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The makeshift and the contingent: Lefebvre and the production of precarious sacred space

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Abstract: Geographical engagement with religion has grown substantially of late, with many recent studies considering the ‘sacred beyond the officially sacred’. However, many sacred spaces are not used solely for devotion, and there is a need to understand the diversity of sacred spaces, including how they come to be used as such, and the experiences of worshipers using them. Drawing on Lefebvrian notions of diversion and appropriation, I argue that the concepts of contingent and makeshift sacred spaces bring more nuanced and complex understandings of the intertwining of sacrality and profanity in spatial formations. Discussion is grounded in the case study of Muslim worshippers’ sacred spaces in rural western Wales; their relatively small demographic profile means that there is a reliance on short-term arrangements in the absence of long-term, privately-owned and controlled sacred spaces. Through precarious access to sacred spaces, local Muslims are reliant on local institutions’ hospitality, and there is little development in the region’s Islamic sacred spaces or claims to space in the region. I conclude by highlighting the significance of the contingent and makeshift to understand sacred spaces, and its place in everyday life.

Key words: sacred space, Lefebvre, makeshift, contingent, Muslims, Wales-west.

Introduction

Geographical engagement with religion has grown substantially in recent years, with much attention on the ‘sacred beyond the officially sacred’ (Kong, 2001 page 221, 2010; Yorgason and della Dora, 2009). These include studies of university campuses (Hopkins, 2010), shopping centres (Gokarkisel, 2009), state schools (Howe, 2009), and youth movements (Mills, 2012). While these diverse accounts are to be welcomed, it is problematic to assume that the ‘official’ label is clear, homogenous, and no longer of interest to scholars of religion. The notion of ‘official’ sacred space needs unpacking, as does the notion of a ‘sacred space’. There are limitations to ‘sacred space’, largely understood in Christian terms (Eliade, 1957), not least as not all religious or spiritual movements have notions of sacrality. Religious space (conveying the more-than-devotional activities that take place) and devotional or worship space (emphasizing the focus) are alternative phrases. While aware of its limitations, I use ‘sacred space’ as it conveys particular behavioural qualities which differentiate it against other spaces, while alternative phrases do not. This distinction is found in studies of Islam, Hinduism, and Taoism (Sina, 2015; Kang, 2009; Sinha, 2003).

The ‘official’ label is also problematic. Some sacred spaces are official through ‘authorization’ (Asad, 1993, page 8), which may involve consecration, or commemorating a site’s mythology (Lincoln, 2014), while others are recognized due to particular architectural features, access for services, and so forth. However, not all ‘official’ sacred spaces are signified so clearly. Such bespoke developments, particularly for minority religious groups, are often the result of lengthy campaigns (Eade, 1996), and subject to objections to aesthetics and practices perceived as incongruent with surroundings in secular liberal democracies (Dunn, 2001; Naylor and Ryan, 2002, 2003; Cesari, 2005; Gale, 2005; McLoughlin, 2005; Landman and Wessels, 2005). Meanwhile, substitute spaces, such as

private houses, hotel ballrooms, and prefabricated mobile cabins, are used (Kong, 1993a, 2002; Landman and Wessels, 2005). However, not all such arrangements follow a trajectory to bespoke mosque or church development. Some campaigns fail (Thielmann, 2012), and others linger in a state of temporary fixedness (Sina, 2015). While such phenomena are not new (Casanova, 2005), the growth of religious diversity in Europe, northern America, and Oceania, and the subsequent claims to space made by their adherents, means that there is a need to understand the properties of these spaces in themselves, rather than as interim measures. This approach allows understanding of the precarious arrangements many minority religious groups experience, particularly outside metropolitan regions that characterize the literature (e.g. Kong, 1993a, 1993b; Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1999; Sinha, 2003). As Dunn (2004, page 334) demonstrates, developing religious facilities are place-making activities for religious groups, and reliance on substitute sacred spaces contribute to precarious – and often muted – claims to space (Author, 2010). This paper presents the experiences of Muslims' use of everyday spaces for worship in western Wales; spaces reliant on local institutions' 'goodwill', with implications for negotiating space for sacred acts. Notwithstanding Sina (2015), there have been few attempts to understand worshippers' experiences of using such facilities, which brings negotiation around sacred forms and functions. This paper builds on this work to theorize the production of sacred space through negotiation of space, institutional politics, and ritual.

Drawing on Lefebvre's notions of diversion and appropriation (1991), I invoke the concepts of the contingent and the makeshift to understand sacred space production within everyday spaces. Contingent sacred spaces are used regularly for religious or spiritual practices, often through informal but long-term arrangements. They are owned and controlled by others, requiring negotiation of access conditions and modification requests. These differ from 'storefront mosques' (Slymovics, 1996) where worshippers typically have far greater control of the site, formalized in agreements, and often undertaking extensive modification of the building's interior to facilitate devotional and communal activities (Slymovics, 1996), drawing on considerable financial and political capital (Eade, 1996). Dispossession (or precarious possession) is a key feature of sacral politics: 'the sacrality of a place can be directly related to a politics of property' (Chidester and Linenthal, 1995, page 8). Makeshift sacred spaces, meanwhile, are occupied momentarily for worship in the absence of suitable sites, before returning to their intended uses. While contingent spaces can function as a base, makeshift spaces are used opportunistically to fulfil devotional needs. Both require negotiation between sacred acts and profane settings, challenging the established notion of sacred space as absolute space, and bring considerations on adapting sacred conventions. I argue that exploring the relationship of these concepts allows a broader and more nuanced

understanding of sacred encounters in everyday life and the diversity of sacred spaces beyond 'official'/'unofficial' binaries.

