations coexist within it (Daswani 2015), and the value attributed to social relationships and networks by believers and pastors in the making of their careers (Haynes 2013).

Through ethnographic explorations of these dynamics, these works show that the representation of Pentecostalism as a highly individualistic movement, and of prosperity gospel as a doctrine emphasizing God’s will that every believer should be rich and successful, is a simplistic view of the socioeconomic role played by Pentecostalism in different African contexts. Prosperity teaching is not only about giving and investing in God through offerings (and indeed, this kind of teaching would be pointless when targeting poor audiences); it can also involve instructions on how to become an entrepreneur (Van Dijk 2009). Moreover, as several authors have noted, reducing the

idea of prosperity to the promise of returns for money offerings is misleading because it cannot explain why members of these congregations do not abandon them despite their persistent poverty. According to Martin Lindhardt (2009), the success of the prosperity gospel depends on the fact that it offers more than just a magical means to become rich: it is a way of dealing with the perceived ambivalence of wealth by purifying money. In the Pentecostals' view, money that comes from God (in other words, from shops and other businesses run according to Christian values) is blessed, and cannot be suspected of deriving from immoral activities. In this way, Pentecostals justify and add a moral value to believers' entrepreneurial activities.

These studies nuance the view of Pentecostalism as a reaction to transformations under the neoliberal system, and as a coping strategy for urban subaltern groups; they take this religion as a "site of action" appropriated by believers (Marshall 2009), and as a modality of dwelling in the postcolonial situation, characterized by creative entrepreneurship and various forms of securing futurities (Reinhardt 2018, 119).

This inclination becomes manifest in the use Congolese believers make of religious discourse and networks to find their own way to prosperity, and even more so in cases where Congolese pastors decide to start their own *Église de Réveil* in Kampala, thus becoming "independent entrepreneurs of faith" (Lanz and Oosterban 2016, 494), identified by the community as self-made persons.

<H1>"Refugee Churches" and Social Recognition

Pentecostalism is the fastest growing religion in the world. According to the official census in Uganda, Pentecostals increased to 11.1 percent of the population in 2014, from 4.7 percent in 2002 (UBOS 2016). What is probably even more significant, in this period the Ugandan religious scene underwent a Pentecostalization of mainline Christian denominations.⁴ At the same time, Pentecostalism increased its influence in the Ugandan public and political sectors (Gusman 2017; see Marshall 2009 for analysis of the political role of Pentecostalism in contemporary Nigeria).

Some thirty years after the liberalization of religion in Uganda, at the time of my fieldwork, Kampala recorded the presence of more than one thousand Pentecostal churches, according to the estimates of the National Fellowship of Born-again Pentecostal Churches of Uganda;⁵ this presence was composed of a small group of megachurches, a number of medium-sized congregations, and a large number of small churches, ranging from fifty to two hundred members.⁶

Among the myriad congregations in Kampala, which make the Pentecostal phenomenon internally diverse, are dozens of Congolese churches, most of which have been started in Kampala since the year 2000. In November 2014, the *Communauté chrétienne congolaise en Ouganda* comprised fifty-five churches in Kampala, and seventy in total in the country. According to the leader of the association, this figure was largely incomplete, because he estimated that at least one hundred fifty Congolese churches were in Kampala alone, most of which were not registered with the association.⁷ The membership of these so-called refugee churches is mostly composed of asylum seekers and refugees from the DRC, although they attract believers from other francophone countries too (Rwanda, Burundi).

The highest density of Congolese *Églises de Réveil* in Kampala is found in some of the poorest neighborhoods of the city, where Congolese refugees usually live. Among these, I selected for my fieldwork the slum of Katwe, where in September 2013 I mapped the presence of fourteen Congolese Pentecostal churches. These congregations usually consist of about thirty to three hundred members, and the numbers fluctuate, as Congolese frequently move from one church to another and are resettled in a third country after their period of stay in Uganda. Most of these congregations offer aid to people newly arrived from the DRC. They provide shelter (usually within the church building itself), food, help with starting the process to request refugee status, and spiritual support and counseling. Urban refugees, in fact, do not have access to the same kind of assistance that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Ugandan state provide for displaced persons who live in official refugee settlements in the country.⁸

According to UNHCR estimates, around 860,000 Congolese live as refugees or asylum seekers in other African countries; Uganda is by far the first country of refuge, hosting more than 350,000 people from the DRC (figure for June 2019),⁹ with an increasing number of them living in Kampala. These are people who have left the refugee settlements and moved to Kampala in search of better livelihood opportunities, or—more frequently—who have fled directly to the capital city. The resettlement process has become increasingly protracted, and it is not infrequent to meet people who have been living in Uganda for ten or more years waiting for relocation to a third country,¹⁰ whence derives the need to organize one's own life in Kampala in a medium-term perspective, trying to cope with economic constraints and other daily challenges.

