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Curating Spaces of Hope: Power to the People in Post-Pandemic Society

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In this paper I will set out a new paradigm for mapping different forms of power available to leaders within faith based organisation, and the potential it offers for organising and 'building back better' in post-pandemic society. I will open by using literatures from political philosophy, sociology of religion and social policy to explore the rationale for this new paradigm. I will then introduce the new paradigm, Curating Spaces of Hope (Barber-Rowell, 2021) and the opportunities that it presents for mapping and mobilising leadership in urban contexts. I will use ethnographic data from three sites in northwest England: a town centre church, an estate church and community centre and a faith based social enterprise to set out the paradigm. From this data I will highlight two conceptions of power, namely potential and concrete, and how they are each expressed by leaders in terms of their operant values and practices and what this means for authentic leadership. I will then set out the post-pandemic contexts using UK wide research into the role of faith groups and local authorities in responding to the pandemic (Keeping the Faith, 2020) and the ways in which this new conception of power might be explored further. I will use three case studies from a higher education institution, a third sector infrastructure network and a grassroots political organisation.

Keywords: power, hope, postsecular, faith based organisations

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022) catalysed a dramatic increase in collaboration and partnership working between faith based organisations and local authorities across the UK. The Keeping the Faith Reports (1 & 2) set out in detail not only the initial "rescue and emergency" response offered by faith groups during national lockdowns, the impressive and innovative nature of this response, but also a desire from local authorities to consolidate this new way of working characterised in terms of "building back better" from 2022 onwards (Keeping the Faith, 2022, p. 3).

A critical issue however is that faith based organisations (FBOs) have previously been poorly defined such that understanding of them was homogenous and un-able to be differentiated from other non-faith based groups (Johnsen, 2014). I have proposed an answer to this definitional issue, by setting out a new paradigm of FBOs called Curating Spaces of Hope (see Barber-Rowell, 2021; 2023a; 2023b; 2023c). At the heart of pandemic response by faith groups were local leaders who were empowered to act. Through this paper I will set out, using Curating Spaces of Hope, a means of conceptualising power and mapping its affect on values, practices and authentic leadership practice, which in turn can contribute to the process of building back better, post-pandemic.

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The COVID-19 Pandemic in the UK

The Keeping the Faith Reports (1 & 2), commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Faith and Society and conducted by the Faith and Civil Society Unit at Goldsmiths, University of London, offer a UK wide insight into this response. Keeping the Faith (1) engaged with all 408 local authorities in the UK receiving 194 valid survey responses (47.5%) and 55 in-depth interviews conducted with local authority leaders and coordinators of faith based projects across 10 sample local authorities chosen for the demographic and geographic diversity (Keeping the Faith, 2020, p. 3). What the research found was that critical provision of food and financial support, mental health and well-being support, and vaccine rollout support was undertaken. As regards food, 66% of local authorities were engaged with this kind of support before the pandemic which rose to 78% during the pandemic (Keeping the Faith, 2020, p. 4). As regards health and well-being services, this rose from 43% to 48% (Keeping the Faith, 2020, p. 4). 91% of local authorities, describe their experience of partnership working during the pandemic as either very positive or positive (Keeping the Faith, 2020, p. 4). 93% of local authorities surveyed indicated that best practice in coproduction between community partners as either very important or important to them (Keeping the Faith, 2020, p. 4). Keeping the Faith (2) drilled down into specific themes using a further 35 interviews with key personnel involved in pandemic response across the UK. Stephen Timms MP noted,

> Local authorities had become much more aware of what faith groups were doing, and of how well they were doing it. The success of the partnerships had deepened dialogue and strength of relationships. Many of the collaborative initiatives at the start of the pandemic crisis had been highly innovative. Respondents were reflecting on how the same ethos and approach might now be applied to tough, longer term challenges. (Stephen Timms MP, in Keeping the Faith, 2022, p. 2)

This was characterised as a move from "rescue and emergency" to "building back better" (Keeping the Faith, 2022, p. 3), which, on the one hand draws on the honest and authentic pandemic experience, and on the other relies on a new appreciation for the resources and innovation available. In order to realise the transition from rescue and emergency to building back better, it was noted that there must be a shift from faith groups as co-implementors i.e. the delivery arm of the public services, to co-initiators and even co-designers of resources and innovations (Keeping the Faith, 2022, p. 43). This shift puts power in the hands of people operating on behalf of faith groups. The question is, how might this transition be realised?