Examining contingent and makeshift sacred spaces provides a number of insights for geographical studies of religion. Firstly, these concepts allow examination of how sacred politics and poetics (understood in descriptive rather than substantive terms) entwine. Kong (2001, page 212), drawing on Chidester and Linenthal (1995), defines the 'politics of the sacred' as the 'maintenance and management of the sacred', and the poetics as 'the essential character of the sacred'. While these distinctions have been adopted by others (e.g. Holloway, 2003a, 2003b; Mills, 2012; Finlayson, 2012), these have been approached as different concerns, despite Kong herself noting their permeability. To date, little attention has been paid to the ways in which questions about how the appearance of sacred spaces (the poetics) are related to their modification and maintenance (the politics). In situations where users have little or no control over sacred space, these are central concerns about how sacrality can be produced in a way that conforms with conventions, rituals, and expectations. Secondly, these understandings gleaned from Lefebvre inform a spatial theory of worship. Building on MacDonald's pioneering work (2002), I consider the production of sacred space through ritual. While others have considered the role of the body, space, materiality, and technologies in prompting affective responses to sacrality (Holloway 2003a, 2003b; Connell 2005; Finlayson 2012; Sina, 2015), there is a need to understand its production when a space's form-structure-function diverge. Thirdly, and relatedly, I highlight the permeability of sacred/profane distinctions – two concepts developed by Durkheim (2001 [1912]) that serve as conceptual foundations for religious studies. Through examining sacred productions through ritual in 'profane' settings, this opposition is destabilised, allowing for 'messier' understandings of sacrality.

The paper is structured as follows: the next section considers how recent studies have understood sacred spatialities. The third section draws on Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991) to understand contingent and makeshift forms. Methodology and the case study's context are briefly discussed in the fourth section. The fifth and sixth sections consider the politics and poetics of contingent and makeshift sacred spaces respectively in western Wales. Conclusions are offered in the final section.

Locating sacrality

Sacred/profane distinctions, originally advanced by Durkheim (2001 [1912]) and developed by Eliade (1957) remain important in spatial practices delineating sacred spaces. This distinction rests on the need to separate sacrality from profanity (both of which are considered contagious) to preserve

sacralities' supposed special characteristics, and is upheld through various spatial assemblages. Rituals are central to producing sacred space: 'sacred place is ordinary place, ritually made extraordinary' (Kong, 2001, page 218), and 'something or someone is made sacred by ritual' (Smith, 1987, page 105). Rituals order space in authoritative ways through spatial practices (Asad, 1993; Lincoln, 2014). MacDonald (2002) outlines the ways in which highly regulated rites, such as communion, reinforced gendered and insider-outsider politics at a Free Presbyterian church in the Hebrides. While the building was locked outside of services, emphasizing the notion that god could be found everywhere, behavioural practices reinforced the distinction of the site as a sacred space set apart from a profane world. Similarly, Sina (2015) outlines a number of widespread and accepted devotional practices which separate female and male worshippers, and menstruating females from other worshippers in a site of communal Islamic prayer. These, and other cases, such as Smith's discussion of the zones attributed to different actors at the temple at Zion (1987, pages 54-56), illustrates that spatial practices bring location-based behavioural cues, reinforcing hierarchies of sacrality alongside sacred/profane distinctions. These rituals are informed by authority on the circumstances of what is permitted. For Asad (1993, page 8), authorized space is that 'whose extensions are variously defined, and whose limits are variously imposed, transgressed, and reset'.

Sacred/profane distinctions and sacral hierarchies are also conveyed in many sacred spaces' material constructions. As Finlayson (2012) notes, architecture is used to elicit particular affectual responses, spatially demarcated from the broader world, such as gravel driveways or leaded lights. Similarly, atmospherics, such as music or silence, are also used in the Taoist and Methodist centres she studied, to produce sacred affects. Technologies, such as sound systems, lighting, and large screen with hymn words to encourage participation, are also used in megachurches to produce affects which differentiate the experiences of sacred space from other spaces (Connell, 2005).

Yet, there is a tension between rituals and the spaces in which they are performed. Smith (1987) argues that emplacement, the situation in which rituals are performed, determines whether rituals are sacred: 'When chanted in the Temple (or its surrogate), [songs] are, perforce, sacred; when chanted in a tavern, they are not' (page 104). However, he fails to reflect critically on the site's significance in emplacement. It is unclear how a surrogate temple fulfils that role, or what distinguishes a surrogate temple from another space. There is a need to consider how substitute spaces are accessed and negotiated, how they are amended to accommodate devotion, and how these are perceived and understood as sacred spaces by worshippers.

