

## RELIGION, MOBILITY AND BUSINESS: EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN FAITH, WORK AND ENTREPRENEURIALISM IN THE UK AND BEYOND

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019  
Arts 1 Lecture Theatre  
Queen Mary University London

### OVERVIEW:

This workshop marks the culmination of a British Academy/Leverhulme funded project on '*Religion, migration and entrepreneurship: The impact of transnational Pentecostalism in migrant entrepreneurship in the UK*'. It brings together scholars to explore key themes that have emerged throughout the project and to explore further the connections between religion, mobility, work and entrepreneurship from a range of epistemological and empirical perspectives. Whilst there is a burgeoning literature on ethnic minority entrepreneurship and growing acknowledgement of the importance of migrants' religious practices in shaping contemporary cities there is notable lack of work that explores the interconnections between the two. Moreover, work that explores the growing rapprochement between religious and secular practices and values in 'postsecular' contexts has thus far tended to focus on welfare provision and rights, with less focus on the ways in which faith shapes and is shaped by entrepreneurship and work practices. This workshop provides an opportunity for theoretical engagement with these connections, as well as drawing on a range of empirical examples from the Global North and Global South, from disciplinary perspectives spanning theology, sociology, geography, management studies, entrepreneurship and cultural studies. The aim is to create a space for dialogue and sharing ideas with the view to elaborating a research agenda that explores how values and faith networks shape everyday life, work and entrepreneurial practices.

This event is funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant '*Religion, migration and entrepreneurship: The impact of transnational Pentecostalism in migrant entrepreneurship in the UK*', SG160477

### How to register

Please register using this link <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/religion-mobility-and-business-exploring-the-connections-between-faith-work-and-entrepreneurialism-tickets-58894594317>

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## PROGRAMME

10.00-10.15	Coffee/tea and registration
10.15-10.30	WELCOME <i>Olivia Sheringham, Queen Mary University London &amp; Maria Villares-Varela, University of Southampton</i>
10.30-11.15	PLENARY LECTURE  'The Church, Citizenship and Society: What Pentecostals are Doing to Make the World a Better Place' <i>Andrew Davies, University of Birmingham</i>
11.15-12.15	PANEL 1: THEORIES AND PRACTICES OF RELIGION, WORK AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP  'Enterprising neoliberal subjectivities in post-secular societies: understanding a new ethic of transformative economic self-realization, <i>Scott Taylor, University of Birmingham</i>  'House of Faith Ltd.: Pentecostal entrepreneurialism in Kampala, Uganda' <i>William Monteith, School of Geography, Queen Mary University of London</i>
12.15-13.15	Lunch and coffee  Served in the foyer (Arts 1 building)
13.15-15.15	PANEL 2: MIGRATION, WORK AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: FROM THE TRANSNATIONAL TO THE EVERYDAY  'Ruminations about the cultural meanings of transnational religious circulation amongst the Jain diaspora' <i>Bindi Shah, University of Southampton</i>  'Migration, Enterprise and Society: Latest theoretical and empirical development from entrepreneurship scholars' <i>Natalia Vershinina, University of Birmingham</i>  'For protection and prosperity: spiritual practices, work and entrepreneurship among Vietnamese communities in London' <i>Annabelle Wilkins, University of Manchester</i>  'Faith, migration and business: the role of Pentecostalism in migrant entrepreneurial practices in London and Birmingham,' <i>Maria Villares-Varela, University of Southampton and Olivia Sheringham, Queen Mary University London</i>
15.15-15.30	Closing remarks and next steps, Olivia Sheringham and Maria Villares-Varela

## Abstracts

### **The Church, Citizenship and Society: What Pentecostals are Doing to Make the World a Better Place, Andrew Davies, University of Birmingham**

This exploration of the social engagement strategies of Pentecostal megachurches worldwide will first offer a working taxonomy and summary description of some of the more interesting kinds of social concern work they engage in, emphasising the different priorities and interests that distinguish such activities among different communities in the global North and South. Having demonstrated that such social engagement is both culturally contextual and perceived now as part of the everyday life and work of the church in most regions of the world (with perhaps one distinctive exception) the presentation will then consider the 'why' and the 'how' of such activities, reflecting upon the practical challenges the megachurches face and the management of the systems, structures and processes which manage their intervention, and concluding with consideration of the theological motivation which above all drives their engagement.

