

Curating Spaces of Hope: Coproducing Shared Values in Uncertain Times

Matthew Barber-Rowell
Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, UK

This paper sets out a new paradigm of faith based organisation (FBO) called Curating Spaces of Hope. The paper sets out the paradigm and the interdisciplinary literatures into which the paradigm is applied namely, the diversifying belief landscape in the UK, the postsecular, the redefinition of FBOs, and liminality as the new norm in policy. The paper then turns to ethnographic research to evidence the ability of the paradigm to map and coproduce shared values, before considering applications of Curating Spaces of Hope in post-pandemic contexts in the north west of England through case studies with ecumenical Christian, non-religious, and Turkish Muslim and interfaith contexts.

Keywords: shared values, coproduction, postsecular, faith based organisations, spaces of hope

Introduction

In this paper, I set out a new paradigm for coproducing shared values in uncertain times. The rationale for this is the increasing diversity of religious positions in the public sphere, has left us without an adequate means of mapping this landscape and therefore understanding the values that different beliefs, values and worldviews produce. They have become less static, since the turn of the 21st century, in what Clarke and Woodhead (2018) described as ‘the single biggest change in the religious and cultural landscape of Britain for centuries, even millennia’. In order to address this problem, I will first engage with interdisciplinary literatures, where I will set out the diversifying belief landscape in the UK characterised by the ‘rise of the nones’ (Woodhead, 2016; 2017). I will use the faith based organisations (FBOs) literature to show that the ‘F’ (faith) of FBOs has become homogenised, and as such a new means of mapping different beliefs values and worldviews is needed. I will argue this point using the turn to the postsecular (Habermas, 2005; 2008a; 2008b) and what this means for mapping difference in the public sphere. And I will turn to social policy literatures which explore ‘liminality as the new norm’ as a characterisation for a prevailing context of uncertainty. Following this review of the literatures, I will turn the new paradigm that underpins my argument, the Curating Spaces of Hope paradigm, which I will use to set out the means of mapping values characterised in terms of emergence, context, foundation and formation. Finally I will turn to applications of Curating Spaces of Hope in the north west of England, as a means of evidencing the potential for coproducing shared values in uncertain times.

Matthew Barber-Rowell, PhD in Theology and Religious Studies from Goldsmiths, University of London. Honorary Postdoctoral Fellow, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, UK. Research Fellow, William Temple Foundation, UK. Fellow, Royal Society of Arts, UK.

The Diversifying Belief Landscape in the UK

Clarke and Woodhead (2018) have said that we are experiencing ‘the single biggest change in the religious and cultural landscape of Britain for centuries, even millennia’. This is a substantial claim. So what is meant by it? To make sense of this I will look at the ‘spiritual turn’ (Houtman & Aupers, 2007) and the more recent ‘rise of the nones’ (Putnam & Campbell, 2010; Woodhead, 2016; 2017), highlighting the diversifying landscape and the context for which a new means of coproducing values should respond.

The ‘spiritual turn’ in the UK emerged during the 20th century (Houtman & Aupers, 2007). It was a response to the confluence of unwavering secularisation and religious deinstitutionalisation, coupled with spiritual moves as counterculture in the 1960s developing into New Age thinking in the 1980s (Houtman & Aupers, 2007, pp. 305-306). Spirituality has been described as Do it Yourself Religion (Baerveldt, 1996), Pick and Mix Religion (Hamilton, 2000), or a Spiritual Supermarket (Lyon, 2000) and even ‘eclectic if not kleptomaniac process ... with no clear reference to an external or deeper reality’ (Possamai, 2003, p. 32). The spiritual turn is a move to a more subjective view of the world, away from paternalism and reliance and submission to institutions and hierarchies, and a move towards individual agency and capacity to decide for oneself. Aupers and Houtman (2003) argued that this movement is enabling choice and curtailing a monopoly on wisdom. Where once Christendom defined our Western context, increasing deinstitutionalisation, modernisation and increasing spirituality brought this to a halt.

Sociologists have disagreed about the significance of this shift. Bruce (2002) has seen the reducing salience of religious perspectives and ‘do it yourself religion’ as confirmation of a secularising public sphere (p. 105). Berger (1999) drew different conclusions, and stated that the secularisation thesis, a body of work he made substantial contributions to, was ‘essentially mistaken’ (p. 2) as he saw this deepening spiritual subjectivity as a consequence of modernity acting to undermine the close association between modernity and secularisation. Houtman and Aupers (2007) suggested Post-Christendom Spirituality represents ‘gnosis’, or an epistemological third way, defined by ‘the self [as] divine and by the immanent conception of the sacred that goes along with it’ (p. 308). This points to the subjective sense of self (Giddens, 1998), and the pursuit of authenticity (Giddens, 2008) within a more fluid and emergent landscape. Heelas and Woodhead (2005) proposed that this spiritual subjectivity was a driver for cultural change away from paternalistic and hierarchical forms of religious prescription; a shift that we are now seeing. Heelas and Woodhead (2005) conducted The Kendal Project, where spiritual practices aimed at improving psychological wellbeing have grown in contrast to institutionally religious adherence in the service of and to an external God. This latter perspective has halved relative to the population since the 1960s. The experience uncovered by this research is representative of new forms of spiritual fluidity analysed in sites such as Kendal and Glastonbury in the UK (Partridge, 2006), at festivals and online (Baker & Dinham, 2017, p. 10).