Recent literature has explored sacred encounters beyond the confines of recognized sacred spaces (Yorgason and della Dora, 2009), challenging the bounded-togetherness of practice and space. Studies of these 'unofficial' sacred spaces have considered rituals and worship in spaces not designed for such purposes, include spaces within the home (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1999), shrines that have become sites of tourism as much as for pilgrimage (Kang, 2009), and memorial cairns that have been produced in forms of spirituality associated with the 'subjective turn' (Maddrell, 2009; Heelas and Woodhead, 2005). Similarly, religious diversity, often linked to immigration patterns, is a driver of heterogeneous religious landscapes (Eade, 1996; Naylor and Ryan, 2002, 2003). Smaller religious communities often make use of spaces available until more permanent premises can be accessed, although premises are often outgrown. While there are instances of extensive bureaucratic control managing the development and merger of sacred spaces (Kong, 1993b; Sinha, 2003), failure to address religious needs sufficiently leads to what Kong (1993a, page 346) terms 'substitute' sacred spaces. Hotel ballrooms, school halls, and houses are used for devotional practice, emphasizing the role of a sense of community in producing sacred space. Sacred/profane distinctions are upheld in these spaces: the location of shrines, *pooja*, or prayer-spaces are often separated from 'unclean' sites (kitchens, toilets), sometimes shielded by a curtain, and subject to special cleaning arrangements (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1999; Kong, 1993b). Such spaces function as counterpublic arena (Fraser, 1990) for groups who do not have the same access to communal spaces, such as Muslim women, enabling a clearer sense of community to emerge (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1999).

Growing religious diversity often means shared sacred spaces, both through designed multi-faith spaces and in bespoke spaces 'opened-up' for other faiths. Institutional politics shape worshippers' experiences of these shared spaces. In her study of the Millennium Dome in London, Gilliat-Ray (2005) notes that while designed as an inclusive, flexible space with portable paraphernalia of several faiths, claims were made on the room as a Christian space through daily Christian services and 'forgetting' to remove crosses afterwards. Furthermore, Islamic presence was marginalized at the site (cf Hopkins, 2010). Two Muslim representatives advising the design of the multi-faith space requested a separate prayer room away from the site, which was funded by lottery money and thus considered in appropriate. While the multi-faith space could facilitate Islamic worship (e.g. through prayer mats at hand), there were reports of Muslims directed to the prayer room to worship there. As Chidester and Linenthal (1995, page 16) note, 'sacred places are always highly charged sites for contested negotiations over the ownership of the symbolic capital'.

Minority faith groups are often given use of spaces designed for another faith group by institutions such as hospitals (Eccles, 2014) and universities. Sina (2015), in her study of Islamic worship in a university's Christian chapel, demonstrates the re-ordering of space to remove Christian paraphernalia during *jum'ah*. Embodiment is central to these practices, demarcating worship space visually and aurally. Thielmann (2012) discusses a similar situation in Germany, where the institution became increasingly frustrated with the requests of students which it did not see as its responsibility to address. As I have discussed elsewhere, there is often frustration with users of these arrangements, who feel they are worshipping in a sacred space made profane by the presence of Christian iconography. As one of Sina's respondents notes, "I'd rather pray elsewhere if I had the option" (2015, page 305).

Having outlined both the continued significance of sacred/profane distinctions for worshippers in sacred space, and the ways in which these distinctions are challenged by practices, I move now to outline the salience of Lefebvrian theory to understand these dynamics of sacred space production.

Producing sacred space

Lefebvre's work on the production of space has received much attention in Anglophone social science since the 1990s. I do not revisit the debates over his work here (Unwin, 2000; Kipfer et al., 2013), except to outline that his work brings value with its intention not to analyse 'things in space, but space itself, with a view to uncovering the social relationships embedded in it' (Lefebvre, 1991, page 89). Much of Lefebvre's thesis rests on a series of related triads: of spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces (1991, pages 32-33, 38-9); of perceived, conceived, and lived spaces (page 39); and of structure, form, and function (pages 147-149). The lived spatial practices mediate between the conceived representations of space and the perceived representational spaces, bringing dialectical unity. However, it is to aspects which have received less attention that I turn.

As Lefebvre (1991, pages 144, 148-149) details, a strong and positive relationship has been established between form and function to ease signification and the signs' readability; in bespoke sacred space, alignment of form and function is expected, giving rise to structure. The architectural forms of a mosque or church not only signify its function, but also facilitate it. This need not be limited to the external aesthetics, which may conform to archetypal conventions, but also to its layout: entrances segregated by sex, leading to a supply of running water for the *wudu*, and a carpeted floor maintaining cleanliness and preserving this ritual washing before prayers. These and other aspects accommodate devotional ritual as part of everyday routines for Muslims in that they

allow adherence to norms, duties, and expectations. There is also alignment in transformed spaces, such as 'storefront mosques' (Slymovics, 1996), even if the façade does not align with aesthetical expectations. These are 'dominated' spaces (Lefebvre, 1991, pages 164-168, albeit to a lesser degree than the fortifications he mentions, as their forms are transformed by labour and technology (through renovation) to facilitate function. In contrast, 'appropriated' spaces, where form-structure-function is more diffuse, bring challenges in producing legible spaces which facilitate particular activities.

