9. Violent conversion: Conclusions and discussion

This study has investigated conversion to Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique. It appears that it is primarily upwardly mobile women who are converting and that their conversion is usually violent. The aim of the study was to understand this violent conversion. Analysis has shown that in a shifting, uncertain but challenging urban environment, like that found in the Mozambican capital Maputo, upwardly mobile women are seeking to direct and control their new socio-economic and cultural position. Uncertainties about possible new ways of life require critical cultural reflection by women, especially in the reproductive domain with regard to their dependence on kin and partners. Upwardly mobile women’s participation in Brazilian Pentecostalism demonstrates how they are conquering (conquistar) new ways of being and doing through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The South-South transnational dimension of Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique has turned out to be especially relevant for upwardly mobile women in their exploration of alternative lifestyles and their search for new socio-cultural options. The openness of Brazilian pastors on issues such as love, marriage and sexuality adds to the pastors’ spiritual and cross-cultural strengths. This is allowing them to cross sensitive cultural boundaries and is making them important and attractive healers and counsellors. In this respect, women’s local socio-cultural position as cultural mediators connects with the transnational Pentecostal transgression of boundaries. Both find and reinforce each other in their capacities to challenge and move frontiers in the national sphere, particularly regarding issues of family and gender. Since Pentecostals aim to initiate and produce social transformations, they are a pioneering force in the city (Maputo), the nation (Mozambique) and the world. Pentecostal pioneering behaviour demands that converts are constantly engaged in the spiritual war between God and the Devil. As Pentecostal soldiers, they use pioneering techniques to break, confront and destroy, intentionally inflicting harm on persons and things. The violent effects of these Pentecostal techniques can be observed in the hate and distrust that are emerging between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals and even amongst converts in the destruction of social security networks, and in the downward socio-economic mobility numerous converts experience.

*Chapters 1 and 2* argued that the literature predominantly shows that religious manifestations are a response to modernization, globalization and social transformations. As such, religious conversion is mainly understood as a strategy of coping, giving meaning and rebalancing to manage poverty, deprivation, illness, conflict, war, insecurity, uncertainty and neo-liberal capitalism. My analysis, however, shows that conversion is not best understood in terms of a coping mechanism. The ethnography presented in this study has revealed that converting to Pentecostalism often
implies increasing uncertainty and downward mobility, which comes with the pioneering spirit that is shaped in the interaction between South-South transnational Pentecostalism, a gendered urban domain and different generations of upwardly mobile women. I therefore argue in favour of understanding Brazilian Pentecostalism in Maputo as a practice of pioneering, but with violent dimensions.

The next section recapitulates the particular aspects explored in every chapter of this study, following the research questions presented in Section 1.4.3. Then I discuss the insights that my ethnography provides into the relationship between religion and social transformations. In doing so, I elaborate on the kind of society Pentecostal pioneering is creating, with special emphasis on the three central themes discussed in Chapter 2: family and gender; (in)security; and development.

9.1 Violent conversion

The central research question was: How and why has conversion to Brazilian Pentecostalism by upwardly mobile women in Mozambique become violent? In an attempt to answer this question, every chapter explored a particular aspect of Brazilian Pentecostalism as a practice of pioneering and its violent dimensions. In the first part of this study (Chapters 3, 4 and 5), Pentecostal pioneering was considered in relation to Mozambican urban society and history. Chapter 3, on the gendered nation-state formation in Maputo, provided some historical context about why upwardly mobile women are engaging in transnational Pentecostalism as a practice of pioneering, particularly in the field of family and gender. Family and gender have always been at the heart of social transformations in Mozambique under colonialism, socialism, the civil war and the current neo-liberal order, respectively. After such different historical periods with their challenging and contradictory socio-cultural developments, Mozambicans living in the capital today are uncertain about ‘the national culture’. This is reflected in the current gendered discussions about the future of the Mozambican nation-state. How should a Mozambican man or woman behave? How should marriage and a family work? A growing number of upwardly mobile women (and some men) are challenging what they consider to be a traditional gendered representation of the national culture by the government, relatives and fellow citizens. They are shaking the foundations of what it means to be Mozambican, or even African (cf. Mbembe 2006; Yuval-Davis & Stoetzler 2002). Since the control of women’s sexuality and fertility through lobolo always used to secure the reproduction of Mozambican society, the new positions that urban women are currently taking appear to be making these questions more pertinent.