To make further sense of this shift, I will consider the rise of the ‘religious nones’. This group is characterised by their rejection of some aspects of institutional religion whilst often retaining a strong interest in spiritual categories. Religious nones were initially identified in the United States and presented in *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). Religious nones in the UK do not fit neatly into one demographic. Different genders, ethnicities and races are as likely as each other, however, there are some distinguishing markers (Woodhead, 2017). The ‘rise of the nones’ in the UK coincided with a reduction in numbers affiliating with Christian identity. Between 2001-2011 YouGov polling indicated those

identifying as Christian declined (70% to 59%), with non-affiliates increasing (14.8% to 25.1%) over the same period (Graham, 2013, p. 6). For 2011, British Social Attitudes Survey figures indicate 46% identifying as ‘no religion’. Woodhead (2017) sought to make sense of this phenomenon in a UK context. In 2013, 41% of people identified as a ‘none’. In 2015, this figure was 50%. These statistics told a story contextualised by the British Social Attitudes Survey, which had been asking about religion since 1983 (2017, p. 249). In 2019 it placed nones in the UK at 53% (British Social Attitudes Survey, 2019). There is a ‘stickiness’ to no religion i.e., once you are a ‘none’ you are likely to remain a ‘none’ and identity as a none is likely to pass from one generation of a family to another (Woodhead, 2017, p. 250). This is contrasted with those who identify as Christian, where the chance of them becoming a none is 45% and with regards to young people who have nones as parents, there is a 95% chance that they will remain nones too (Woodhead, 2017, pp. 251-252). The increasing population of ‘nones’ in the UK is coupled with an increasing number of identities being acknowledged within non-affiliation too.

The relevance of the long view in this trend was highlighted by the 2021 Census for England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2022). The census surveyed religious affiliation and sets out a more nuanced shift in the landscape relative to the British Social Attitudes Survey Data, in that the nones no longer comprise more than 50% of the population. 94% (56 million people) of eligible residents answered (up from 92.9% or 52.1 million in 2011). There was a drop in those identifying as Christian (46.2% down from 59.3% in 2011). 37.2% of the population identify as non-religious (up from 25.2% in 2011). There was also an increase in those identifying as Muslim (6.5% up from 4.9% in 2011). Hindu affiliation rose from 1.5% in 2011, to 1.7% in 2021. Sikh affiliation rose from 0.8% in 2011 to 0.9% in 2021. Buddhist affiliation rose from 0.4% in 2011 to 0.5% in 2021. Jewish affiliation remained the same at 0.5% however within this there was a numerical rise of 6,000 from 265,000 to 271,000. These data show that the landscape that was once taken for granted as majority Christian, is no longer so. The big indicator of this is the ‘rise of the nones’, which accounts for a 12% increase in those not affiliated with a religion. Context is given to the rise of the nones by studies such as the ‘Understanding Unbelief’ project (Lee, 2016). The study highlights that ‘nonreligious’ cannot be seen as anomalous or ‘a vague or marginal population, but a large, often committed and heterogeneous one that should certainly be accounted for alongside religious ones’ (Lee, 2016).

What’s the ‘F’?

To make sense of how the diversifying belief landscape is accounted for, I turn now to the FBO literatures. FBOs are “organisation [embodying] some form of religious belief in the mission statements of staff and volunteers” (Beaumont & Cloke, 2012b, p. 10). FBOs are providers, protesters and everything in-between, making a contribution to voluntary activity and public service. This is well documented in the US (Beaumont, 2004; 2008a; 2008b) and in European contexts (Beaumont & Cloke, 2012a; 2012b). There are multiple different typologies for FBOs. Cnaan, Wineburg, and Boddie (1999) identified FBOs by scale; ranging from local congregation to religiously affiliated international organisations. Smith (2002) identified faith related groups by the role of belief; ranging from faith saturated groups through to completely secular groups. Smith (2002) offered a clearer understanding of how the ‘F’ of FBOs is understood. Herman, Beaumont, Cloke, and Walliser (2012) provided suggested styles of FBO, recognising that spaces are created by these styles by the nature of the engagement within them. This introduces the idea or variable of spatial analysis. These are spaces

of community, sanctuary, faith, care, learning, market interaction and so on (Herman et al., 2012, pp. 63-65). Beaumont and Cloke (2012b, p. 13) identified that FBOs possess a 'heterogeneous mix of theology, organisational structure and practical aims' but also noted that the context reveals new details about the FBO and the things they do. Whilst these typologies are welcome, they also point to FBOs as possessing multiple differences, with this variety of meaning leading to FBOs 'defy[ing] straight forward definition' (Beaumont & Cloke, 2012b, p. 11). This point is reinforced by Johnsen (2014) who highlighted the central problem with current understandings of FBOs with regards to social policy. It is not clear what the 'F' in FBO really stands for. Without a clear understanding of the difference that the 'F' i.e., faith, makes, it becomes increasingly difficult to examine FBOs and the role that faith plays in them. Johnsen (2014) found that it is both increasingly difficult to discern between FBOs and secular equivalents, which is encouraging an uncritical homogenisation of worldviews, whilst different characteristics are there to be discerned. In this way, Johnsen argues that different sources of motivation i.e. the different understandings of the 'F', should not be ignored.

Embracing Differences

In the context of the diversifying belief landscape and the need for greater attention to difference within the FBO literatures, in now turn to the postsecular. Habermas (2005; 2008a; 2008b) argued that this is not the decline of either the importance of religion or the secular in 21st-century Britain, but the coexistence of both in often unexpected, open and creative ways within an increasingly pluralistic society (Habermas, 2005). It must be noted that the postsecular is a contested idea. Parmaksiz (2018) noted, 'the concept cannot be much more than an eloquent way to disguise a sophisticated religious revivalism' (pp. 98-116). Beckford (2012) argued the postsecular, whilst talked about widely, does not possess any meaningful definition or application at all, noting six separate definitions (pp. 2-13). Others argue it simply describes swaths of history, which are recognised in other areas of the literature, or simply ignores existing literatures regarding the role of religion in the public sphere [see Kong (2010), Ley (2011), Wilford (2010) and Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, & Van Antwerpen (2011)]. With this in mind, I want to be more specific in terms of the framing of the postsecular. Olson, Hopkins, Pain, and Vincent (2013) helped here by pointing to an interplay or coproduction informed by the religious and secular in a specific location:

Postsecular theory is concerned with understanding the coproduction of the religious and the secular in modern societies and the discourses, practices, and moral and political projects associated with this coproduction. Whereas secularization theory asserts clear divisions (spatial, social, and political) between religion and other social functions and structures, postsecular approaches reflect on the maintenance, contestations, and meanings attributed to these divisions. (Olson et al., 2013, pp. 1423-1424)

Cloke, Baker, Sutherland, and Williams (2019) offered a grounded deployment of the postsecular, defined in terms of specific geographies or spaces of postsecular engagement. These geographies, they argue, emerge in terms of social movements and networks, hopeful expressions of care and community action, and pedagogical spaces (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 6). It is possible to explore the production, negotiation, and sustaining of differences and subjectivities that affect the formation of the political positions which form and shape our values. So I am not seeking to take for granted that all public spaces are postsecular. I am seeking to explore the question as to whether they are, as means of examining the concern of how we treat difference, in the context of a diversifying belief landscape.

Uncertain Times

The shifts in the belief landscape that are the premise for this paper are not the only changes taking place globally. They are related to broader contexts of uncertainty, which Baker and Dinham (2018) characterised as ‘liminality as the new norm’ (Baker & Dinham, 2018, pp. 15-32). This is described by the increase in globalised, fluid and frictionless environments, punctuated by market efficiency and new technology, along with intense flows of migration, ideology, innovation, investment and “knowledge that show little respect for existing forms of local identity and community” (Baker & Dinham, 2018, pp. 15-16). What is produced is increased expressions of social and economic inequality, fear and anxiety, populist politics, and challenges to identity and democracy. The ‘disorienting and non-binary’ state this creates can be defined in terms of liminality originally set out by Turner (1967; 1969). What this means for my argument, is that the change characterised by the postsecular and the evidence in terms of the diversifying belief landscape, is being experienced within interdisciplinary policy contexts, too.

Curating Spaces of Hope

In order to respond to the uncertainty created by ‘liminality as the new norm’, the diversifying belief landscape, and in order to map the postsecular spaces within which different values might be uncovered, I will turn to a new paradigm of FBO, namely ‘Curating Spaces of Hope’ (Barber-Rowell, 2021). This paradigm emerged from contexts of uncertainty mapped through auto-ethnography, a social movement and networked dialogues from 2016-2020, mapping lived experiences of living with liminality and a personal and collective search for values. This mapping offered terms of reference for a new paradigm characterised in terms of (1) embodying and responding to liminality, (2) difference and creative potential, (3) rhizomatic or non-linear forms, and (4) shared values. This paradigm was tested through ethnographic research in sites characterised by different worldviews, in the north west of England. I will set out this research, before turning to applications of the paradigm to the question of coproducing shared values in uncertain times.

A Personal and Collective Search for Values

In 2009 I graduated into a context set by the global recession, and the policy of austerity delivered by the UK Government. My career plan was to go into the oil industry, however the careers advice at the university I attended was to ‘get a temp job’. I did so, but soon found myself unemployed. Poor mental health followed before I secured a part-time job in January 2010.

I managed to secure work as a sales assistant at a local petrol station in January 2010. The job was in the oil industry, but it was not what I had anticipated. The irony of this was not lost on me, and it challenged my perceptions of myself ... and the values I lived by ... I was wearing a uniform emblazoned with the slogan ‘There for You’, which possessed multiple meanings for me. It pointed to my function within the shop, but I wanted to be recognised for more than my function as a sales assistant. I knew I had more to offer. I was left with the questions of, who am I? (Barber-Rowell, 2021, pp. 29-30)

In the years that followed, I explored personally the question of who I was and what it meant to share my faith in society. This included community work in an Urban Priority Area in northwest England, where we established a community festival which celebrated the 150th anniversary of the church in that town. The church hosted a ‘not for profit market’ comprising a wide variety of social action projects and services, craft stalls, arts and music stages. We engaged 1000s of people and raised money for charity. This event was later characterised

as a postsecular vignette. From 2014 to 2016 I delivered work, commissioned by a local authority in the north west of England, on behalf of a regional FBO that was auditing the role of faith groups ‘Standing in the Gap’ between people in communities and the state, during austerity (Barber-Rowell, 2021, pp. 31-33).

These experiences of positive and hopeful community engagement were juxtaposed with further contrasting and disempowering experiences taking place in my personal life at the same time. Between 2014 and 2016 I experienced social marginalisation that created conditions of vulnerability and isolation from social networks of support. Language used in legislation today is coercive and controlling behaviour. With hindsight this juxtaposition highlighted for me the contrasting experiences of liminality. This point was highlighted through a contribution I made at the World Mental Health Day Interfaith Service at Manchester Cathedral in 2019:

Perceptions can shape the narrative and open deep divides that too often define our relationships and our communities, condemning us to conditions governed by distrust and disconnection. My experience was that health services saw my plight and I got the support I needed from them. Other services did not listen to me. Instead, they treated me with suspicion and questioned every aspect of my life. I was a white, male, person of faith claiming domestic abuse and they didn’t believe me. Their perception led to prejudice, which led to them choosing to ignore substantial evidence that supported my claims, which led directly to further offences being committed against me whilst I was trying to rebuild my life. (Barber-Rowell, 2021, pp. 39-40)