Lefebvre (1991, page 167) distinguishes between appropriation and diversion (*détournement*). The former is 'a natural space modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a space that it has been appropriated by that group' (page 165). Appropriation produces 'makeshift' spaces. Vasudevan (2015, pages 348-349) discussing urban squatting, considers the makeshift as including collective world-making, improvised materialism, and a specific political imaginary. At its heart are questions of occupation, agency, and making-do, through learning 'to use and adapt different materials in the contexts of "daily survival, experience, inequality and possibility"' (Vasudevan 2015, page 348, quoting McFarlane 2011, page 163). However, Vasudevan is overly focussed on the longer-term modification and transformation of these spaces. While spaces are transformed to meet the needs of squatters and other occupiers, such modifications need not be extensive with the aim of supporting longer-term occupation. Makeshift spaces involve shorter-term accommodation, such as overnight encampment: using space to fulfil a need, before moving onwards, in a momentary, opportunistic occupation of a space. Similarly, the makeshift need not only be concerned with the assemblage of an alternative spatial form: it can be adapted through removing items which inhibit practice. Conversely, it may be appropriated as it is broadly suitable for its intended uses, and not in need of modification. In both senses, it concerns ideas of representational space. Vasudevan's work discusses tactical processes in detail, but there is a need for more attention to how space is used by subaltern groups and their claims to space.

Diversion, meanwhile, is a space which has outlived its original purpose and 'put to a use quite different from its initial one', which had determined its form-structure-function (Lefebvre 1991, page 167). Lefebvre presents the example of the Halles Centrales in Paris: a wholesale food market diverted to serve as a centre for Parisian youths. Indeed, many of Vasudevan's (2015) examples could be read as diversion as much as appropriation. Diversion implies an occupation of a space and its (gradual) modification to serve the needs of the occupiers. Diverted spaces are contingent spaces. Access is negotiated with its owners to enable particular functions. However, control over these spaces lie with the owners, not their users, who may be diverse and with different priorities

(Thielmann, 2012). Unlike a makeshift space, which includes an active – if impermanent – modification of the space through agency, modification of a contingent space is a negotiated, longer-term process. As many contingent spaces are arrangements of ‘fixed temporariness’, there is potential for continued non-alignment of form-structure-function.

Materials and *matériel* are also involved in producing contingent and makeshift spaces. Materials are ‘indispensable and durable: stone, brick, cement and concrete, for example – or, in the musical sphere, scales, modes and tones’ (Lefebvre, 1991 page 105). In contrast, *matériel* consist of ‘tools and directions for their use...when new needs arise, new *matériel* must be invented to meet them’ (*ibid.*). *Matériel* are thus related to representational space. Like the poetics of sacred spaces, theological conventions and customs inform these lived spaces, both in terms of how these spaces should be assembled and used. Materials, meanwhile, can impact on form, but can also facilitate function. While Lefebvre conveys materials as outlasting and informing *matériel*, contingent and makeshift spaces bring an inversion of these. I argue that contingent and makeshift sacred spaces represent a making-do with materials at hand to produce representational spaces, conforming with *matériel*. To be clear, these are incorporated in both contingent and makeshift sacred space in different ways: they are not part of a vector of difference.

I build on Lefebvre’s work to understand institutions’ roles in the production of spaces of difference (Merrifield, 2002, page 91). As others (Blum and Nast, 1996; Buckley and Strauss, 2016) have noted, Lefebvre’s work conveys heterosexist, urbancentric positions, limited in its understanding of difference and multicultural politics. Similarly, his work is nuanced, caveated, and complex; these abstract models do not always translated neatly when applied to case studies. Nonetheless, exploring the dialectic between the conceived representations of space by institutional managers and the lived representational space of worshippers leads to new forms of lived spatial practices, revealing a making do with facilities, their tactical modification, and the adaption of and for ritual. I move now to illustrate this argument through the examples of sacred spaces produced by Muslims in western Wales.

Case study outline

Western Wales is predominantly a rural region, with some post-industrial areas in its south-eastern fringe. It is the ‘heartland’ of the Welsh language, and the demographics are predominantly older, whiter, and more Christian than the UK average. I characterise the area as ‘post-Christian’, following Bruce (2002): its societal culture is influenced by non-conformist Christianity. The main settlements, Carmarthen, Aberystwyth, Lampeter, and Haverfordwest, each have around 10,000 inhabitants. The

region's Muslim population is very small compared to other case-studies which are predominantly large metropolitan areas. According to the 2001 census, there were 730 Muslims in the region – 0.7 per cent of the populace. The region has three hospitals and three universities, which are important in attracting Muslims to live and work in the area. Many residents come to take an early-career post or to study, before leaving for places with perceived better employment opportunities or access to religious services. As a result, a fairly transient population questions the sustainability of local religious facilities.

Data were collected in two strands. Firstly, interviews were conducted with 27 Muslims living and working in the region. While more men (18) were interviewed than women (nine), respondents came from a range of international backgrounds (including the UK, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Malaysia, Nigeria, Egypt, France, Pakistan, Turkey). Most held degree-level qualifications or equivalent, reflecting the demographic profile of local Muslims. Interviews were transcribed and coded with the aid of *NVivo* software. The interviews focussed on respondents' general experiences of living in the region, including discussion on sacred spaces (although not all respondents were regular users of such facilities). Informal discussions with respondents and other Muslims met in the field, complemented the interviews, allowing me insight into aspects of Islamic conventions with which I, a non-Muslim, was unfamiliar.

The second strand developed as an examination into the provision of sacred spaces by local institutions. This included accessing the institutional archive at a local university¹. The papers, which were uncodified, appear to belong to a former registrar. As there was no broader catalogue, there was no scope of cross-referencing for papers from other officials, which may remain in a forgotten filing cabinet. Officials named in paperwork were traced and interviewed where possible, although knowledge and recollection varied considerably, and some key figures had died. This dual approach allowed for an understanding of the processes that led to the adaption of these sacred spaces and the experiences of worshippers using them, capturing both the politics and the poetics of contingent and makeshift sacred spaces.