Chapter 3 also argued that the position of women in Maputo, compared to men, has been marginal since its colonial development. The role of women was
principally restricted to activities within the family and they were excluded from the formal spheres of politics and work, even though they contributed to the colonial economy with their agricultural activities and informal work. While women were increasingly encouraged to enrol in schools, formal jobs and institutions of governance, such as the Mozambican Women’s Organization, under the post-colonial Frelimo government, the simultaneous emphasis on their role as mothers and wives in the ‘socialist family’ resulted in contradictions and restrictions. Consequently, women remained dependent on their families and husbands and had limited political power, although the civil war between Renamo and Frelimo forces, the economic crisis and the subsequent neo-liberal reforms changed their situation considerably as a growing group of urban women were forced to earn a living. Due to the war, women from the rural areas fled to the cities and the number of female-headed households increased. Over the past few years, more women have been able to enrol in schools and universities and to start professional careers. These developments have made urban women more independent financially and less dependent on their kin and husbands: they now drive cars, are starting businesses and criticizing kinship structures. They are crossing historically shaped boundaries of gender in the city, which is making them pioneers in their conquest of former male spaces.

In their pioneering activities, women are also connecting to and exploring Brazilian Pentecostalism. Chapter 4 analyzed how the South-South transnational links of Pentecostalism in Mozambique are influencing the practice of pioneering. The South-South transnational dimension of the Pentecostal space appears to be contributing significantly to providing routes and techniques to transcend and break open the limitations of national boundaries, such as national institutions of the family and kinship structures, and the socio-cultural policies of the government and the older churches. In the South-South transnational Pentecostal domain, businesses can now be set up, ideal husbands can be found and complicated relations with kin can be erased as a result of the new space that Brazilian pastors can offer because they have already moved away from their past life, their families and Afro-Brazilian religions. The South-South relations of Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique are contributing to a critical cultural awareness and a destabilization of cultural continuity by making people to a certain extent an ‘outsider’, instead of being an ‘insider’ within their own society. In this way, Pentecostal women are creating mobility in various domains of their lives, particularly in the important reproductive sphere. Through their participation in South-South transnational Pentecostalism, they are gaining access to the power of the Holy Spirit that helps them to conquer (conquistar) new modes of being and doing with regard to sexuality, marriage, marital relations, kinship and love.

Throughout my research it emerged that converts were involved differently in the transnational Pentecostal spiritual war and thus experienced the violence of conversion in a variety of ways. Chapter 5 addressed how these differences coincided
with generational differences. Women’s different relationships with the history of social transformation (as sketched in Chapter 3) are influencing their exploration of South-South transnational Pentecostalism. On the one hand, the degree of rupture converts invest in and experience is related to their age, and thus to the historical periods in which their lives were set. In general, older women were less integrated in the neoliberal economic order. Through their interaction with Pentecostal pastors on business courses, they received ruthless training in what laissez faire policies can entail, such as Dona Silmara (cf. Chapter 8). The younger generation tends to be more acquainted with the liberal era and they frequently considered the pastors as persons with whom they were ‘doing business’ (Section 9.4). On the other hand, differences among converts are also related to their personal capacities to incorporate the Pentecostal faith, which was elaborated on in relation to the Pentecostal concept of ‘intelligent faith’. By this, Pentecostals mean that it is not sufficient to participate in church services and exorcize demons but that it is also necessary to inhabit all the elements of faith, such as trust and rationality. Depending on how fast one succeeds becoming a well trained Pentecostal believer by following correntes (a chain of services or therapies) and interacting with pastors, a new life is going to emerge. Chapter 7 demonstrated how Elena learned to master intelligent faith while others failed to do so or needed more time.