### **Enterprising neoliberal subjectivities in postsecular societies: Understanding a new ethic of transformative economic self-realization, Scott Taylor, University of Birmingham**

Religious belief and economic activity have been practised in complex, intersecting relationships throughout modern industrial life. This presentation examines contemporary entanglements of metaphysics and work by focusing on spiritualized personal development programmes around the world. The analysis is framed by the proposition that this formation of belief and work can be understood as a postsecular attempt to address modernist workplace discontents. Theoretically this challenges the sociological tendency to either reject or endorse faith-led interpretations of social and economic life (McLennan, 2007). As an alternative, I develop the suggestion that a 'polymorphous', or performative (Day, 2010) and pragmatic (McCutcheon, 1999), approach to analysing religion and spirituality in everyday social or economic life is more productive than previous sociological perspectives. I illustrate the argument presented here with reference to previously published methodological and empirical work (Bell & Taylor, 2014, 2016), and in particular by referring to contributions to a forthcoming collection, *Spiritualities, Organizations & Neoliberalism: Understanding Contemporary Subjectivities*, edited by Emma Bell (Open University, UK), Sorin Gog, Anca Simionca (both Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania), and Scott Taylor (University of Birmingham, UK). This book brings together theoretical and empirical accounts of subjectivities promoted within this form of the 'new spirit of capitalism', in Europe, North America, and Africa. Analysis is either sociological or anthropological, and provides insight into neoliberalism's presence in mainstream churches, yoga, mindfulness, healing, psychotherapy, ecological activism, and corporate training programmes.

### **Ruminations about the cultural meanings of transnational religious circulation amongst the Jain diaspora. Bindi Shah, University of Southampton**

Cross-border dynamics among migrants have received a great deal of scholarly attention, particularly in the migration literature. In this paper I draw on two concepts – 'groupness' (Brubaker 2004) and 'transnational optic' (Levitt 2007) to understand the cultural meanings of the transnational circulation of religious actors, ideas and practices amongst the Jain diaspora. I draw on two strands of my research on the Jain diaspora to illustrate how the concepts of 'groupness' and a 'transnational optic' encourage us to view religious and ethnic communities not as monolithic givens but as fluid, mutable and fragmented. One strand of my research highlights that despite a transnational circulation of Jain actors, ideas and practices between two national Jain organisations, local contexts still matter. The specificities of Jain migration histories, national incorporation regimes, and the place of religion in each society has led each organization to emphasize different aspects of the Jain tradition, and to play different roles in community formation among Jains in the

two countries. A second strand of my research examines transnational philanthropy by diasporic Jains to a Jain faith-based organization run by Jain nuns. My research finds that such philanthropy is motivated by shared religious norms, and this social practice enables lay Jains to be Jain in the diaspora. However, this way of being Jain is not the norm amongst all diasporic Jains, and such Jain diasporic philanthropy supports contested forms of Jain practice deemed appropriate for Jain ascetics.

**Migration, Enterprise and Society: Latest theoretical and empirical development from entrepreneurship scholars, Natalia Vershinina, University of Birmingham**

In a recently edited Special issue in IJEBR on Migration, Enterprise and Society, we showcase the latest academic articles that help us understand the challenges of migration on the global scale as well as everyday practices of migrants in new host societies with major shift toward entrepreneurship as employment option for these individuals. Entrepreneurial endeavors take place within specific social and cultural contexts (Bruton et al. 2010; Jennings et al. 2013; Welter and Smallbone 2006), and although research can tell a lot about the macro-level analysis and outcome from entrepreneurship for migrants in new host environment, there remains a paucity of works that engage with the 'everyday' nature of many manifestations of entrepreneurial practices. We know that entrepreneurs themselves and the entrepreneurial processes and practices are not taking place in political, cultural or societal vacuums. (Johannisson, 1988; Ansari et al. 2012; McKeever et al, 2014). Rather than simply accepting the traditional view of entrepreneurial activities involving the 'super-hero' stereotype of the entrepreneur (Burns, 2001), a growing strand of critical entrepreneurship (Anderson et al, 2010; De Clercq and Voronov, 2009) calls for the recognition of the everyday (Johannisson 2011) and mundane nature (Rehn and Taalas, 2004) of varied forms of entrepreneurship. Taking the UK as a contextual example, over the past decade, increasing numbers of 'new' migrants have arrived in the UK (Jones et al. 2014). This is explained by a rise in refugees and asylum seekers from war-torn countries (Edwards et al. 2016) and migration from the new EU member-states (Vershinina, et.al, 2011; Ciupijus, 2011; Drinkwater et al. 2009; Khattab and Fox. 2016; Barrett and Vershinina, 2016). Despite the growth of 'new' migrant communities in the UK, within an 'age of super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007, Ram, Jones and Villares, 2017), the authors who have submitted to our special issue aimed to ensure that such groups are represented in the in contemporary debates on self-employment and/or entrepreneurship (Edwards et al. 2016; Ram et al, 2008).