Faith Based Organisations (FBOs)

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, for example, 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, as such FBOs 'defy straight forward definition' (Beaumont & Cloke, 2012b, p. 11). This point is reenforced by Johnsen (2014) who noted that 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 their contributions. In order to address this, I will turn to the postsecular as a conceptual lens for embracing differences.

Embracing Differences

The postsecular is a term popularised by Jurgen Habermas (2005; 2008a; 2008b). His work questions the conditions under which different worldviews are recognised and how they contribute to the public sphere. He argues that the Western world is experiencing not the decline of either the importance of religion or the secular in 21st century, but the coexistence of both in often unexpected, open and creative ways within an increasingly pluralistic society (Habermas, 2005). The postsecular is a contested idea however. 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[1]. With this in mind, I will be more specific in terms of how I will use the postsecular, not as a pervasive or taken for granted framing of different contributors to society, but as a context specific lens through which differences might be considered. 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)

In order to locate these interplays and coproductions between those of different worldviews, the postsecular shound be considered in terms of different geographies. Cloke, Baker, Sutherland, and Williams (2019) theorised these geographies in terms of spaces of postsecular engagement, which they articulate as,

> a co-productive relationship between faith, and the secular, involving a commitment to solidarity and an openness to difference. It is about doing something together, based on an acceptance of the unknowns and unknowables in particular context and being open to what could emerge … It can reflect to varying extents both a relaxation of secular suspicion toward spirituality, and related re-enchantments, and a willingness to take religious values out into the secular world … reflecting a blurring of sacred and secular spaces and subjectivities, through the coproduction of hopeful imaginaries, hopeful ethical sensibilities and hopeful practices. (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 8)

[1] See Kong (2010); Ley (2011); Wilford (2010); and Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, & Van Antwerpen (2011).

It is argued that the emergence of geographies of postsecularity is taking place in three ways. The first emergence is through the production of social movements which empower people to respond to issues of oppression locally understood (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 9). The second is through the expressions of care and social action that take place in the city, typically within the community settings where local people and volunteers are central contributors (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 12), and the third emergence is through pedagogical engagement where epistemological and methodological challenges can be overcome (Cloke et al., 2019, p. 16)[2]. My argument here is not that all spaces are postsecular, but that the question of whether or not there are spaces of engagement between those of different worldviews is sufficient to have a means of exploring them further and offer a means of embracing differences.

Different Worldviews

To address this question, I will turn briefly to the belief landscape in the UK, in order to verify the different worldviews that are present. The 2021 Census for England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2022) surveyed religious affiliation and set out the different worldviews that are present. 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 (for more on the 'rise of the nones' see Putnam & Campbell, 2010, and Woodhead, 2016; 2017). This diversification of the religious landscape highlights that it cannot be taken for granted which worldview someone might hold and what it means for the contributions they might make to society.

Postsecular Social Policy

The contributions of those with different worldviews to social policy have traditionally been characterised in terms of two schools of thought: 1) FBOs as an asset to be harnessed, or 2) FBOs as a problem to be solved. As a result, FBOs are either actively included or excluded, depending on the prevailing positive or negative perceptions of them and their different characteristics (Levin, 2020; 2022; Baker & Dinham 2018; Bloom, 2022). AHRC funded research *Re-imagining Religion and Belief in Policy and Practice* (Baker, Crisp, & Dinham, 2018) mapped international expert perspectives on the role of faith and belief in social policy. Findings from this research described the belief policy landscape as a "truly interdisciplinary challenge" characterised by the anthropological concept of liminality. What is meant by this is a period of transition where the normal rules of engagement are suspended for an indeterminant period of time, such that experiences become disorienting and confusing (see Turner, 1967; 1969). The research articulated this sense of liminality in terms of an 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

[2] For a wider discussion of the conceptual relationship between geographies of postsecularity and faith based organisations, see Barber-Rowell (2023a) in *Social Policy Review 35*.

show little respect for existing forms of local identity and community (Baker & Dinham, 2018). What is produced is increased expressions of social and economic inequality, fear and anxiety, populist politics, and challenges to identity and democracy. At the heart of this characterisation is a recognition of different and contextual factors that must be taken into consideration. In part this challenge is recognised as epistemological, with a need to bridge between classic binaries for example the religious and secular. The challenge is also part methodological, finding ways to reach constituencies who are not gathered around, identifiable hierarchies, structures, or denominations (Baker & Dinham, 2018, p. 30).