In response to this period of my life, I began to explore what experiences of liminality meant to others. In 2016, I began to talk to people about what mattered to them and what they had experienced. We gathered in cafes and community centres, listening as different narratives formed and stories were told. This continued for over 3 years, drawing in close to 1,000 people across 70+ organisations, through 40 gatherings. We engaged one another in dialogue around social ills, hopelessness and finding solutions to help make life better. This movement was called Spaces of Hope (Barber-Rowell, 2021, p. 43). In 2017 I was commissioned by a local authority in northwest England to develop networked dialogues to support the faith, community and voluntary sector to respond to the impacts of austerity, divisions exposed by Brexit, unprecedented changes to public services and a growing epidemic in mental health. The issues faced struck at the heart of civil society, impacting personal resilience and the community resources public services relied on. A case study for the Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in England summarised these dialogues as:

bringing together innovative mixes of civil society actors—from professional community practitioners through to individual community activists—to ‘meaning-make’ as a response to experiences of pointlessness and emptiness in personal, community and professional life. (Civil Society Futures, 2018)

The gatherings raised interesting questions for the inquiry. The lead researcher noted:

In a public sphere which has struggled to talk about religion and belief, how might faith-based actors be held to account? Should public spaces attempt to preserve the idea of secular neutrality? Or does that stifle the fullest explanations of why certain actors act ... In an increasingly religiously diverse landscape these questions have traction ... ‘Spaces of Hope appears to open [these] questions up and this in turn is opening up an innovative space in public policy making and practice’. (Civil Society Futures, 2018)

In terms of the gatherings, 65% of respondents associated Spaces of Hope with values of personal vulnerability, personal freedom and social connection and 40% understood people’s suspicions and perceptions around different cultures and worldviews to be barriers to Spaces of Hope. This intervention opened up scope for values based dialogues within this locality. 1/3 of respondents said that the Spaces of Hope dialogues had

catalysed something new within their own work. Further, 90% of respondents said that they valued the Spaces of Hope dialogues and would participate in them in the future (Barber-Rowell, 2021, pp. 47-48).

Mapping Sources of Motivation

In order to explore the potential opened up by this social movement and network, I engaged in ethnographic research across 3 sites in northwest England: a town centre church, a faith-based cafe, and an estate church in an area of significant multiple deprivation. The ethnographic sites were engaging in the spaces between the faith and public sectors responding to a variety of concerns from poor mental health, to unemployment, food poverty, and existential dread regarding the relevance and therefore the future of the groups themselves (Barber-Rowell, 2021, pp. 134-141). The research was designed to look for the terms of reference that had emerged from the social movement and network namely, liminality, difference, rhizomatic or non-linear flows, and shared values.

I utilised assemblage theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988); opening up the affective flows of contents off expressions, and their relationships in and between different spaces across the sites, and Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 2007), which McFarlane notes can ‘finesse’ understanding and applications of assemblage theory (McFarlane, 2011, p. 207). ANT opens up relationships between humans and non-humans and their agency within social and material assemblages. The key distinction, which Latour makes to enable consideration of agency as being equally attributed to human and non-human, is between ‘matters of fact’ and ‘matters of concern’ (Latour, 2007, pp. 88-116). What is meant by this is, matters of concern acknowledge that there are more to experiences than meet the eye, and that acknowledging the non-human uncovers understandings of agencies that are shaping the world. Latour (2007) noted, ‘whilst highly uncertain and loudly disputed, these real, objective, atypical, and above all, interesting agencies are taken ... as gatherings’ (p. 114). The role of these gatherings is to learn to feed off uncertainties, and to reject premature unification, thereby enabling them to become understood on their own in terms as opposed to ‘deciding in advance what the furniture of the world should look like’ (Latour, 2007, p. 115). To decide in advance would be to engage in what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as ‘decalcomania’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, pp. 11-16); a desire to label what we think is there based on our own prior experience and naming things as such, as opposed to carefully mapping the realities of what is unfolding, which can be quite different. This conceptual point can be set in context by considering the earlier section on the diversifying of the belief landscape and the definition of FBOs. In these earlier sections, I addressed the homogenisation of the ‘F’ set out by Johnsen (2014) and argued that the different sources of motivation underpinning the work of FBOs and therefore understandings of the ‘F’ were relevant and that the differences highlighted by the diversifying belief landscape should be taken into account. To do this, mapping matters of concern by Latour, and not falling foul of decalcomania as cautioned by Deleuze and Guattari, are pertinent.

The research comprised 27 interviews, 114 surveys and 90 hours of participant observations. Following Thematic Network Analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001), a set of six global themes and 18 organising themes, or modalities and supplementary characteristics, emerged as common across the three ethnographic sites. The 6 global themes are (1) Types of Relationships, (2) Leadership Roles and Responsibilities, (3) Sources of Motivation, (4) the Interface with the Public Space, (5) Stories, Prophecy and Authenticity, and (6) Relational and Administrative Flows (see Table 1). Each of the 6 modalities provided a distinct vantage point on the complex gatherings of overlapping contents and expressions of each of the FBOs. I summarise these modalities

and characteristics as the “socio-material nuances of space”. The socio-material nuances of space are the heart of the Spaces of Hope paradigm. Each are distinct and simultaneously interdependent characteristics that map the different affects expressed within spaces of postsecular partnership. The rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) or non-linear structure of the paradigm means that any of the 6 modalities can emerge as a guiding influence on the others. The emergence of the socio-material nuances of space framework was indicative of the potential for one conceptual framework, to map the relationships between different content and expressions across multiple spaces and put these spaces in dialogue with one another with respect to shared matters of concern. It is this capacity to set different spaces in dialogue with one another that offers a means of coproducing shared values, which I will move on to below. One limitation of the research was that it was produced with reference to Christian, and non-religious ethnographic sites. Therefore it did not capture fully the diversity of beliefs within the landscape in the UK. As a result, further research is being conducted in environments characterised by other beliefs, values and worldviews.