Contingent sacred spaces

While many proposed mosque developments are contested on the basis of their architectural features, many Muslims in Europe, northern America, and elsewhere worship in more discrete buildings, which do not necessarily have these features (Slymovics, 1996). Others, such as Muslims in western Wales, make use of rooms and buildings that have been set aside for them on temporary, often informal, bases for communal worship and related activities. Premises used in this way are

contingent sacred spaces. They are everyday spaces, diverted from their original functions to serve as sacred spaces. They differ from 'storefront mosques' in three respects. Firstly, there is a lack of control over the space. While worshippers may use the premises regularly, they may not have sole use of the site. Users do not own the site, and there is normally no lease agreement formalising arrangements. Some spaces may be privately owned and accessed via individuals: a room above a restaurant was used for communal worship in one town. Others are accessed via local institutions such as hospitals and universities, which have been provided through hospitable gestures. Negotiation is informal and reliant on sympathetic individuals who have the resources to invest in the premises. Secondly, these are intended as short-term accommodations rather than longer-term projects, but often demonstrate 'temporary fixedness'. Finally, and relatedly, there is little or no refurbishment or renovation to transform the premises from cinemas, etc., into mosques through structural work (e.g. joining rooms to facilitate communal worship) or designs influenced by representational space (e.g. segregation of the sexes). Contingent spaces are often limited to the removal of some functional paraphernalia indicative of its former use, which may occur after long and extensive negotiation.

As diverted spaces, contingent sacred spaces' form-structure-function aligns with the site's former use rather than its current role and is not necessarily retained when the function changes. A redundant gymnasium was selected by one university to serve as a prayer-room for Muslim students: it had a large floorspace suitable for communal worship and a flow of running water, facilitating the *wudu*. However, these buildings' layout can hinder some rituals. In another town, Muslim worshippers (overwhelmingly international postgraduate students and their families) use a small one-storey rectangular building in a car park, for communal worship. Despite longstanding use, the facilities are seldom suitable for these ablutions. The sink's location in the atrium created difficulties in performing the *wudu*:

'I think the problem is that we don't have proper facilities for the mosque. When we come out of the back of the mosque we'll have water, ablution area, and a separated side for sisters and brothers, and have enough space for the prayer. Sometimes we have to go, we have to wait outside and have enough space to [wash].'

(Omarⁱⁱ)

There is only enough space for one person to wash at the time, and the location of the sink between the interior and exterior doors creates a backlog of worshippers waiting for access to the prayer-room. To avoid this bottle-necking, many worshippers opted to use nearby public lavatories to

perform the *wudu* instead. Indeed, the building can be considered *too* functionalist, paying insufficient attention to activities beyond prayer. As Ibrahim notes, the lack of other facilities (other than the prayer-room and sink) also created difficulties:

‘It was provided by the university, and we can’t renovate the mosque, I mean the prayer room to be like a proper mosque, you know? Which we can cook food, area, ablution area, and to toilet, which is difficult. Sometimes you come, you sit for a few hours without having toilets around...’

Such spaces are used for social gatherings alongside worship, particularly during religious festivals. During *iftar* gatherings, many respondents spoke of having ‘to use the bathroom, have to come back and do the *wudu* again’ (Mehmet). While Muslims, along with many reformed denominations of Christianity believe that practically any place can be used for prayer (MacDonald 2002), the need to access a water supply for the *wudu* limits these places in western Wales. Due to their diverted nature, the form does not facilitate the function.

Diversion is also a gradual process, whereby premises are transformed in a staccato manner. Premises may be selected as an interim arrangement but becomes established in their use. One university allowed Muslim students to use the aforementioned gymnasium for communal worship in 1989, initially as a short-term solution to accommodate their devotional needs while plans were developed to commission a bespoke, archetypical mosque on campus in the early 1990s. As nothing materialized, local Muslims (students and residents – a transient community of worshippers, as noted) continued to use the old gymnasium for religious activities. Unlike many ‘storefront’ mosques, which are commercially rented and subject to specific terms and conditions, users of contingent sacred spaces are reliant on the ‘goodwill’ and ‘hospitality’ of others to modify them. In December 1998, the university’s Islamic Students Society (ISS) requested that gymnastic equipment be removed from the mosque (Memo, International Liaison Officer, 7th December 1998); the university agreed to redecoration and some refurbishment, including new power sockets and upgrading the building’s security features (Memo, Maintenance Officer, 25th March 1999). While institutions act in hospitable manners towards these groups, such dynamics illustrate the ambivalent air of responsibilities when sites are used in an informal ‘overspill’ manner. While institutions are responsible for upkeep and regulation, users can feel frustrated about the time taken to make changes, and have difficulties influencing development, as where responsibility lies is not always clear. Contingent sacred spaces are characterized by fixed-temporary arrangements requiring negotiations between site users and controllers.