The second part of this study (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) examined how conversion becomes violent in interactions between South-South transnational Pentecostal discourses, practices, pastors and converts. Three cases were analyzed that correspond with the three central Pentecostal techniques of violence and their subsequent effects: breaking, confronting and destroying. Chapter 6 demonstrated how Pentecostal women are breaking with the so-called spirit spouse, a spirit of vengeance that is related to wars and/or witchcraft practices and receives a virgin girl (and in some cases also a boy) as a gift for reconciliation. I have argued that the current high number of spiritual spouses that forcefully penetrate and ‘eat’ female bodies demonstrates the crisis in gender roles, as witnessed by difficulties in relations between kin, between partners and between people and spirits in the reproductive order in Mozambican society. Upwardly mobile women are frequenting Pentecostal churches to get rid of this spirit of war and witchcraft, and of kin who force them to be married to such a spirit. This ‘marriage’ makes it impossible for them to marry a man of flesh and bones. Pentecostal women are learning to close off their bodies to spiritual intruders and demanding kin by becoming filled with the Holy Spirit. Yet the way in which the Holy Spirit comes to act on Pentecostal women’s bodies in the framework of South-South transnational Pentecostalism is equally violent and is causing afflictions. Converts enter a violent spiritual war by dressing in spiritual armour to combat spirits, kin and partners. As a result, converts posit themselves outside local social-security networks, have sleepless nights of prayer, and experience increased tensions in their relationships. They become
part of the frontier where the battle is being fought and incorporate the conflicts in society and between them, kin and partners, finally coming to stand alone.

Converts must also be able to scrutinize whether all the necessary ways of being a soldier of God have taken root in their whole body. Converts need to be attentive and ready soldiers, continuously dressed in their spiritual armour. They are thus always in a war situation and need a strong and determined attitude. Signs of the Holy Spirit’s presence in their bodies are not limited to the creation of a happy marriage and the wish to become successful, but also encompass an entire manner of being and acting. Believers may need years of training and have to actively participate in parallel cycles of church services (*correntes*) and in campaigns that demand sacrifices, such as fasting, the payment of large sums of money and nightly vigils. The *terapia do amor*, examined in Chapter 7, is one such example. Converts can enjoy romance, fidelity and happiness in their affective relations by learning to incorporate the confrontational Brazilian Pentecostal bodily forms, such as practices of kissing and embracing in public. The creation of specific new bodily modes during the therapy elicits feelings for potential partners and effectuates marriages. Yet the desire to find a partner and get married may result in premature bonds where misunderstanding and hate develop rather than love. For example, partners may have become demonized when a relationship did not work. Nevertheless, resistance and loneliness are logically part and parcel of fighting an enemy and moving frontiers. And converts and pastors illustrate this with biblical examples such as Abraham and Jacob.

The destructive and aggressive character of Pentecostal conversion is particularly noticeable in Chapter 8, where the financial campaigns and the huge offerings involved in Brazilian Pentecostalism were examined. On the one hand, the act of sacrificing thousands of dollars in church shows the need to destroy ‘Mozambican culture’ once and for all. For example, coffins are buried in or near the Universal Churches and a year’s salary is offered in church, practices that go against and damage local exchange relations. On the other hand, participation in financial campaigns offers the possibility of realizing a new life in the current neo-liberal urban society. Female converts feel attracted by the fact that Pentecostal pastors do not offer help but instead push them to help themselves. This is an attitude upwardly mobile women aspire to and through which they can learn and demonstrate their capacities to pioneer. Sacrificing, fighting and struggling are manifestations of these women’s participation in the urban domain and economic activities. Depending on their experiences with a neo-liberal urban society and their personal capacities, Pentecostal women deal differently with the violence involved in financial sacrifices. Some have lost everything they had, while others have learned to distance themselves from their pastors and judge for themselves how much they are prepared to invest in a new life.
9.2 Pentecostalism, family and gender