Curating Spaces of Hope

In this section of the paper, I will turn to Curating Spaces of Hope as a response to the challenges of defining FBOs, in a way which is sensitive to the different worldviews in society today, and responds to the epistemological and methodological challenges within postsecular social policy. I will do this in three phases, which evidence the means of producing postsecular spaces: social movement, expressions of care and social action, and finally pedagogical engagement. The Curating Spaces of Hope paradigm is characterised by four terms of reference: (1) embodying and responding to liminality, (2) difference and creative potential, (3) rhizomatic or non-linear forms, and (4) shared values[3]. I will explore these throughout this part of the paper in such a way as to open up discussion of power and leadership on offer from FBOs in the final section.

Empowering a Movement

In July 2009 I graduated from my undergraduate degree in Environmental Science. I had planned to secure work in the oil industry. The global financial crash of 2008 had precipitated a global recession in 2009, and the policy of austerity delivered by the UK Government in 2010. Whilst I initially found temporary work, by October 2009, I found myself unemployed and disempowered by circumstances beyond my control. In January 2010, I secured a part-time job as a sales assistant in a petrol station. This new role was in the oil industry but not in the way I had anticipated. The irony of this was not lost on me. 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 it also hinted at a sense of service to others, openness and vulnerability. I wanted to be recognised for more than my function as a sales assistant. I knew I had more to offer. I worked at the shop for 3 and a half years. In the years that followed, I explored personally the question of what it meant to be there for others. In 2013 I worked in an Urban Priority Area in northwest England, to support and empower communities that had been impacted by austerity. In one town, we established a community festival which celebrated the 150th anniversary of the church. This was a much needed excuse to gather people who were facing hard times. 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 thousands of people and raised money for charity. From 2014 to 2016 I worked 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. My role was to map and tell the stories of empowerment in those communities (Barber-Rowell, 2025, pp. 38-42).

These experiences of empowerment were juxtaposed with disempowering experiences taking place in my personal life at the same time. Across 2014 and 2015 I experienced domestic abuse, and coercive and

[3] You can also see further discussions of Curating Spaces of Hope with respect to shared values, social policy and postsecular partnerships in *Sociology Study, SPR 35*, and *Journal of Church and State*.

controlling behaviour. The open and vulnerable predisposition that is needed to be there for others was taken advantage of. Someone saw this difference in character as a weakness and exploited it. During this episode, I lost my home, my job, my car, my social network, my financial stability and I was physically assaulted on numerous occasions. This experience was compounded by the fact that when I went to the police for support, with the requisite evidence to prove my case, they treated me with suspicion and did not consider my evidence. This led to further offences being committed against me (Barber-Rowell, 2025, pp. 42-46).

In response to this period of my life, I moved to a new town and found a new role as a community worker. In my new role I had scope to talk to people about what mattered to them and what they had experienced in their lives. We gathered in cafes and community centres, listening as different narratives formed and stories were told. What began as the natural first step into my new role continued for over 3 years, drawing in close to 1,000 people across 70+ organisations, through approximately 40 formal gatherings. We talked about the difficulties we had faced and the disempowerment we had experienced and began to find solutions to help make life better. This movement was called Spaces of Hope (Barber-Rowell, 2025, pp. 46-55). Of the movement the Bishop of Stockport (a regional leader who had supported the emergence of the movement) said,

> Spaces of Hope brings together all our different parts and elements into a shared public space to be able to discuss openly and fully with one another, each from our own experience and belief base and worldview and with our expertise, in order to discover how we best care for one another … I think the opportunities for Spaces of Hope are almost endless because they will be necessary and valuable in every community, potentially. (Rt Rev Bishop Libby Lane, in Barber-Rowell, 2021)

The movement was developing networked dialogues that supported different people and groups within civil society. We enabled the faith, community and voluntary sector to respond to a plethora of issues including the impacts of austerity, divisions exposed by Brexit, unprecedented changes to public services and a growing epidemic in mental health. This was highlighted by a nearby community being characterised as one of the most depressed places in Britain. The "Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in England" researched the movement and reflected,

> 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. 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).