Alongside serving as arena for worship, sacred spaces also act as hubs for fostering a sense of belonging among adherents. To this end, maintaining access is important for enabling new worshippers to use facilities and bond in social and religious capital. A request was made to replace a stile – which some worshippers apparently had difficulty in using – with a gate (Letter, Estates Director to Sports Centre Director, 20th June, 1995). The letter also conveys a request from the ISS for the Imam (a postgraduate student) to be supplied with a key to the on-site car-park due to the lack of parking spaces on the road. The letter presents an elaborate routine to control access:

‘The suggestion has been made by the students that the Imam takes personal responsibility for opening and closing the main gates out of normal hours. This would mean that the gates would be open, under supervision, for a short period around 10.15pm to allow students travelling by car to park inside the playing field. At 10.30pm the gates would be locked and remain locked until the period of prayer ended at approximately 11.45pm, when the gates would again be opened, under supervision, for approximately 15 minutes’

(Letter, Estates Director to Sports Centre Director, 20th June 1995)

The university refused this request. The Director of the Sports Centre responded that she was:

‘totally opposed to them being given a key to the car park and believe that they would be quite likely to make copies as I understand has happened to the gymnasium.... Neither I nor the Groundstaff could take responsibility for the [site] if the Muslims were given a car park key. My only objection to an improved pedestrian access would be that people with dogs and possibly vandals would also have easier access’

(Memo, Sports Centre Director to Estates Director, 27th June 1995)

The Sports Centre Director opposed on two grounds. Firstly, she expressed concerns over the security and safety of the site (interview, November 2009), due to attempted break-ins there during the 1990s (Memo, Registrar to Buildings Officer, 11th February 1994; Memo, Maintenance Officer to Estates Director, 25th March 1999). Indeed, concerns over health and safety, and the university’s obligations influenced its actions in maintaining the site. As the grounds continued to be used for sports (tennis, cricket), the university needed to ensure that the grass was not soiled by dogs, posing a health risk, and that children would not hurt themselves climbing on sporting equipment or be hit by stray balls, as the university would be liable. Despite the oft-made sacred/profane distinction, sacred spaces are physically connected to broader, everyday spaces, with continuous flows between them.

Similar concerns were expressed when requests were made for replacement hotplates for the premises, which were used for communal meals during *eid* and *iftar*:

‘They tend to boil their food for some hours and consequently it boils over onto the heating unit’ (Memo, Estates Officer to Finance Director, 8th November 1996)

The university felt frustrated that equipment that it had provided had not been used properly. There were reports of disposable barbecues being lit inside the hall, and leftovers not being disposed properly, attracting pests. Although the university authorities acted in the interests of its students, use of the site by local Muslims and their children, alongside Muslim students, led the university to be particularly cautious in its regulation. Contingent sacred spaces occupy sites with different and diverse uses; controllers of these spaces must consider their responsibilities to the different users. To this end, a bureaucratic mentality may emerge in ‘citizen-oriented’ approaches to accommodation (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008), where regulations and liability influence decisions. This is not to suggest that such an approach becomes legalistic, but that concerns over litigation inform consideration.

Secondly, the Director felt that the demands made by the ISS went beyond the original conditions and terms of use agreed some five years earlier. She felt that continued requests undermined the institution’s generosity, suggesting fatigue of dealing with the ISS. Notions of hospitality often inform institutions’ roles in accommodating diversity needs. However, understandings of hospitality (Dikeç *et al.*, 2009; Barnett, 2005) emphasize its temporal nature: it is seldom intended as a permanent arrangement. Hospitality is also rarely, if ever, unconditional, and gratitude is often expected in return for the host’s goodwill (see Ahmed, 2011). The university’s frustration when further requests are made without sufficient gratitude is clear, particularly when it views such provision as beyond its remit (Thielmann, 2012).

Their diverted nature and shared use bring difficulties in using sacred spaces as intended: representational spaces may be restricted to what is deemed acceptable, and some functions are restricted by the form, prompting requests to modify premises to facilitate worship. However, worshippers may not have the resources or authority to construct wholesale modification as described by Eade (1996) and Slymovics (1996), lacking sizeable congregations, ownership or consent, and financial and political capital. Diversion brings challenges for small and relatively new religious groups in an area, as sacred spaces aren’t readily identifiable due to their contingent forms. As John notes, the form of the building brings affectual responses as well as identifying function:

'The problem with [locality] is they haven't got a mosque, a permanent building to pray in, that causes a big problem, so the community don't come together as good as it should, it needs a building where we can meet and everything be Islamic, even the whole feel of the building needs to be Islamic, like when you go to a church, the feel of a church when you go in, there's a feeling with a church, and it is the same with the mosque, so you need. Personally, I like to see a minaret, it's like walking to a church; you see a church, you recognise it as a church, and a mosque, if you're walking up to a mosque to pray, and you see it as a mosque, with a minaret and a dome, it really is much more spiritually welcoming then as you walk into, up to and into the enter the building. But, spiritually, or for any other reason, the minaret is not necessary'

For John, particular features convey a sense of belonging and spirituality that are undermined by contingent sacred spaces' aesthetics: the politics of the form of the building are entwined with the poetics of its function. Others, however, felt that it was the act, rather than the surroundings, that provided sacred affects:

'when you pray at home obviously you do feel close to God, because there, there's loads of people there, and your surrounded, all Islam. You feel closer to God and you feel more inspired and stuff about your religion and things.'

(Aaliyah)

For Aaliyah, communal worship reinforced a sense of belonging to a religious community, that was more important than the space's aesthetics.