The violent character of conversion has implications for our understanding of the link between religion and social transformations. The remaining part of this concluding chapter elaborates on these implications, starting with the field of family and gender. The relationship between society, family and gender is central to Mozambican upwardly mobile women’s involvement in Brazilian Pentecostalism. Leading studies on gender and Pentecostalism in Latin America have argued that tensions in the household decrease after conversion (Section 2.2). Such cases are also known in Mozambique (Arthur & Mejia 2006: 68-72). However, in addition to the fact that changes in attitudes may be temporary (Ibid.: 74-77), in my view it is the violence of conversion – illustrated by increasing tensions in the household – that is emerging as the most characteristic feature of Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique with regard to the family and gender.

One important explanation for this distinctive feature and its impact on family and marriage in Mozambique could be the appropriation of the South-South transnational factor of conquest. It can be concluded that Brazilian pastors’ close but yet distant position to Mozambicans and Mozambican culture (Section 4.4; cf. van de Kamp & van Dijk 2010) boosts the spiritual war that Pentecostalism generally propagates. The results of this study suggest that the Pentecostal emphasis on breaking with ‘evil’ local cultures and investing in the spiritual war is enhanced by the South-South transnational process as converts start to feel they are strangers in their own society. In addition, the degree to which converts embody the transnational socio-cultural distance appears to be correlated with upwardly mobile women’s willingness and ability to explore, occupy and create life domains. To gain more insight into the realities Mozambican believers shape, I looked into how women embody the transnational Pentecostal formats in their daily life. The sensory modes shaped in South-South Pentecostalism make converts increasingly sensitive to the spiritual war and also indifferent to other (religious) socio-cultural practices and the experiences of their kin and partners (cf. van Dijk 2009b; Verrips 2006). Mozambican Pentecostal women lose touch with the reality of their partners and kin, which creates tensions between them.

Studying the ways in which religion materializes in the field of gender and family thus requires moving beyond the search for how people establish stable new identities and relations. Once it is seriously acknowledged that Pentecostalism is playing an important role in the creation of new domains of social interaction, such as in the household, we equally have to take into account the fact that conflicts emerge at the frontiers of these life domains. As Pentecostal women are breaking with established conventions and pushing out all sorts of boundaries, they are also encountering opposition. In this respect, it is interesting to reflect on the relationship between a Pentecostal ethic and the spirit of feminism in a pioneer society. Erikson (1965: 283-
described American Protestant pioneer women who lived in a society of dynamic polarities because of the dominant fact of the frontier:

The American woman in frontier communities was the object of intense rivalries on the part of tough and often desperate men. At the same time, she had to become the cultural censor, the religious conscience, the aesthetic arbiter, and the teacher. … They [the children of the woman, LvdK] must be prepared for any number of extreme opposites in milieu, and always ready to seek new goals and to fight for them in merciless competition. For, after all, worse then a sinner was a sucker.

In this reality, an Anglo-Saxon Puritan ethic of the self-made and self-conscious personality was the most pervasive element of the women's role in the shaping of the American melting pot (Ibid.: 286). Despite the obvious differences between American frontier society and Maputo, as well as between the Anglo-Saxon Puritan ethic and the Brazilian Pentecostal ethic, the position of women on the periphery of different cultures shows some remarkable parallels. Pioneer women have to learn new standards of conduct because the aspects of mobility in their lives lead to a (partial) departure of former cultural habits and the need to form new ones. In their efforts to develop a self-made personality, the particular Protestant ethic of self-sacrificing and self-consciousness becomes more rigid (Erikson 1965: 286; cf. Meijers 1991). In the South-South transnational Pentecostal setting in Mozambique, women have to demonstrate their independent self-made personality, that of a woman capable of organizing a happy nuclear family and a successful professional career.