Table 1

The Socio-Material Nuances of Space Expressed as Sets of Modalities and Characteristics That Make Each up

Modalities	Characteristics
Types of Relationships	1.1 Relationship with Place 1.2 Relational Service 1.3 Transformative Potential
Leadership, Roles and Responsibilities	2.1 Incarnational and Negotiated 2.2 Roles and Responsibilities
Sources of Motivation	3.1 Emergent Beliefs, Values and Worldviews 3.2 The Significance of Context 3.3 Foundations 3.4 Formation
The Interface between FBOs and the Public Space	4.1 Communication: Prayer and Dialogue 4.2 Welcome and Caring for Others 4.3 Professionalising
Stories: Prophecy and Authenticity	5.1 Stories 5.2 Prophecy 5.3 Authenticity
Administrative and Relational Flows	6.1 Changing Expressions of FBO: Finding the Flow 6.2 Alliances; Partnerships, Networks and Movements 6.3 Counting the Cost and Embracing Change

Spaces of Hope contributes to knowledge by offering a new paradigm of FBO with the capacity to map different sources of motivation within postsecular spaces and as a result a new means of discerning shared values.

Coproducing Shared Values

Modality 3 ‘Sources of Motivation’ uncovers the why behind the what that we undertake in the public square. These sources of motivations relate the things that we do. Many of these sources are not clearly defined, rather they are characterised by the ebbs and flows of people and place. Others are more explicit and responsive to substantial shifts in policy, for example austerity, or faith-based exercising of authority, or episcopal will. Sources of motivation can have clearly defined foundations. For example, God and Jesus are invoked in a variety of ways, and the desire for a deepening and more authentic experience of how these dimensions or founding precepts of faith may shape outcomes is commonplace. Whilst this is not a surprise within the context

of FBOs, a further theme that is present from the data is that a coproduction of shared values by those of faith and none is beginning to emerge which enables shared practical expressions to emerge too. Quotes from two participants with different worldviews highlight this. Karen from the faith based cafe said:

[we] have a love at the core of who we are and how we are with people with each other, and we work hard to kind of communicate that love to one another and make allowances for one another because we are like you know we're going to make mistakes and ... five years in, that theme runs really deep through the Mustard Seed ... this is what we want to be at the core in our values, but, we've been practicing that over the years so now it's like really embedded. (Interview with Karen)

Donald, a non-religious customer at the faith based cafe, said:

So, there is a change in terms of how the place is now valued and used by the community. [I] think more people are coming in, and once they have tasted what is available, they come back. The staff are so lovely ... what I really like about, unlike any other cafe or any other place, that I have ever been, is that you never get to see, staff arguing or bitching at each other. (Interview with Donald)

So, whilst these founding precepts are present, what is often also present within this modality is an additional emergent sense of the affective impact of the belief, values, or worldview. These sources of motivation do not remove the coherence of normative theological positions, or more arborescent sources of motivation but they do point to new ways of understanding shared values within the postsecular belief/policy landscape (Baker, Crisp, & Dinham, 2018). This distinction is reflective of the Deleuzian grammar that is underpinning this work. Deleuze is not seeking out a means of articulating truth, he is seeking to create perspectives about what there is (May, 2005, p. 22). This enables the emergent nature of sources of motivation within this modality to not be seen as at odds with the normative or doctrinal positions of specific religions or non-religious worldviews, but rather as a context specific coproduction in the public space.

These foundations are often coupled with the formation of content that is indicative of them, for example, faith as a distinctive part of people's lives, hope as a disposition and implicit notion of what is ahead, and love, which is articulated as a core value and as an active element for multiple spaces and contexts. It is important to note here that whilst God and Jesus were identified as prominent foundations for sources of motivation, the survey data showed that a majority of respondents (83/110) expressed a Christian perspective with others (31/110) either identifying as religious nones, other or not specifying any religious affiliation. To this end, it is not surprising that essentially Christian Foundations were identified. However, the data identify the existent of emergent beliefs, values, and worldviews which are not purely the result of abstract or doctrinal positions, but rather represent formational beliefs, values, and worldviews that have been coproduced within the socio-material nuances of space. There were numerous examples of this. A respondent from the Estate Church described a personal transformation from antagonism to faith to openly discuss the implications of love with her colleagues and other community members. Given these people are of both faith and none, the meaning of love is derived from these postsecular contexts. Another respondent describes an emergence of hope generated through daily encounters at the faith based cafe. He described himself as having no faith and also talked about things that matter most to him as being images and the décor in the cafe.

I love the tree; it's the stick-on bits with the leaves too, it's obviously a symbol of the [Seed becoming a Tree] itself. I would really like if they had a real tree. One in the corner. That would be great. So, I like sitting under the tree. It is a symbolic thing for me. (Interview with Donald)

Donald's sense of value was drawn from the mix of socio-material affects within the cafe context, including the relationships, service and hope the environment offers. It was not as simple as opening a dictionary and taking it as read as to what faith, hope or love meant. Instead, what emerged was a coproduction of these stated and foundational values. In the data, the prominent foundational frameworks for justifying FBO motivation were God, Jesus, and the Kingdom of God which were explained by the disproportionate number of Christians whose voices and experiences were recorded in the data relative to nones and people of other faiths. It is also noteworthy that the FBOs in my ethnographic sites expressed either Christian evangelical elements, or explicit Christian evangelicalism. Smith (2002) described this relationship between faith and practice as faith saturated. The fact that faith saturation of this kind was common across the ethnographic sites expressed homogeneity in itself, and suggested a loyalty to core truth propositions inherent as the basis of faith. To test the Curating Spaces of Hope paradigm further, and to test the capacity to coproduce shared values, more diverse contexts are needed.