Site owners may be reluctant to modify these contingent sacred spaces as they may not have the resources or have higher priorities: they may feel that it is beyond their duties towards equalities; or they may view the arrangement as a short-term solution, and resent any modification which acknowledges its diverted use and may give a perception of a longer-term commitment (Thielmann, 2012). While Dunn (2001, 2004) notes that exclusion from space undermines full civic participation, these accounts do not stem from explicit Islamophobic intentions; they illustrate that using contingent sacred spaces creates difficulty for worshippers. As this section has noted, the long-term use of such facilities demonstrates a tactical making-do of hospitality or connections to fulfil religious needs. However, the use of these spaces highlights important considerations that should be made in questions of accommodating diverse needs (Ahmed, 2011): what rights over and to premises should its users have?

Makeshift sacred spaces

Makeshift sacred spaces are everyday spaces that have been appropriated for devotional purposes. Unlike contingent sacred spaces, makeshift spaces are not recognised sacred spaces commonly used for devotional activity; they are opportunistic spaces at hand, transformed into sacred spaces through ritual. However, this transformation may only occur momentarily: spaces revert to their previous states, leaving few, if any, traces of their appropriated uses, although worshippers may often use the same spaces (Kong, 1993a). While legislation, such as the Equalities Act (2010) in the United Kingdom, or employers' goodwill allows worshippers time to pray at work, not all may wish or have time to attend communal worship, as Barack, a student, notes:

'let's say if I'm in the library, I can't really be arsed to walk down to my room, although it's not too far, even to the sort of the chapel in the arts centre. I could just pray on one side of the library'

For others, such as Hussein, a doctor, nearby contingent sacred spaces are inadequate:

'The top floor [of restaurant] has been a mosque for the last twenty years... And that's now difficult to get into on a Friday because you have to stand on the stairs, so clearly there's more people. It's tough. I think the number of Muslims has doubled in the time between the nineties and now.'

Instead, suitable places at hand are appropriated for prayer: an empty office or a quiet spot in a park. As they are used temporarily, the form-structure-function is less aligned than in contingent sacred spaces. Makeshift sacred spaces are spaces suitable for devotion (e.g. prayer), accessed in an informal manner. They are convenient, private, clean, and the layout can be adapted easily. Consequently, makeshift sacred spaces demonstrate more *ad-hoc* approaches to making a space for devotional rituals in societal cultures that delineates sacrality to particular time-spaces.

For many Muslims in western Wales, their place of work would typically give them access to such facilities as rooms they can use for prayer. Respondents would typically pray in privateⁱⁱⁱ spaces that were at hand; convenient for spatial practices, such as daily routines:

'I need somewhere private to pray because when you're praying, you obviously need somewhere quiet, and I don't really need to do that a lot here, because I don't spend a lot of time in the office. I mean I do two [prayers] in the office and the rest back home'

(Noor)

Noor's office was suitable as it didn't involve a long break from work finding somewhere suitable to pray. She would also have more control over her own privacy than in other appropriated settings; by shutting the door to her private office, she would not be watched by others, while signifying that she did not wish to be disturbed. Others did not have opportunities for private space, and reported feeling uncomfortable:

'They would just stop doing their work and observe you, and it's a bit funny because you almost see that they get a bit scared, I don't know maybe they think of al-Qaeda [laughs]'

(Fatima)

Fatima felt that onlookers at the library were surprised by her actions, while Saeeda spoke about feeling employers were over-observant in allowing her time to pray:

'I feel really, under their microscope, you know, like I'm being watched all the time because I find it so strange. The actual practical part people find really strange to see, but they're more than happy to sort of facilitate that, really'

(Saeeda)

While she appreciated that employers took her religious needs seriously, Saeeda felt that the unfamiliar *rak'ah* motions of Islamic prayer were the subject of a gaze (Gilliat-Ray, 2005). Fatima, however, felt that she raised awareness about religious diversity and prayer styles in the region. However, many noted that praying was more important than where it took place: 'if there is no allowance to have that kind of privacy, then they will probably pray anywhere.' (Jamal).

Spaces such as a library, or a multi-faith 'chapel' in a hospital or a university, are appropriated as they are deemed clean and quiet (Eccles, 2014; Sina, 2015): they do not restrict functions, without, necessarily, being functionalist. However, they could be unavailable at required times due to their use by other groups. As Islamic prayer-times are dictated by the position of the sun in the sky, and therefore vary daily, some Muslims planned carefully where and when to pray. Consequently, makeshift spaces are speculative spaces. In contrast to the 'at-hand' spaces, where worshippers will make do with any site available, speculative spaces include 'scouting-out' of suitable sites in advance:

'when I have to do my prayers during my work time, I have to look for a room which is not being used, or I don't disturb anyone as well as, I don't want people to think "Oh, what is this person doing?", you know, so I won't, although it just takes four minutes, or

three minutes, but I have to calculate, “Ok, if I go in this room, I think nobody will come for another five minutes, so I could quickly do my prayers and leave”

(Ali)

This calculation to avoid being ‘caught’ highlights the concerns many had of not appearing to act out of the ordinary. Ali’s actions, particularly his scouting for a space that would not be interrupted, illustrates that this action was something deeply personal that he did not want to share. He felt some of his colleagues would look down on his use of the facility, because of its perceived lack of cleanliness:

‘I was praying and somebody came in and I think probably it was somehow, why it was a bit embarrassing for them, and, I don’t know why, but I feel very, you know, very sensitive about this, so, I immediately break my prayers, that they don’t feel that I was doing as something then “Oh, he’s kneeling down on the floor where we walk”, you know? And, “Sitting on the floor where we walk”, or something like that’.