**Faith, migration and business: the role of Pentecostalism in migrant entrepreneurial practices in London and Birmingham, Maria Villares-Varela, University of Southampton and Olivia Sheringham, Queen Mary University London**

This paper analyses the role of Pentecostalism in migrant entrepreneurial practices. Whilst the link between religion and enterprise is at the core of foundational sociological essays – including Weber's discussion of the relation between religion and the emergence of capitalism - the connection between religious faith and business practices has remained, until recently, notably under-explored. A growing body of work is emerging which examines the connection of religiosity and workplace practices and enterprise. Elsewhere, and within a wider body of work examining the 'post-secular' landscape of many European cities, scholars have explored the role of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOS) in welfare provision, outlining the ways in which the boundaries between the work of faith-motivated and secular organisations are becoming increasingly blurred. Yet less attention has been paid to entrepreneurship, both in terms of churches themselves as entrepreneurial actors and generators of particular norms and values about entrepreneurship, and the wider entrepreneurial aspirations of believers. Our focus on Pentecostalism emerges from its importance amongst new Christian migrant communities in the UK and its emphasis on the promise

of prosperity, its success among the poor and its role in career aspirations. Drawing on qualitative interviews with Pentecostal migrants in London and Birmingham, in this paper we critically examine: i) the role of Pentecostal churches in supporting entrepreneurial activities among migrant communities; and ii) the ways in which Pentecostal beliefs and values influence the aspirations and practices of migrant entrepreneurs.

**For protection and prosperity: spiritual practices, work and entrepreneurship among Vietnamese communities in London, Annabelle Wilkins, University of Manchester**

This paper explores how members of the Vietnamese diaspora in London draw upon spiritual and religious practices as resources in work and business. Workers and entrepreneurs seek the guidance of religious figures, ancestors and various deities to manage the everyday challenges of work and to ensure success in their business or future career. The Vietnamese diaspora is diverse in terms of religious practice, including followers of Buddhism, Catholicism and ancestor veneration. The paper draws upon ethnography and in-depth interviews with participants who arrived as refugees in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and those who have migrated for work or education in recent years. The research is situated within broader changes in work that have taken place within Vietnamese communities in the UK. While newly arrived refugees initially worked in the clothing industry, its outsourcing led to new forms of entrepreneurship, including Vietnamese restaurants and nail salons, both of which are sites of connection between older and younger generations with diverse migration backgrounds. The paper demonstrates the multiple scales at which spiritual practices take place, including through the material culture of religion in the workplace, but also through transnationally connected prayers and other practices. Drawing upon concepts of lived religion and transnational spirituality in the home and city, I propose that religious and spiritual practices are crucial resources in work and entrepreneurship.

**House of Faith Ltd.: Pentecostal entrepreneurialism in Kampala, Uganda**

*William Monteith, School of Geography, Queen Mary University of London*

Urban marketplaces have long provided a context for witnessing how economic realities get 'done'. The regulation of such markets is a moral project insofar as it involves the invocation of a range of principles relating to the rules of exchange, which draw their power from local systems of culture and faith. In this paper, I examine the influence of Pentecostal Christianity on entrepreneurial life in Kampala, Uganda, through an analysis of the records of *House of Faith*, a moneylending business located in the central marketplace. I argue that although *House of Faith* exhibits many of the norms and values associated with neoliberal capitalism, these norms and values are situated within a religious landscape that places limits on what can be exchanged with who. These findings inform the burgeoning literature on entrepreneurialism in Africa by demonstrating the ways in which 'neoliberal' ideals often sit alongside alternative and contradictory principles derived from local religious practice.