Most of the Congolese in Kampala live in poverty and social marginality, usually in informally defined neighborhoods, with poor housing and scant hygiene. Only a tiny number have access to formal employment; most survive through informal commerce or with the help of relatives or friends, or of networks—especially religious networks—of which they are part.

In this situation, chances of achieving success are limited. The richest Congolese in Kampala are often people who have established an illegal trade in gold or diamonds between the DRC and Uganda. Other entrepreneurial figures seek success in popular music, create a soccer team hoping that one of the players will become a football star, and found new religious congregations.

The Congolese population in Kampala consists mostly of young, self-reliant individuals who navigate through urban life in search of employment and educational opportunities. In this context of social insecurity, Pentecostal congregations are both a space in which to find comfort and share emotions in everyday life (Gusman 2020) and the first resort for people seeking a place to stay on their arrival in Kampala and to build new social networks with other Congolese. The lack of welfare services by the Ugandan state and international organizations thus creates the conditions for churches to become service providers.

In this situation, Pentecostal pastors often become guides for the local Congolese community, as well as representatives who assume the task of dialoguing and mediating with local

and national institutions, in a context where urban refugees have difficulty making their voices heard. These pastors' success can therefore be measured in terms of the social recognition that they have among the Congolese community in Kampala, the social status they achieve through their spiritual charisma, and their capacity to express the needs of Congolese refugees.

Congolese Pentecostal pastors in Kampala are creative in finding ways to make their churches grow; at the same time, they reproduce and imitate already-existing successful models in a process of apprenticeship (Lauterbach 2015). Most of them started their careers as assistant pastors in one of the Congolese churches in Kampala and then decided to found their own congregations. Their "entrepreneurial imagination" (Reinhardt 2018) pushes them to take the risk of investing in their charisma and seeking to maximize the benefits from the contexts in which they live and operate, yet this does not mean adhering to an individualistic vision of religion. Although the pastors considered in this article try to profit from their religious entrepreneurship, the main aim of their activity seems to lie in the social reputation and recognition that they acquire, and not in the wealth that they accumulate. With this, I do not mean to deny that social reputation and recognition are important ingredients leading to wealth accumulation. What I want to highlight in the case of Congolese pastors in Kampala is that becoming a leader of a refugee church is not a way of becoming rich, owing to the limited resources of the congregation. Rather, through their religious enterprise, these pastors achieve a leadership position within the refugee community, recognized as figures of success by other refugees.

To support my claim, in the next sections I present and analyze the religious and entrepreneurial trajectories of Pastor Schadrac and Mama Kati.

<H1>Pastor Schadrac: Investing in God to Become a Leader

I first met Pastor Schadrac in Kampala in September 2013, when he was the main pastor of a small Congolese Pentecostal church, the Merisa Rehoboth Church, located in the neighborhood of Katwe. This church had been founded in 2009 by another Congolese pastor, Apostle Joseph, who in 2012

had been resettled to the United States and had left the leadership of the church to Pastor Schadrac. When the founder left, the congregation had about fifty members; however, under Schadrac's leadership, it grew rapidly, and in 2014 it counted more than one hundred twenty.

Despite this growth and the success of his leadership, the first time we met, Pastor Schadrac told me that he had had a vision: he wanted to build his own church, with the aim—in his words—of training “real men of God. You know, there are many people who wake up one morning and decide they are now ‘pastors’, without any specific training. These are just self-proclaimed pastors, not real men of God. To become a leader in the community and make a difference, one needs to be trained; that’s what I want to do, with God’s help” (Pastor Schadrac 2013). In effect, Schadrac built his reputation as a pastor not only through his preaching, but also through the self-representation of a man of study. He was considered a well-educated person, someone who always had a good word to say to people who come to his church, not only for material help, but also for counseling and advice.

Schadrac was born in 1980 in Bukavu (DRC) in a middle-class Roman Catholic family; he converted to Pentecostalism and was baptized in 1997. After that, he started singing in the church choir and soon became the leader of the church's youth group. It was in that context, according to the story he told me, that in 2000 he received a call from God, with a vision to found his own church as part of a new generation of Pentecostal churches, focusing on the values of education and training young pastors. When we met in Kampala, he was still working on that vision, which he realized two years later, with the opening of New Generation of Pentecostal Churches—The Shelter.