Coproducing Shared Values in Uncertain Times

In March 2020, lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic began, in the UK. This exposed the country to rules or limits that shaped day-to-day life characterised by disorientation, loss, illness, and grief. One could reasonably characterise this experience as living with liminality. The Keeping the Faith Report (2020), sets out the response by faith groups to the pandemic in relationship with local authorities in the UK, during lockdown. The research comprised a bespoke survey and in-depth interviews. The survey was sent to 408 local authorities in the UK with 194 responding. 55 in-depth interviews were conducted with local authority leaders (n = 28) and co-ordinators of FBOs (n = 27) across 10 sample local authorities. 91% of local authorities describe their experience of partnership with faith groups as 'Very Positive' or 'Positive'. 93% of local authorities in our survey consider wider sharing of best practice in co-production between faith groups and local authorities to be 'Very Important' or 'Important'. 67% of local authorities report that there has been an increase in partnership working with FBOs since the start of the pandemic. The majority of this increase came with respect to provision of food and alleviation of food poverty, and mental health and wellbeing. 76% of local authorities expect this increased level of engagement to continue after the pandemic, with 47% of them wanting partnerships to continue on a changed basis after the pandemic. There were of course dissenting views. However, the fact that many councils expect these new partnership to continue beyond the pandemic highlights the need to understand what motivates these groups within renewed contexts of uncertainty.

In January 2022, I began to interrogate these contexts. Three contexts characterised by different worldviews were identified in Liverpool: an ecumenical Christian gathering of social activists; a gathering of fellows from the Royal Society of Arts expressing no religious affiliation; and a gathering of Turkish Muslim asylum seekers who are volunteering in an interfaith context with the Dialogue Society. In each of the three contexts, the opportunities to coproduce shared values were opened up through initial dialogue, and will be explored within organisational contexts in 2023.

Ecumenical Activists

The first dialogue came about following a lecture given by Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald, at Liverpool Hope University, exploring human fraternity across difference (Francis & Al-Tayyeb, 2019). Cardinal Fitzgerald

challenged those in attendance to pursue and promote this agenda. This prompted the establishment of a connection with St Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in the centre of Liverpool, where the Spaces of Hope dialogue was conducted, with reference to the Papal encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* (Francis, 2020). Pope Francis uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to challenge us to consider how we treat others. Respondents noted that they sought to welcome all comers, highlighting their work with refugees from across the world, including from the Ukraine following the breakout of war. Respondents noted that welcoming people made them nervous, because people can take advantage. This juxtaposition was highlighted using examples of provision of resources; food and clothes from the food bank and clothes bank run from the church. The underpinning motivation for this provision was to share the gospel through good works. But it was felt that this mightn't be received as such. However, there was a strong sense that this should not prevent the welcome of people, in fact, it was an opportunity to show people a different way and to be personally challenged in terms of whether or not welcome was extended to people. The motivations of laity in the church are pertinent to the Catholic Church due to the ongoing synodal process instigated by the Vatican, which is designed to inspire new forms of lay leadership in the Catholic Church. The motivations of welcome of this kind, the relevance to the Papal encyclical, and the parable of Good Samaritan, stand out. In Liverpool, these exchanges also sit within a wider culture of seeking the common good. Bishop David Sheppard and Archbishop Derek Worlock exemplified this in the 1980s, in response to a variety of uncertainties in the city (Sheppard & Worlock, 1994). One key outcome from the legacy of Sheppard and Worlock was the formation of Liverpool Hope University College, named 'Hope' by the first Rector, Professor Simon Lee, to honour the 'sign of hope' it represented to the city and the existence of 'Hope Street' between the Catholic and Anglican Cathedrals in Liverpool (Goodwin & Kelly, 2022). The relevance of this detail is that the naming of these values; welcome and hope, is being tested further in the ecumenical context of Liverpool Hope University, in 2023, exploring what the concept means to the institution and its relationship with the city.

Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Fellows

The RSA has a tradition of gathering to engage in dialogue about how to respond to concerns in UK society. The RSA is in its 270th year and has adopted this approach since William Shipley convened what was then the Society of Arts in coffee houses in London (Howes, 2020). With this in mind, a dialogue was established in consultation with the Northern Manager of the RSA, at a coffee shop in Liverpool to consider the 'renewal of relationships post-pandemic'. The Fellows gathered had freelance consultant, system leader and artist collective background. Their interests related to housing, mental health, heritage and civic space, ecology, sustainable development and community activism. We explored the questions, 'what gives you hope?' 'what are the barriers to hope?' and 'how might we overcome these?'. People acknowledged a vulnerability created by social isolation during the pandemic. Those who attended sought to bring the joy back. They imagined opening the city back up through festival like encounters in physical spaces such as the 'bombed out church'—a cultural space in Liverpool. This was tempered by a sense of worry. Digital spaces; zoom calls for example, had allowed anonymity through attendance whilst keeping screens turned off. There was a sense of anxiety at returning to gatherings 'IRL' (in real life). The experience of hybrid living made it tough to separate actual and virtual lives. A possible remedy was to curate spaces that mimicked the conditions of a zoom room by hanging a curtain for people to sit behind allowing them to recreate 'camera off' conditions, whilst talking to

others behind the curtain. This would facilitate reconnection whilst soothing the anxiety of the attendee and opening up opportunity for us to identify ourselves; our story and our hopes for the future. As a result of this dialogue in 2022, a connection was established with Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services. This infrastructure organisation is the oldest of its kind in the UK (LCVS, 2023) and is a key stakeholder in working to serve the city after the pandemic. They have engaged Spaces of Hope in 2023, as a tool to develop plans for reducing poverty in the city of Liverpool rooted in emergent shared values.