This raises questions about whether Brazilian Pentecostalism, through its impact on upwardly mobile women, will have lasting impact on Mozambican urban society. In my view, the answer depends to large extent on the (future) role of men in Pentecostalism, or their comparative absence. In the American case described above, Protestant women often seemed to have Protestant husbands (Erikson 1965: 279ff; cf. Meijers 1991: 62-64), which, although perhaps minimally, provided a sense of a collaborative project among both men and women, and husbands and wives. So far, Pentecostal conversions in Maputo appear to have contributed to a growing divide between male and female spaces and between men and women. Pentecostal women are having to conquer male spaces and this is predominantly taking place without the conversion and integration of men. Men are not converting to Pentecostalism easily or in large numbers. Pentecostal pastors are directing their sermons and activities at women and are barely addressing men at all where gender issues are involved, leaving the transformation of male spaces to women. In one of the Assemblies of God churches, efforts are being made to also integrate men in the conversion of gender roles, which seems to have enhanced cooperation between the sexes (Section 7.4). But often men become demonized amongst Pentecostal women and only in a few cases are they seen...
as fellow soldiers. This division is leading to violent conflicts between men and women. If the Pentecostalization of gender issues is principally producing conflict, how long can this war continue, especially if one takes into account the fact that the government is in the process of a re-masculinization of Mozambican society (Paraskeva 2009)? In my view, it is the role of Pentecostalism in these spaces of confrontation that will have an impact on future gender divisions in the city as well as on the extent of the feminizing influence of Pentecostalism more generally. If the conversion of male spaces does not manage to integrate more men in the conversion project but instead creates violence, it is questionable whether Pentecostalism will play an important role in the feminization of society at large and in establishing workable gender roles. In this case, people, and primarily converts, will become tired of the violence, as convert Julia showed by leaving the Pentecostal church (Chapter 6).

9.3 Pentecostalism and (in)security

The violent character of conversion affects issues of security and insecurity, which is the second theme raised in Chapter 2 of this study. As argued before, the dominant sociological view on religion, including Pentecostalism, is framed in terms of coping mechanisms that are thought to offer security and cultural continuity in a context of change. My analysis, however, suggests that this approach seems to be ill-suited to offering a satisfactory explanation for the spectacular rise of Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique, where conversion means people entering or increasing the insecurity and uncertainty of their position.

The violence of conversion and its generational and personal variety raise questions about the elective affinity between levels of (in)security in a society and violent conversion. It is interesting to note that an examination of Pentecostalism in comparable urban societies, such as in Caracas (Sánchez 2008) and Durban (van Wyk 2008), led to similar observations about the aggressive activities of Pentecostals. These scholars’ analyses confirm my suggestion that people who appear to be connecting most to the pioneering techniques of Pentecostalism are those who are trying to benefit from the unclear, uncertain and open spaces in their society, be they spiritual or physical, that are being claimed by competing politics, economies, spirits and cultures. These Pentecostal techniques seem to have a greater impact in environments with a strong survival-of-the-fittest mentality. And Pentecostal practices are even gaining new dimensions in such places. Depending on the risks converts are prepared to take and how experienced they are in doing so, pastors can thus increase the (literal) price of the sacrifices they demand from their members. It is emerging that the level of people’s encounters with insecurity as much as their ability to incorporate a pioneering mentality are influencing the degree of violence created and experienced in the process of
conversion. This can also be illustrated by the pragmatic way in which various converts deal with their relationship with pastors and their churches. As the church is not a social institution and trust is not being cultivated, people can easily leave and join a new (Pentecostal) church (cf. van Wyk 2008). The church itself is part and parcel of an insecure society and converts react to this and behave accordingly. The risks they take are related to a particular type of society. Macamo (2005c) has noted that for many African societies, such as those in Lusophone Africa, agents’ risk behaviour is embedded in a history of vulnerability and violence, and particular circumstances of social transformation. In a comparative framework, it might be interesting to discern whether the extent to which conversion turns into risk behaviour and causes (dis)continuity and (in)security (Engelke 2010) could be related to more general experiences of insecurity and rupture in a society now and in the past, and the pioneering possibilities people have. Considering the history of Mozambique, the discontinuity of conversion might be seen in continuity with a history of insecurity and rupture in which violence becomes a social condition that both disorders and reorders social reproduction (Lubkemann 2008).