His work as an apprentice pastor in Bukavu had been interrupted by the violence that hit his family: in 2005 his mother was kidnapped and then killed, and he had to interrupt his studies in theology and take charge of his three siblings, who were still living with him in Kampala.¹¹ In 2008, following other episodes of violence, he decided to flee from the DRC to Uganda, where in 2010 he was ordained a pastor at Merisa Rehoboth Church.

During his first years in Kampala, he worked as an assistant pastor, and then, after the resettlement of Apostle Joseph, he became the main pastor of the church; despite this rapid pastoral ascent, he decided in 2014 to leave Rehoboth Church to follow his vision and start the process that would lead him to found The Shelter in 2015. The new church initially had no more than sixty members, but it grew quite fast, and after two years it counted around one hundred fifty to one hundred sixty members. This expansion mainly reflected Pastor Schadrac's role in the Congolese community in Kampala, where he built fruitful relationships with local authorities and even attracted Ugandans to his congregation.¹²

What is even more interesting for the aim of this paper is that Pastor Schadrac built his reputation through a remarkable trajectory of religious entrepreneurship. He took an entrepreneurial risk, as the church he left was already well established and allowed him to live comfortably and provide for his younger siblings. However, he said that he felt the need to “invest in God,” to take a further step and found his own congregation. This does not mean that he hoped to become richer with the new church, because he was well aware of the limited resources of the Congolese in Kampala. What he really pursued with The Shelter was redemption from the suffering that he had experienced in the DRC and at the beginning of his life in Kampala.

In the Pentecostal vision, being successful in a worldly enterprise is a sign of empowerment and spiritual regeneration, and it is one of the main driving forces in Pentecostal entrepreneurship (Agyeman and Carsamer 2018). Founding a new church and making it grow was for Schadrac a way of showing the people around him that he was—in his words—“victorious in God.” At stake at the same time was achieving economic prosperity—because a poor pastor would not show the benevolence of God— and being recognized as a leader of the community. Starting a congregation in this situation is not only, or not even, a financial investment: it is “an investment in one's status as pastor or religious expert. Becoming a pastor also means attaining social status that is recognized not only by members in church, but more widely in society” (Lauterbach 2015, 31).

Most of the young Congolese members of the congregation saw Pastor Schadrac as an example to follow. They recognized the economic component of his success and the status he had obtained within the community through his leadership. Most of these young people had come to Kampala alone or with siblings, and some of them—once in Uganda—had had to become the family’s breadwinner, taking care of younger family members. In this situation, they admired the trajectory that some pastors had been able to build. Consider, for example, the words of Erick, at the time twenty-three years old, with four younger siblings to look after. In the DRC, he had not been a religious person, but when he arrived in Kampala, he started praying in a Congolese church, and by the time we met, he had become one of the leaders of the congregation’s youth group. He talked about Pastor Schadrac in these terms:

<EXT>When I look at him, I see someone who has been able to realize his dreams; and he did this as a refugee. During his time here in Kampala, he was able to graduate in theology, to become a leader in the church, to buy a nice car. He always wears nice suits, so when he goes around in town, he can be proud of himself. This is a stimulus for me, to see someone who arrived in Uganda as a refugee, with nothing, and who has been able to do all these things. His example makes me think that if I work hard and I trust in God, I can become someone, even here in the refuge. (Erick 2013)</EXT>

To become someone, as Erick said, Pastor Schadrac invested in his religious enterprise. He took a risk as a businessman; he invested not only his time and work in the process of starting the new congregation, but also his own money for the church building. He received financial and material help from some of the members of the congregation, but the money he collected was not enough to cover the building costs. So he decided to sell his car—an old Prado—to finance the building.