Power: Puissance and Pouvoir

In 2018/2019 I explored the potential opened up by the Spaces of Hope movement, by conducting 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[4]. 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 and food poverty (Barber-Rowell, 2021, pp. 134-141). The research was designed to look initially for the terms of reference that had emerged from the social movement; liminality, difference, rhizomatic or non-linear flows, and shared values, as well as typical activities undertaken by FBOs, i.e. power brokering and local leadership.

The ethnographic sites were chosen due to their liminal character and the different worldviews that were present in each. The research was responding to the methodological challenge cited by Baker and Dinham (2018) and discussed earlier i.e. finding ways to reach constituencies who are not gathered around, identifiable hierarchies, structures, or denominations. To respond to this challenge, I utilised an assemblage theory framework (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988).

This is a transformational framework which looks at the differences and creative potential within relationships, the affect that is generated between those relationships and the spaces that they take place within and between. The language that Deleuze and Guattari (1988) used of this is 'terratorialise' i.e. when a space or assemblage becomes occupied it is terratorialised; to enter a space or assemblage is to 're-terratorialise' and to exit a space or assemblage is to 'de-terratorialise'. Within assemblage theory, terratorialisation takes place through the flow of differences being expressed. Differences are understood in terms of power, characterised as potential (puissance), and concrete (pouvoir) content and expressions i.e. what differences might, and what differences actually do to one another as they terratorialise different spaces (Massumi, 2016 [1988], p. xvi). This means that understanding of difference is gained by considering both the potential and concrete content and expressions of power as terratorialisation takes place. An additional consideration within the research was whether it was just power between people that was a relevant concern, as opposed to power between people and all the other different content and expressions in a given space. To account for this, assemblage theory was '*finessed*' (McFarlane, 2011, p. 207) by the addition of Actor Network Theory (ANT). ANT considers the potential and concrete expressions of both human and non-human actors in an assemblage, as having equal potential for affecting one another. Latour (2007) explained this approach in terms of 'matters of fact' and 'matters of concern' i.e. things are by their nature uncertain and therefore contested and so we cannot take for granted or assume a given understanding of anything as fact, but rather, the details must be examined and used to carefully map what is going on, 'whilst highly uncertain and loudly disputed, these real, objective, atypical, and above all, interesting agencies are taken … as gatherings' (Latour, 2007, 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 expectations and naming things as such, as opposed to carefully mapping the realities of what is unfolding, which can be quite different. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) referred to this mapping as cartography.

The research tools assembled to map these assemblages, comprised 27 interviews, 114 surveys and 90 hours of participant observations. Thematic Network Analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) was used to unearth the

[4] 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.

different and creative potential themes within the data. A set of 6 global themes and 18 organising themes or modalities and 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 flows of overlapping contents and expressions of each of the FBOs. The modalities and characteristics that were found through this research offer a means of mapping the flows of difference, relationships and power through the assemblages within the postsecular spaces across the three ethnographic sites. Each modality is distinct and simultaneously interconnected. 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. I will turn now to the data to discuss how potential and concrete forms of power were expressed and implicated by the modalities and characteristics of the Spaces of Hope framework.

Table 1

The Modalities and Characteristics Framework for Mapping Spaces of Hope

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

Mapping Potential and Concrete Expressions of Power

In this section I will set out one of the three case studies from my research to evidence the affective flows of potential and concrete expressions of power, viewed through the lens of the Curating Spaces of Hope modalities and characteristics (see Figure 1). This will show how power implicates the relationships, leadership, motivations, interface, stories, and administrative flows across the different assemblages within the study. The study I will use is the Mustard Seed, and its counterpart, the Seeds Cafe, which are both founded on one high street in a town on the southern edge of Greater Manchester[5].

[5] The names used within the research have been replaced by pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality and anonymity for the research participants. Whilst the names have changed, the sense in which the original names were used to generate the names of the cafes, inspired by someone and their behaviours, has been preserved and maintained.

