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Transformation in and through charismatic worship

In Nairobi Kenya, a young generation gather in Mavuno church to worship God with songs, music and dance. From stage they are challenged to surrender themselves and their lives to God, while worshipping Him with their bodies. After half an hour or so the music team leaves stage and it is time for the two hosts to create an atmosphere of fun and togetherness before the sermon starts. Every Sunday they highlight the Mavuno slogan: 'Turning ordinary people into fearless influencers of society'. And almost every Sunday they invite someone to speak about how worshipping in Mavuno has transformed their lives in one way or another. Sometimes instantly, but more often through taking part in small-groups, discipleship programs and church services. The testimonies given every Sunday serves as models for people to search for transformation and narrate the story of their own life. However, unlike typical conversion-stories in other charismatic churches, they are also stories of social and cultural change. Stories of how individual transformation aims at and results in social transformation.

This paper dives deep into ethnographic data to give an example of how an urban, middle-class church in contemporary Africa understands transformation, and discusses that example theoretically and theologically.