While explaining this decision, he gave his interpretation of what prosperity is:

<EXT>If you look for money through the ministry, the money will run away from you; but if you pursue God, the money will look for you. When a pastor friend of

mine found out that my wife and I had sold our only car to build the temple, he looked at us straight in the eyes and told me “You made a mistake, Pastor.” I answered: “You say this because you don't know the principle of prosperity: everything that we own belongs to God.” (Pastor Schadrac 2014)</EXT>

Two years after this conversation in Kampala, Pastor Schadrac posted on his Facebook profile the picture of the new and almost finished church building, together with the picture of his new car, a recent white Toyota. He added the following words to the post, to remark the difficulties he had had to overcome as a refugee, before achieving the social position he had at the time:

<EXT>If the fear of failure overwhelms your desire for success, you will achieve nothing, because failure is part of the path to success. . . . Everyone who has reached success has also gone through a number of failures. . . . The difference between losers and winners resides in the courage of the latter to persevere after a failure and of the former to surrender after failure. My friends ask me how I can overcome barriers and apparently succeed. . . . My answer is simple: I am neither afraid nor ashamed of failing.</EXT>

As we can see from these sentences posted on Facebook, Pastor Schadrac views his success in religious entrepreneurship as the result of his faith and courage to take a risk, following the call he had received from God. His trajectory is emblematic of the new figures of success represented by some of the Congolese pastors in Kampala; among changing socioeconomic circumstances, the religious field is one of the sectors in which new leaders emerge.

At the turn of the new millennium, amid the social, political, and economic turmoil that African societies experienced in the last decades of the twentieth century, “new trajectories of upward mobility . . . appeared,” and they “attest that other ways of access to success and other modes of accumulation other than political power exist” (Banégas and Warnier 2001, 7). However, the category of success is highly fluid and heterogeneous: it assumes diverse meanings in different societies and different times. Banégas and Warnier’s view on these new figures of success in the

religious field is rather narrow: it seems to be restricted to a group of well-known rock-star pastors, and to put money accumulation and the possession of luxury goods at the core of the definition of success. This perspective leads Banégas and Warnier to the conclusion that Pentecostal churches have become the main drivers of the spirit of capitalism in Africa.

Pastor Schadrac's trajectory suggests a somewhat different way of looking at the socioeconomic role of Pentecostalism in Africa. Leaving his former church, where he had become the main pastor, Schadrac took an entrepreneurial risk by investing his own resources to build the new church and help recently arrived members of the congregation. Some of the latter, after having settled in Kampala, helped him in the construction of the building. They thus demonstrated the importance of networking for the development of pastoral projects of this kind, as well as the need to move toward a complex understanding of the economy in which believers operate and the relations of reciprocity they establish with the church (Coleman 2011; Premawardhana 2012). Indeed, the trajectories of most of the Congolese pastors with whom I worked in Kampala were marked not by a strong individual dimension but by the need to construct social networks that helped them accumulate the resources to start a new congregation. Much of the prosperity of these pastors was explained in relational terms. Their value was judged from how they utilized their social status and from the care relationships they established with believers (Daswani 2016).

<H1>Mama Kati: The Business of Deliverance and Religious Healing

The importance of social networks to develop one's religious entrepreneurship is even more evident in the case of Mama Kati, a Congolese woman whom I met in Kampala, where she had been living since 2010 with her three children, after having fled from the conflict in Kivu. While in the DRC, her husband had been the pastor of a church in Bukavu. When he was killed during a raid by a group of rebels, she decided to leave and seek refuge in Uganda. Initially, she went with her children to a refugee settlement in Western Uganda, but after three months there, she decided to move to Kampala because—as she explained— “life, in the settlements, was not a real life; and the

kids, they could not go to school.” When they reached Kampala, they had no contacts in the city. They did not know where to go: “I don’t even know how we were able to reach this place,” she said. “I didn’t know anything about Kampala, and didn’t understand the language; but God directed me to the church, where they hosted us for three months, and then helped us collect the money to pay the rent for the first two months” (Mama Kati 2013).

The literature on religion and migration often underlines that belonging to a religious group works as a coping mechanism for migrants, providing a “home away from home” (Adogame 1998). This view highlights the centrality of the protective role that religion plays in migration contexts; although this is an important element, there is also the need to investigate how membership of a Pentecostal congregation can become a stimulus to entrepreneurship, even in situations in which economic resources are limited, as they are for most Congolese refugees in Kampala.

Pentecostal discourses often focus on how believers should manage their lives to start a business; here, religious messages turn into instructions on how to follow biblical values to develop the capacity to run one’s affairs in ways that please God (Van Dijk 2009, 106). This is evidenced by many cases in which Congolese in Kampala start a small business—a hair salon, a tailoring shop, and so forth—with the material and spiritual support of the congregation to which they belong. This dynamic can be used to explain the religious entrepreneurship of Mama Kati as well; it was through the message she heard at the church that hosted her during her first months in Kampala that she developed her own religious business in the field of deliverance and healing. The support of the congregation and of the women’s group at church has been crucial for her to advance in this activity.