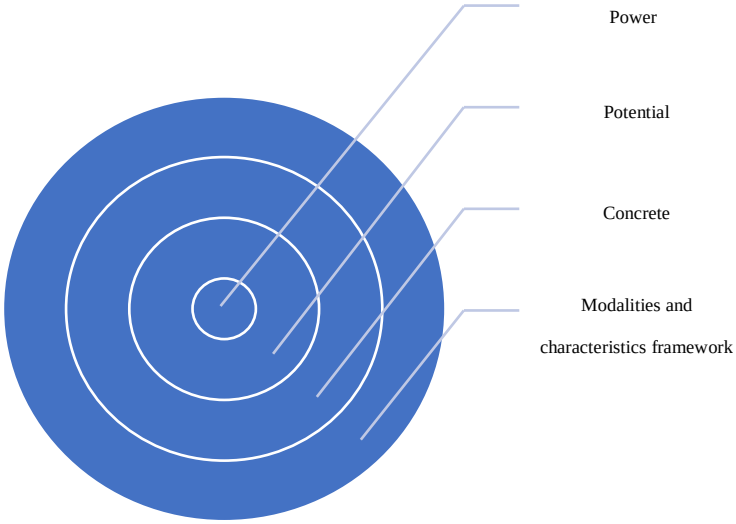


Figure 1. Layers denoting the expression of power as potential and concrete, which is viewed and interpreted through the lens of the modalities and characteristics framework of Curating Spaces of Hope.

The Mustard Seed and Seeds Cafe

The Mustard Seed was opened in 2013 and the Seeds Cafe was opened in 2015. The two cafes were formed out of one vision, which was inspired by a local woman whose nickname was “Seeds”, because she scattered the Christian gospel wherever she went like the parable found in the Christian gospels. This was expressed by Seeds speaking with homeless people on the high street and buying them food, whilst sharing her time and the Christian gospel with them. The vision for a cafe was formed after Seeds passed away. The original vision was to honour the life that Seeds lived, and to share the gospel as she did, in an open and hospitable way. The vision holder was called Janice and she nurtured this vision for 20 years. The Mustard Seed was the original manifestation of the vision. The Mustard Seed was developed by a steering group from the community, including people from different churches from different denominations. As the project progressed, a premise was identified, and plans were made to open the Mustard Seed. These plans were supported by a local Christian philanthropist, who agreed to support the project financially. The building was purchased, and it reached a point of signing it over to the local steering group that had formed. At this stage the philanthropist made clear that they would not sign over the property unless certain conditions were met. These included the adoption of an off-the-shelf social enterprise model which dictated everything from the aesthetic of the building (clean, crisp, plane, colours, finishes on furniture etc.) to the staff structure and governance processes. This was consolidated by the requirement for the husband of the Director of this faith-based social enterprise franchise, being installed as the Chair of board of trustees for the project group. There was also a condition that the Chair associated with the social enterprise franchise had a veto for anything that he felt went against the brand principles of the social enterprise franchise. These conditions were reluctantly accepted by the group, because they had shepherded a vision, inspired by seeds, to the point of it becoming real, and they wanted the cafe open to begin serving people in the community. But once the cafe was open, it became clear that what was being delivered, was no longer Seeds vision. The prophetic story of Seeds was no longer being told. Due to the polished aesthetic and because the cafe was structured like a professional establishment, once an order had been consumed it was expected that people would vacate their tables and move on. It was felt that

this was not conducive to welcoming the homeless. Janice, the woman who carried the Seeds vision reflected,

> I realized that I could take [people] in for a coffee but then when we'd drunk our coffee that's it, it's over with. You have to move on. Whereas here [Seed Cafe] people can come and sometimes are here at 10 o'clock and we have to throw them out at 4 o'clock. If they come from a cold home and they're lonely and obviously they can take advantage of a warm place and a free coffee and plenty of company and support. And so, we've developed this, The Seeds cafe, branching out from the original Seed concept.

Further, the Seeds story, whilst maintained in the name, had been replaced by the narrative of the social enterprise franchise characterised by a charismatic evangelical Christian gospel; indiscriminately scattering seeds as they go, and a rallying call of 'unity', which indicated that whilst people might be different and think differently, there is only one God and therefore people must come together or unite under his leadership. Unity was described by a member of Mustard Seed as follows,

> If we could be churches working together in the community that would hold a greater weight. It's something that is not always that easy to do because we've all got our own doctrines and our own ways, belief systems even within Christianity itself. But, when we dwell in unity there is great power in that. And so that was very much a message at the beginning when we reached out to all the local churches to take part in establishing the Mustard Seed here in the community.