Another factor to consider is the tension between certainty and uncertainty that is produced in the conversion process itself. Pentecostals have to demonstrate faith and this means that they have to show that they are secure in this faith. Yet pressure can be counterproductive, leading to ambiguity and violence. In the terapia do amor, converts are certain about the partner appointed to them by the Holy Spirit, even before a loving relationship has had time to emerge. Unfortunately, some marriages have led to not-so-loving relationships. By promising a pastor that they will give away all their savings, converts want to prove their commitment although they cannot always foresee the effects such promises will have. In his article on religious transformation and uncertainty, Engelke (2005: 785) says that, based on the work of Crapanzano, ‘the religious subject can act with certainty and still not understand what that certainty entails’ (cf. Nieswand 2010). The act of certainty is uncertain in itself and, as I have shown in this study, potentially violent. Converts know they are still prone to the Devil and can make mistakes. In this sense, they can never be totally secure about the positive outcome of their behaviour even though they have converted, since they may become less vigilant and fail in their faith.

What do the above insights say about the role of religion in a world in which globalizing forces seem to be generating increasing insecurities and a new collective risk consciousness (cf. Beck et al. 1994)? There are scholars who believe that people are finding the processes of globalization uncontrollable, especially in so-called developing countries, and that religious movements serve to construct ‘defensive identities that function as refuge and solidarity, to protect against a hostile outside world’ (Castells 1997: 65). Yet besides the fact that at least for upwardly mobile Mozambicans globalization is not necessarily a danger, Pentecostal women in Maputo
are illustrative of the understanding that the possible uncertainties globalization is producing are also a chance to create new life worlds. The South-South transnational space, like Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique, is even encouraging these women to produce a Pentecostal process of globalization by transcending the familiar. Upwardly mobile converts are displaying how their decisions and actions include being prepared to step out of well-trodden routines and show a willingness to destabilize the social order (cf. Eriksen et al. 2010). Crossing boundaries is not being experienced as disconcerting or uprooting, and religion is becoming important precisely in the way it is destabilizing the notion of socio-culturally and nationally unified terrains (van de Kamp & van Dijk 2010). At the same time, the efforts of transcending boundaries and transforming imply that conversion harbours embodied tensions between security and insecurity. Some converts acknowledged these tensions more openly than others and reflected on their calculations of risk, like the extent to which they would take a confrontational position towards kin and partners. Follow-up research might concentrate further on the self-reflexivity of converts on issues of risk and uncertainty, like in the case of incorporating the ‘intelligent faith’ mode.

9.4 Pentecostalism and development

The violent character of conversion raises some final questions about the kind of development transnational Pentecostalism is bringing about in Mozambique. Firstly, there is the issue of how Pentecostalism relates to existing development models and then, secondly, what Pentecostal development is like. In relation to existing development models, converts are fervently criticizing local frameworks of development. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 analyzed the ways in which converts prefer to detach themselves from local ideas of development that have been reintroduced in the policies of the Mozambican government and numerous NGOs. Converts are disconnecting from local healing rituals, marriage arrangements and exchange relations. Of particular importance here is the Pentecostal preoccupation with raising awareness of the spiritual forces that are behind developmental processes based on ‘Mozambican traditions’. In general, people are worried about the role of spirits in post-war reconstruction activities and the implementation of neo-liberal economic programmes. They are afraid of the negative consequences of vengeful spirits as a result of the war and ‘sorcerers’ searching for wealth (Chapter 6). The particular spiritual framework of Brazilian Pentecostals, which demonizes all spirits, offers a space to address such concerns by using a confrontational mode. The secrecy that still surrounds the public presence of spirits due to a history in which they were negated is being opened up by the Brazilian transnational power of the Holy Spirit that is eliminating ‘traditional’ spiritual forces. This Pentecostal attitude is impacting on the processes of finding a national identity.
Pentecostals want a Mozambican identity free of traditional influences and, in an attempt to destroy the past, they are burying ‘tradition’ in coffins and sacrificing vast sums of money (Chapter 8). Their fellow citizens have understood this and are, in turn, trying to counter this Pentecostal process of forgetting the past and negating the shared responsibility of social and spiritual security.