The Pentecostal congregation, which was her first contact and host in Kampala, provided her with the “protective network” (Sommers 2001) necessary to recover from the trauma that she had experienced in Congo DRC, and at the same time with a “community of trust” (Lyytinen 2017) to begin organizing her life in Kampala. The teachings she received during church services were a stimulus for her to start her activity of deliverance. In this, she followed the guidance of the main pastor of the church, who in his preaching often encouraged the congregation members not to wait

for external help or for a miracle from God, but to work hard so as to prosper. Consequently, Mama Kati told me, when she realized that she had a gift of deliverance and of healing people, she decided to use it to help people, but at the same time to make it a business to help her family.

She started praying in the intercessors' group at the church where she and her family were staying; the other members of the group acknowledged that she had unusual charisma in prayer for intercession. It was in that period—she told me—that she began to realize she had the gift of deliverance and healing. Already in the DRC she had had some experience of praying for people who then saw their problems solved; however, she had not paid much attention to this phenomenon, considering that it was common for believers to help others through the power of God. In Kampala, she started to hold deliverance and healing sessions regularly, as a growing number of people (mostly other Congolese, but some Ugandans too) visited her for prayer and healing. During the following years, she built a reputation as both a charismatic preacher and an intercessor for divine healing and deliverance. Although she referred to herself as a pastor, she did not have a specific church where she ministered, although she was invited to several churches in Kampala to lead prayer and deliverance sessions.

The story of Mama Kati shows how her trajectory of religious entrepreneurship developed from the gift of deliverance and healing that other believers thought she possessed, and from her ability to make a business out of this gift. Two years after her arrival in Kampala, this activity had become her main source of income. Consequently, she decided to give up her small business of selling jewels, to engage full time in her pastoral work, which consisted of preaching one or more times a week in Congolese churches in Kampala and in receiving her clients at home. People mostly went to her to ask for prayer to solve health problems, or to remove a *blocage* that prevented them from finding a job or a partner, or from being resettled (Gusman 2018b). She did not ask them for money directly, but they were all aware that they were expected to donate something to her—money, food, and other goods—in exchange for her help.

Meanwhile, she had become a leader of the women's group at the church where she had been hosted on her arrival in Kampala, and was the one who organized the fundraising to help other women start their own small businesses, including a hair salon, a tailoring shop, and a small restaurant. Over time, this activity turned into a small but efficient microcredit organization, led by Mama Kati with the help of other women in the group; this gave her the status of a leader among Congolese women in Katwe. On several occasions, she was asked to take part in informal neighborhood committees as a representative of the Congolese community in the area.

Her successful trajectory, although different from that of Pastor Schadrac, once more highlights the aptitude to react proactively to the new situation experienced as urban refugees in Kampala, and to adapt the Pentecostal discourse and worldview to the condition of being a refugee.

With her activity in the field of spiritual healing, Mama Kati entered the "business of deliverance" (Hackett 2003) that has become one of the main factors in the spread of Pentecostalism in Africa. Faced with "spiritual insecurity" (Ashforth 2005), a feeling of being in danger and exposed to the attacks of evil forces, many people look for individual and collective protection through deliverance sessions in Pentecostal churches. In the case of Congolese urban refugees in Kampala, this sense of insecurity can become even more accentuated, owing to the lack of assistance from international organizations. It is for this reason that, despite the limited financial resources, a market of deliverance and healing is flourishing in the Congolese community in Kampala. Mama Kati managed to develop her own business in this sector; however, as I have shown, in parallel to this enterprise, which earned her a living, she carried out other activities in church, most notably the microcredit group. In her case, too, her pastoral career was strongly influenced by the moral value that other people attributed to her activity, since she was not suspected of using her spiritual powers for negative purposes.

<H1>Conclusion

In recent years, several authors have discussed so-called pastorpreneurship within Pentecostalism, with entrepreneurial pastors being described as those “who think in opportunities, have a global vision for church growth and lead churches where fun, excitement, entertainment and an orthodox message are found” (Klaver 2015, 152). Several studies link pastorpreneurship to the development of new media technologies, but they limit its definition to megachurches, where marketing techniques make developing a powerful religious enterprise possible. They usually describe the development of megachurches and pastorpreneurs as paradigmatic examples of the capacity of Pentecostalism to adapt to neoliberalism (Jennings 2017), yet scholars have shown that Pentecostal entrepreneurship can be found in other situations and outside the restricted contexts of megachurches; these works engage with pastorhood as an instrument of social mobility and as a form of entrepreneurship in which spiritual cultivation and the construction of social status go hand in hand (Fesenmyer 2018; Lauterbach 2015).