Members of the original steering group who had been usurped by the manoeuvres of the Christian philanthropist did not feel able to adopt the 'unity' narrative and so they left the project, and secured a different property at the other end of the high street, and named it the Seeds Cafe. This cafe was opened using the inspiration of Seeds life, adopted a pay as you feel model, and kept space for the homeless to reside in the space across all opening hours.

Potential and Concrete Expressions of Power

Within the Seeds assemblage, power implicates relationships between people, expressed in terms of the different modalities and characteristics, in different ways. Potential power (puissance) can be found in the emergence of the vision for Mustard Seed and Seeds Cafe after Seeds death, was indicative of the prophetic power of her story (Modality 5). The story expressed the motivation (Modality 3) held by one woman to care for others (Modality 4) in a way that established an enduring relationship and legacy with that place (Modality 1). In turn Janice carried the story forward and gathered others around it (illustrating leadership—Modality 2) to form a working group to realise the potential that the vision had (characterised by the administrative flows of Modality 6). This realisation of the vision had been coproduced by different contributors, such that the assemblage continued to become terratorialised within the scope of the Seeds narrative. Concrete power (pouvoir) is expressed most notably by the leadership (Modality 2) of the philanthropist whose ultimatum forced the deterritorialisation of the project group (Modality 6), in order to reterritorialise it with a new Chair with veto powers that ensured a specific set of predetermined aesthetics and working practices in the cafe (characterised as the interface within Modality 4). This expression of power (pouvoir), was exercised as a condition of the project resources being returned to community ownership and re-establishing the relationship between the project and the place it emerged from (Modality 1). This example expresses power (pouvoir) as an actual, concrete affect that took place within the Mustard Seed based on the force exerted by the philanthropist. The deterritorialisation of the board of trustees was one of many options that were open to the gathering of interested parties but was made concrete by the condition of the philanthropist; to install the faith based social

enterprise franchise they had sympathy with in a position of oversight, before ownership was handed over to the community. This was inspired by the new narrative of 'unity'. Within the assemblage, the potential and concrete expressions of power are implicated by the different outlooks and worldviews of those involved. I will turn to analysis of power with respect to these different worldviews now.

Power and Different Worldviews

Within the Mustard Seed assemblage, there are distinct expressions of power that are conflicting with one another. The concrete expressions of power by the philanthropist are used to leverage power over the project and are motivated by a worldview that is expressed as one of Christian unity. Given the obvious discord that occurred following the actions of the philanthropist, the language of unity in this case does not appear to match with the fact that a deterritorialisation took place and a whole new cafe was established; Seeds Cafe, as a rejection of the approach taken to the first project. The data highlight this complexity within the assemblage, the power relations involved and the critical role that different worldviews can play in interpreting power. Members of Mustard Seed reflected that there was a sense of loss but that they felt that God was active in the experiences they were having. One member who worked well with both Seeds Cafe and Mustard Seed said,

> Whilst at the time it appeared that these two things were in competition with each other; that they weren't really [getting] on, God honoured both of those visions and actually we now bookend the high street, and I think that's really a wonderful thing … We serve very diverse people by different clientele. But we do support each other as well so it's just lovely how it all worked. (Barber-Rowell, 2021, p. 274)

The sense of unity was reflected on also. It was considered that the experience was ultimately one of grace and the redemption of broken relationships,

> We don't have a blame culture at all, is all about supposed redemption … it is very much about second chances and moving people forward and strengthening things rather than knocking things down … And I know a lot of that is because you serve one Lord … we are all one in Christ and we are all part of that family whether you're in the church or not. We are also part of God's family.

This example of seemingly contradictory parts co-existing in one irreducible whole is called univocity (Deleuze, 2014 [1968]) and is characterised by Deleuze and Guattari (1988) as possible due to disjunctive synthesis i.e. two contradictory parts comprising a single whole. Disjunctive synthesis allows the nuances that worldviews offer to the power dynamics in this assemblage to be highlighted. On the one hand, there is a narrative of unity and a claim that God is working in all things within the assemblage, and simultaneously there is an acknowledgment of the affect of the power expressed, the loss experienced and the way in which blame was transcended to allow people to move forward. By considering the different flows of experience in this way, the homogenous expression of 'unity' which is claimed by respondents to offer great power, is opened up to greater scrutiny.