Converts want to free themselves of the burden of local forms of security and development that are built on kinship relations. The risks that they consequently take are often not in tune with the strategies and interests of other members in their household who may be frequenting other churches and healers. The fact that persons in the same home are seeking out different spiritual powers demonstrates the problems surrounding wealth sharing in Maputo, where growing inequalities between richer and poorer relatives and distrust between kin and partners are ever present. These tensions frequently have gendered dimensions and are increasing because of the contradicting religious routes each is following and subsequent accusations of witchcraft from both sides. In the field of conflicting views and trajectories of development, the overtly critical views and, at times, aggressive actions by Pentecostals are leading to an explosion of tensions, as in the case of the stoning of a Universal Church building (Chapter 8).

Pentecostals are also critical of international donors’ efforts to ‘discipline Mozambique through Structural Adjustment’ (Macamo 2005b) and related development aid programmes. According to Pentecostals, these SAPs have created a mentality of holding up one’s hands, while pastors and converts agree that people have to help themselves and be responsible for their own actions. It is here that Pentecostalism seems to be encouraging a form of socio-economic development that could be useful in a market economy (Berger undated, 2009; CDE 2008). People have to learn to plan their lives, be independent, take initiatives and run risks. Yet it is important to realize that Pentecostal leaders are predominantly seizing the opportunities neo-liberalism offers rather than helping converts to gain the type of skills that they need in a (new) capitalist order. The leadership of the churches is paying a high price for air time on television and is pressing people to offer all their savings to help the Pentecostal movement win new converts and open new buildings. Pentecostal practices are not a reaction to neo-liberalism but are enmeshed in it (Comaroff 2009; Meyer 2007) as these churches are, in many ways, operating as enterprises. Additionally, Pentecostals seem to be working to expand the boundaries of the present neo-liberal reality. Converts and pastors are seizing the opportunities they see in the new neo-liberal market where there is little control by outsiders, and are, for example, pushing the limits on the amount of money they demand converts sacrifice.

A particular transnational Pentecostal development model is being demonstrated, based on what van Dijk (2010a) terms ‘social catapulting’ to describe a process that is contrary to the idea of social capital, whereby believers capitalize on the
support that religious groups offer. Pentecostal leaders are pressurizing converts to engage in opportunities and challenges with a minimum of support. Employing Max Weber’s general argument that the market can be shaped by religiously inspired ethical codes of production in an environment of competition like Maputo, the Pentecostal ethic encourages believers to take a pro-active attitude towards business and ensuring a prosperous life. The Pentecostal development model that upwardly mobile women are adopting involves opening up fresh spaces and navigating new cultural and economic domains, even if this means going beyond what seems feasible, to realize heaven on earth. Here, violent conversion serves to create a prosperous life.

In summary, conversion to Brazilian Pentecostalism by upwardly mobile women in Mozambique is violent because it involves forcefully pushing change as they pioneer new spiritual, cultural, political and socio-economic terrains. The South-South transnational Pentecostal spiritual war and its techniques of breaking, confronting and destroying are processes of social transformation that are encouraging the stretching of societal frontiers. It is at the borders of these frontiers that conflicts are emerging as different groups, customs, values and policies clash. However, it is precisely at the frontier that boundaries become more permeable and social change could develop. Women engaged in Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique are demonstrating how much religion can influence and shape social transformations.