Dialogue Society Volunteers

The final case study came in May 2022. A dialogue with the Dialogue Society who share an influence by the Hizmet (meaning service) Movement (Weller, 2022) was convened. We met using zoom, attracting attendance from Turkish Muslim asylum seekers who had moved to Liverpool during the pandemic. We explored the stories of those in attendance. Themes included the safety and education of their children, loss of loved ones, the limitations created by a language barrier, and the stress and insecurity of being in an unknown city. One respondent noted that this was the first opportunity they had had to reflect on their journey. They asked for the opportunity to write down their feelings and their experiences, as it would give them time to translate their thoughts from Turkish to English. Those gathered expressed a deep resilience to overcome barriers, supported by the small actions of others; a phone call from a friend in Turkey, a cup of tea from a fellow community member in Liverpool. Through the transition into the UK the group gathered had found a new appreciation for social connection. They noted that they had lost work (in business and science and education) but gained a sense of togetherness and common humanity, not limited by their own preconceptions and worldviews per se, but defined by finding common ground with people in their new communities. This dialogue has become the basis for further gatherings that are taking place in 2023, as part of the formation of a new branch of the Dialogue Society in Liverpool.

Conclusions

In this paper I have set out the diversifying belief landscape in the UK. I have contextualised it through consideration of interdisciplinary literatures that highlight the relevance of understanding and mapping the differences that make up experiences of uncertainty, and as a means of coproducing shared values. I have set out Curating Spaces of Hope as a new paradigm for coproducing shared values in uncertain times, and I have set out initial applications of this paradigm in contexts in the north west of England. This paper sets out something of the potential offered for Curating Spaces of Hope. However, there are far deeper implications for coproducing shared values out of contexts of difference and diversity outside of sociology of religion. The 2021 Census set out the shifting belief landscape in the UK. There are implications for Religious Literacy and what Grace Davie characterised as the 'lamentable state' of it (Dinham, 2016). If postsecular spaces of dialogue and exchange between different worldviews, are opened up, this can hold serious and important implications for the partnerships that can be developed in the UK. The Keeping the Faith Report highlighted the potential that is there for good work to be done, between group of different worldviews. But how much more significant will that be if it is sustained by trust worthy and values based partnerships with shared values in uncertain times? Time will tell. The applications of Curating Spaces of Hope in Liverpool in 2023 across Christian, Muslim and non-religious contexts will contribute to this discussion.

References

- All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Faith and Society. (2020). *Keeping the faith: Partnerships between faith groups and local authorities during and beyond the pandemic*. Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aa7ae58266c07fe6b48eb76/t/5fab1475ae8b92bcf64f30c/1605091658307/APPG_CovidReport_Full_V4.pdf
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385-405.
- Aupers, S., & Houtman, D. (2003). Oriental religion in the secular West: Globalization, new age and the re-enchantment of the world. *Journal of National Development*, 16(1/2), 67-86.
- Baerveldt, C. (1996). New age-religiositeit als individueel constructieproces (New age-religiosity as a process of individual construction). In M. Moerland (Ed.), *De kool en de geit in de nieuwe tijd: Wetenschappelijke reflecties op new age (The fence, the hare, and the hounds in the new age: Scientific reflections on new age)* (pp. 19-31). Utrecht: Jan van Arkel.
- Baker, C., & Dinham, A. (2017). New interdisciplinary spaces of religions and beliefs in contemporary thought and practice: An analysis. *Religions*, 8(2), 1-12.
- Baker, C., & Dinham, A. (2018). Re-negotiating religion and belief in the public square: Definitions, debates, controversies. In C. Baker, B. Crisp, and A. Dinham (Eds.), *Re-imagining religion and belief: 21st century policy and practice* (pp. 15-32). Bristol: Policy Press.
- Baker, C., Crisp, B., & Dinham, A. (2018). *Re-imagining religion and belief: 21st century policy and practice*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Barber-Rowell, M. (2021). Curating spaces of hope: Towards a liminal, rhizomatic and productive paradigm of faith based organisations (FBOs) (Doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London).
- Beaumont, J. (2004). Workfare, associationism and the “underclass” in the United States: Contrasting faith-based action on urban poverty in a liberal welfare regime. In H. Noordegraaf and R. Volz (Eds.), *European churches confronting poverty: Social action against social exclusion* (pp. 249-278). Bochum: SWI Verlag.
- Beaumont, J. (2008a). Introduction: Dossier on faith-based organisations and human geography. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 99(4), 377-381.
- Beaumont, J. (2008b). Faith action on urban social issues. *Urban Studies*, 45(10), 2019-2034.
- Beaumont, J., & Cloke, P. (2012a). *Faith-based organisations and exclusion in European cities*. Bristol: Policy Press, University of Bristol.
- Beaumont, J., & Cloke, P. (2012b). Introduction. In J. Beaumont and P. Cloke (Eds.), *Faith-based organisations and exclusion in European cities* (pp. 1-36). Bristol: Policy Press, University of Bristol.
- Beckford, J. A. (2012). SSSR presidential address: Public religions and the postsecular: Critical reflections. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 51(1), 1-19.
- Berger, P. L. (1999). The desecularization of the world: A global view. In P. L. Berger (Ed.), *The desecularization of the world: Resurgent religion and world politics* (pp. 1-18). Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans.
- British Social Attitudes Survey. (2019). *Religion. Identity, behaviour and belief over two decades*. Retrieved from https://bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39293/1_bsa36_religion.pdf
- Bruce, S. (2002). *God is dead: Secularization in the West* (1st ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Calhoun, C., Juergensmeyer, M., & Van Antwerpen, J. (2011). *Rethinking secularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Civil Society Futures. (2018). *Inquiry into the future of civil society in England*. Retrieved from https://civilsocietyfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/11/Civil-Society-Futures__Civil-Society-in-England__small-1.pdf
- Clarke, C., & Woodhead, L. (2018). *A new settlement revised: Religion and belief in schools*. Retrieved from <http://faithdebates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Clarke-Woodhead-A-New-Settlement-Revised.pdf>
- Cloke, P., & Pears, M. (2016). *Mission in marginal places: The praxis*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.
- Cloke, P., Baker, C., Sutherland, C., & Williams, A. (2019). *Geographies of postsecularity: Re-envisioning politics, subjectivity and ethics*. London: Routledge.
- Cnaan, R. A., Wineburg, R. J., & Boddie, S. C. (1999). *The newer deal: Social work and religion in partnership*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2016 [1988]). *A thousand plateaus*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Dinham, A. (2015). Religious literacy and welfare. In A. Dinham and M. Francis (Eds.), *Religious literacy in policy and practice* (pp. 101-112). Bristol: Policy Press.
- Dinham, A. (2016). Grace Davie and religious literacy: Undoing a lamentable quality of conversation. In A. Day and M. Lovehiem (Eds.), *Modernities, memory and mutations: Grace Davie and the study of religion*. Oxon: Routledge.

- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. (1998). *Third way: The renewal of social democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. (2008). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the later modern age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goodwin, N., & Kelly, S. (2022). *Foundations of hope: Reflecting on 20 years at Liverpool Hope University*. Liverpool Hope University Press.
- Graham, E. (2013). *Between a rock and a hard place: Public theology in a post-secular age* (1st ed.). London: SCM Press.
- Habermas, J. (2005). Equal treatment of cultures and the limits of postmodern liberalism. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 13(1), 1-28.
- Habermas, J. (2008a). Notes on post-secular society. *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25(4), 17-29.
- Habermas, J. (2008b). Religion in the public sphere: Cognitive presuppositions for the 'public use of reason' by religious and secular citizens. In *Between naturalism and religion: Philosophical essays* (pp. 114-147). London: Routledge.
- Hamilton, M. (2000). An analysis of the festival for mind-body-spirit. In S. Sutcliffe and M. Bowman (Eds.), *Beyond new age: Exploring alternative spirituality* (pp. 188-200). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Heelas, P., & Woodhead, L. (2005). *The spiritual revolution: Why religion is giving way to spirituality* (1st ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Herman, A., Beaumont, J., Cloke, P., & Walliser, A. (2012). Spaces of postsecular engagement in cities. In J. Beaumont and P. Cloke (Eds.), *Faith-based organisations and exclusion in European cities* (pp. 59-80). Bristol: Policy Press, University of Bristol.
- Hervieu-Leger, D. (2000). *Religion as a chain of memory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University of Press.
- Houtman, D., & Aupers, S. (2007). The spiritual turn and the decline of tradition: The spread of post-Christian spirituality in 14 Western countries, 1981-2000. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 46(3), 305-320.
- Howes, A. (2020). *Arts and minds: How the Royal Society of Arts changed a nation*. Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Johnsen, S. (2014). Where's the 'faith' in 'faith-based' organisations? The evolution and practice of faith-based homelessness services in the UK. *Journal of Social Policy*, 43(2), 413-430.
- Kong, L. (2010). 'Global shifts, theoretical shifts: Changing geographies of religion'. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(6), 755-776.
- Latour, B. (2007). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor network theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lee, L. (2016). *The nonreligious are Britain's hidden majority*. Retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/the-nonreligious-are-britains-hidden-majority/>
- Ley, D. (2011). Preface: Towards a postsecular city? In J. Beaumont and C. Baker (Eds.), *Postsecular cities: Space, theory and practice* (pp. xii-xiv). London: Continuum.
- Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services (LCVS). (2023). *Our history*. Retrieved from <https://www.lcvs.org.uk/about-us/our-history/>
- Lyon, D. (2000). *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in postmodern times* (1st ed.). Oxford: Polity Press.
- May, T. (2005). *Gilles Deleuze: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McFarlane, C. (2011). Assemblage and critical urbanism. *City*, 15(2), 204-224.
- Office for National Statistics. (2022). *Religion, England and Wales: Census 2021*. Retrieved from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021#how-religious-affiliation-varies-across-england-and-wales>
- Olson, E., Hopkins, P., Pain, R., & Vincent, G. (2013). Retheorizing the postsecular present: Embodiment, spatial transcendence, and challenges to authenticity among young Christians in Glasgow, Scotland. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 103, 1421-1436.
- Parmaksiz, U. (2018). Making sense of the postsecular. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 21(1), 98-116.
- Partridge, C. (2006). The spiritual and the revolutionary: Alternative spirituality, British free festivals, and the emergence of rave culture. *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 7(1), 41-60.
- Pope Francis, & Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. (2019). *A document on human fraternity for world peace and living together*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html
- Pope Francis. (2020). *Encyclical letter, Fratelli tutti, of the Holy Father, Francis, on fraternity and social friendship*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

- Possamai, A. (2003). Alternative spiritualities and the cultural logic of late capitalism. *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 4(1), 31-45.
- Putnam, R., & Campbell, D. (2010). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us* (1st ed.). New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Sheppard, D., & Worlock, D. (1994). *With hope in our hearts*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Smith, G. (2002). *Faith in the voluntary sector: A common or distinctive experience of religious organizations*. London: Centre for Institutional Studies, University of East London.
- Turner, V. (1967). *Betwixt and between: The liminal period in rites de passage*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Y0h0OEe19pcC&lpg=PA3&dq=victor%20turner%20liminality&lr&pg=PA18#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Turner, V. (1969). Liminality and communitas. In *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.
- Weller, P. (2022). *Hizmet in transitions: European developments of a Turkish Muslim-inspired movement*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Wilford, J. (2010). Sacred archipelagos: Geographies of secularization. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(3), 328-348.
- Woodhead, L. (2016). The rise of 'no religion' in Britain: The emergence of a new cultural majority. *Journal of the British Academy*, 4, 245-261.
- Woodhead, L. (2017). The rise of 'no religion': Towards an explanation. *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, 78(3), 247-262.