Power to the People

The Mustard Seed had its 5th birthday during the research. It gave respondents the chance to reflect on how things had changed since they opened. The Mustard Seed manager reflected,

> It's much more relaxed now that I think from the trustees down, that we all work, we're all from different fellowships all from different sort of church memberships but we remember that God's only building one church. We all work together in harmony and unity … So, we've grown in our confidence as a body of Christ.

The leadership on offer at all levels of the organisation had recognised the affect of the concrete expression of power that had punctuated the establishment of the Mustard Seed. In recognising this, the participants in the research had been able to move on from that episode and were able to work together. It was unclear to what extent this was individuals who had reconciled, or the organisational structures that had been adapted to accommodate the affect of this concrete expression of power and to mitigate for such shocks in the future? The Mustard Seed itself grew and became characterised by new partnerships and networks which were forming with the wider community in a manner that empowered people. One of the cafe managers at Mustard Seed who began working there when Mustard Seed opened noted,

> I think part of the network and part of the community, and something that I think the Mustard Seed has been knitted into, been woven into, part of that network and part of that community does span across the locality of the community but also with churches and other agencies … I think it'd be really tricky and really interesting to actually go into the networks that inform what happens here. Because it would be quite wide ranging. And that would go right between Christian groups and churches, people who know each other from the community, it would go through other charities and agencies too.

However, at a point coinciding with the end of the research period, this member of staff opted to take up new employment elsewhere. It was seen as a potentially catastrophic piece of news by those within the cafe, because this member of staff had become so integral to the day-to-day running of the Mustard Seed that she was seen as impossible to replace. A member of the board of trustees reflected,

> One of the cafe managers is moving on to pastures new, which is going to leave an enormous, she's very tiny person physically, but she really was going to leave an absolutely massive hole to fill. We 100% bless her in her new experiences, but we are finding it a challenge to look at how we're going to fill that spot. We do need to, no question. But we will really need somebody who can sort of hit the ground running as well with a little bit of training. So we're all praying very hard contacting lots and lots of church contacts and we've put things up on the Christian Jobs website. We're doing everything in our power but mostly we're sort of giving it to God and from prayer chains and things trying to get the right person in because it's incredibly important that we get the right person, not just for the staff but the customers; the whole future of the cafe is in this post really.

This change is indicative of a deterritorialisation of the Mustard Seed assemblage, where the affect of this member of staff leaving, their power to influence the Mustard Seed through both their concrete power (pouvoir) expressed as their presence in the job role, and their potential power (puissance) through their absence, is recognised. The trustee is counting the potential cost of the change that has been forced upon Mustard Seed as potentially an existential threat to the future of the cafe.

In this section, I have mapped potential and concrete expressions of power within the Mustard Seed case study, using assemblage theory and the modalities and characteristics framework of Curating Spaces of Hope. This mapping has shown the relationship between spaces of power and the potential and concrete expressions of power that can take place within FBOs. In the final section of this paper I will turn to opportunities this opens up for building back better, in post-pandemic contexts.

Power to the People in Post-Pandemic Society

At the beginning of the paper, I set out the pandemic response by FBOs and the potential that it offered for new and innovative expressions of partnership and people power, after the pandemic characterised initially as 'rescue and emergency' and then as 'building back better'. In this final section, I will set out how I have begun to explore the potential for Curating Spaces of Hope to contribute to this process of building back better in

post-pandemic society. In 2022 I began this exploration. I issued a call to action for people to gather together and to share the different concerns that they were facing and to consider how they might move forward together, empowering a movement of change (Barber-Rowell, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c). This call attracted responses from a diverse range of people and organisations included the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), William Temple Foundation, Liverpool Hope University, Dialogue Society, European Innovation Council, Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services, Gramsci Society UK and the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The emerging response also included circa 350 individual respondents from across the community and voluntary sector, think tanks, people with lived experience of poverty and inequalities, people with different worldviews (Christian, Muslim and non-religious) and people working at different levels of organisations across the public and higher education sectors regionally, nationally and internationally. From early 2022 to July 2023 engagements comprised circa 20 dialogue gatherings that were both situated 'in person' gatherings and virtual 'online' gatherings. The overarching shared purpose during these gatherings was to find hope in the contexts that people were in such that sense might be made and affinity might be found between otherwise disconnected groups that could develop concrete practice in response to shared concerns. What emerged exhibited potential for coproducing postsecular spaces, which empower people to build back better in post-pandemic contexts. These spaces were characterised by both formal and informal leadership, or as Antonio Gramsci would describe it, traditional and organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 5-23). Here I will set out three initial expressions of the Curating Spaces of Hope movement, each indicative of the emergence of postsecular spaces namely, grassroots political movement, networked expressions of care and social action, and pedagogical engagement.