The present article has built on this approach, focusing on the role of social recognition and trust in the entrepreneurial trajectories of the two characters it introduces. The reputation and social role that they gained in the Congolese community in Kampala depended not so much on their wealth (which is, however, an important symbol of social ascent, especially for young people) as on their capacity to build relationships and on the ethical value attributed to their activities. They considered themselves prosperous but not rich—meaning that they had achieved a condition of well-being (financial, social, relational) that had redeemed the suffering they had experienced. The accumulation of money, while important, is not central to this idea of prosperity, and the path to prosperity is conceived as one marked by hard work and struggle, reflecting the everyday experience of Congolese refugees in Kampala.

In this context of displacement, Pastor Schadrac and Mama Kati exemplify different styles of entrepreneurial creativity, reworking some of the main features of the Pentecostal worldview to make them fit with their conditions as refugees. In a situation of economic and moral precariousness, these pastors have invested in God in material and relational terms. They consider themselves—and

are considered by other members of the refugee community—role models of entrepreneurship in the religious field, although they have not achieved a particularly high economic status. Their trajectories require us to think more carefully about the heterogeneity and multifaceted dimensions of Pentecostalism in Africa, and about the meaning of prosperity and success, not limiting our scope to the phenomenon of megachurches. Religious entrepreneurship, as in the case of the Congolese pastors considered in this article, can assume different and less readily apparent paths, whose investigation will enhance our understanding of Pentecostalism in Africa.

<REF>NOTES

¹ As I specify later in the article, in 2013 I mapped the presence of fourteen Congolese “refugee churches” in Katwe, a neighborhood of Kampala. I call these congregations refugee churches because almost all their members are refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from the DRC, but in some cases also from other neighboring francophone countries, especially Rwanda and Burundi.

² Simon Coleman called this literature the second phase of studies of prosperity Christianity. Among the works that contributed most to rethink the relationship between Pentecostalism and economy are Coleman 2017; Daswani 2015, 2016; Haynes 2012, 2013; Kirby 2019; and Lauterbach 2015, 2019.

³ Églises de Réveil (Awakening Churches) are Pentecostal-like churches, originating in Congo and other French-speaking countries, either as independent churches or as part of larger evangelical denominations. The growth of the Charismatic renewal in the DRC occurred at the end of the Mobutu era, in the second half of the 1990s. Pentecostalism is today dominant within the Congolese diasporic religious field. Some congregations originated in the DRC and opened new branches abroad following the paths of the Congolese diaspora (Demart 2008); others were created in diasporic contexts and sometimes established one or more branches in the DRC.

⁴ A similar phenomenon has been observed elsewhere in Africa, for example, in Zambia (Kangwa 2016), Cameroon (Mbe 2007), and the DRC (Wild-Wood 2008), and has been described as one of the main forms of contextualization in the mainline Christian churches throughout the continent (Van Klinken 2015).

⁵ The National Fellowship of Born Again Pentecostal Churches of Uganda is a network of more than 30,000 Pentecostal churches and organizations in the country (www.nfbpc.org).

⁶ Congregations usually start as small groups that meet in private houses; when the size of the group is big enough, they build a church with cheap and perishable materials, such as wood, sheet metal, mud, or papyrus reeds; hence the name of *biwempe* (papyrus) to denote newly established churches in Kampala (Gusman 2018a).

⁷ Personal communication, December 2014. The Congolese Christian Community in Uganda was established in 2010.

⁸ Ugandan legislation on refugees is regulated by the so-called Refugee Bill (passed in 2006, but applied in 2009), which recognizes the right for refugees to live anywhere in the country, to move freely, and to work; yet, at the same time, it states that they cannot receive any assistance outside refugee settlements (Kreibaum 2016).

⁹ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/drc> (accessed August 13, 2019).

¹⁰ The UNHCR defines “protracted refugee situation” when the refugee stays for five years of more in the host country before being resettled.

¹¹ Pastor Schadrac restarted his studies in Kampala and obtained a master’s degree in theology.

¹² This is why The Shelter has several official languages—not only Swahili and French, as in most of the other Congolese churches in Kampala (most of them add Lingala as a vehicular language for the Congolese community), but also English, to be able to communicate with the English-speaking population. This is reflected in the Facebook page of the congregation and of Pastor Schadrac himself, who uses different languages in his posts according to the targets he is addressing.

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