Grassroots Political Movement

In May 2022, I convened a dialogue with people who identify themselves as volunteers of the Dialogue Society. This group are influenced by the Hizmet (meaning service) Movement, which is a pacifist political movement inspired by the Islamic teacher Fatollah Gulen (Weller, 2022). The gathering was convened via a zoom call. Those gathered had moved to Liverpool during the pandemic after seeking asylum in the UK. The dialogue explored the stories of those in attendance including narratives of 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 gathering had empowered them to speak and was the first opportunity they had to reflect on their journey. 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 offered 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, which is seeking to develop civic links and partnerships from the margins of the city.

Networked Expressions of Care and Social Action

In June 2022 I convened an in-person gathering with fellows from the RSA in Liverpool. Their interests included housing, mental health, heritage and civic space, ecology, sustainable development, community activism, and eradicating poverty. We explored how the fellows, members of the RSA network who are broadly characterised by a desire to do good in the city, might renew relationships with one another post-pandemic and empower one another to respond to some of these concerns together. As a result of this dialogue, a fellow of the RSA identified themselves as a board member of Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services (LCVS) who

subsequently commissioned the deployment of Curating Spaces of Hope with members of their network, to empower members to work together to reduce and eradicate poverty in the city of Liverpool.

Pedagogical Engagement

In July 2022 I convened a gathering of Anglican and Catholic Christians both from academic and community contexts. Inspired by the Papal encyclical, Fratelli Tutti (Pope Francis, 2020) we utilised the parable of the Good Samaritan to challenge us to consider how we treat others and how to learn from those who are different from us. 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 who were different from them 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 might not 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, which is unique in Europe for its ecumenical foundation i.e. being rooted in both Anglican and Catholic faiths. Following on from the initial ecumenical dialogue I conducted, an agreement was formed with Liverpool Hope University to support further development of Curating Spaces of Hope from 2022 to 2024. One such development includes the deployment of Curating Spaces of Hope across the University, exploring how to empower staff and students at all levels through their work in the University and the city. The pedagogical engagement at Liverpool Hope University also includes the space to draw together the three strands of work noted in this final section to inform Curating Spaces of Hope as a toolkit for not only mapping but also for empowering and mobilising a postsecular movement in post-pandemic society.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have set out Curating Spaces of Hope as a means of mapping potential and concrete forms of power, nuanced by different worldviews, and implicated by the way in which people might be empowered within postsecular spaces. In the final section of the paper, I have pointed to the potential for a new movement to emerge which can engage not only in mapping, but can deploy Curating Spaces of Hope to empower the process of building back better after the pandemic. The three examples of post-pandemic deployments point to the opportunity for new forms of engagement with FBOs, characterised by groups of different worldviews, including those of no religious affiliation. This research began by addressing a deficit in understanding of faith based organisations including mapping the role of power. However avenues now exist to be able to explore Curating Spaces of Hope within other literatures too. I have set out the possibilities for Curating Spaces of

Hope in social policy in *SPR 35*, but in light of Keeping the Faith Reports further research should be conducted into the role Curating Spaces of Hope can play in building back better post-pandemic. The discussion of power in this paper should also be developed within politics literatures, for example in conversation with the work of Antonio Gramsci and his discussion of hegemony, intellectuals and the modern prince. In this way, dialogue between Curating Spaces of Hope and social movements is also something that should be developed as a means of testing the potential Curating Spaces of Hope offers for organising and curating postsecular partnerships across those of different worldviews. At the heart of these different areas for development is the opportunity to explore and develop Curating Spaces of Hope as a means of empowering individual people to initiate and innovate in a way that enables us to build back better in post-pandemic society.

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