(Ali)

Ali felt he was being judged not for his actions, but for the transgressing sacred/profane boundaries: performing devotional acts which involve kneeling and placing his palms and forehead on the floor in the unclean space of the hospital room. The use of makeshift spaces raised some questions about their suitability for Jamal, too. He wanted to avoid performing the *wudu* in a place that could have been considered unclean:

‘There’s a toilet for disabled people in the library. The thing is it’s lowered, so I can make ablutions in there, but then, there’s a toilet there, so it’s bit weird because there’s a toilet there, and you’re doing your ablution here, and you see stuff like that which is not, I mean you’re supposed to clean yourself, not seeing dirty things, you know, so it’s a bit [indicates uncertainty].’

(Jamal)

Despite the strident hygiene regulations that mandate regular cleaning and inspections in public lavatories, Jamal felt that there was a strong tension between wishing to think ‘clean’ thoughts in an ‘unclean’ surrounding to maintain sacred notions of worship (Sina, 2015). However, such arrangements are necessary if the ablutions are to be made, allowing prayer in makeshift settings. Barack noted that ‘as long as I’ve got *wudu*, as such, it’s it should be perfectly fine.’, suggesting that the intention of fulfilling devotion, not the location it took place, was the most important aspect.

Echoing, Sina's (2015) findings, the negative rite of the *wudu* allowed the profane setting to be cleansed before being transformed into a sacred setting, producing representational space through worship in a wider spatial practice. As Omar notes:

'it's not compulsory to do it at the mosque, we can do it anywhere... We just stop for five minutes to pray. We can just pray in the hallway, it's no problem.'

While such settings are not ideal, emphasis was placed on the importance of prayer as fulfilling devotion.

Makeshift sacred spaces aren't necessarily 'pop-up' acts of appropriation. They include pre-arranged and agreed use of other facilities, such as hiring a church hall for fast-breaking during Ramadan, or booking a university room for weekly communal *jum'ah* prayers. These are not contingent sacred spaces, as these spaces are not used as a regular 'base', but represent a more formal arrangement in accessing makeshift sacred spaces. Negotiation of the space's form to facilitate a function that aligns with representational spaces takes place: blankets are brought in to an uncarpeted church hall to preserve worshipers' feet after the *wudu*. Premises are selected as they will facilitate communal prayer and can be adapted easily. In a non-denominational chapel in one hospital, some modification takes place: pews were removed to accommodate the *rak'ah*, and statues of Buddha were removed for the duration of the room's use to conform with the convention of avoiding idolatry (Gilliat-Ray, 2005; Sina, 2015). However, as Abdel and Saeda note, not all potentially idolatrous artefacts can be removed:

A: 'ok there are no objections to praying in the chapel, but when you've got mosaics in the chapel, then'

S: 'idolatry'

A: 'you know'

S: 'Stained glass windows, and statues'

A: 'yeah, yeah, so that will affect our religion.'

A former warden of a university hall-of-residence remembers requests from the ISS to remove pictures from the common room which they'd booked: she refused as they were gifts bequeathed to the hall for users' appreciation but agreed that they could be covered during worship. These modifications make-do with materials at hand to facilitate *matériel* which conform to representational spaces. Here, the forms are adapted so that the space allows worship in accordance with authoritative conventions.

As the functions differ to those intended by the design of the spaces, the form will also be subtly different to those produced in 'purpose-built' surroundings. When office spaces, libraries, and quiet spots outside are used for prayer, they become temporary sacred representational spaces. They are produced, momentarily, by the coming-together of different spaces of representation and spatial practices, transforming an office into a prayer-room, leaving behind only traces of its use: a moved desk, or an out-of-place chair. These representational spaces make-do with what is available in a manner that allows rituals to be performed. These spaces' production are informed by sacred poetics and politics, delineating what can be used as a substitute and in what manner. This process illustrates a complex relationship between sacred forms and functions, leading to its contestation in makeshift scenarios, such as the publicity of prayer and sacred/profane transgressions.

Use of makeshift sacred spaces disrupts sacred/profane distinctions, where the former is not confined to absolute space. They are not, like one of the great cathedrals discussed by Lefebvre, something marvelled at for their form, but incorporated by their function; such approaches, like artefacts displayed in museums (Cresswell, 1996, pages 77-79) privilege the exchange value (form) above use value (function). For Smith (1987, page 106) it is emplacement that is significant: 'The sacred are sacred solely because they are used in a sacred place; there is no inherent difference between a sacred vessel and an ordinary one'. Yet, this approach is limited; places' sacred attributes are precarious, not inherent. If a tavern serves as a substitute temple (Smith, 1987, page 104), it does not mean that sacred songs chanted there are profane. Intent is also important in producing sacred spaces. If sacrality in everyday lives is to be understood in meaningful ways, it must be explored within everyday surroundings, when it is frequently entwined with profanity.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have outlined the production of sacred spaces through diversion and appropriation. They are produced not only by ritual, but also by modification, socialisation, and negotiation. Negotiations between a range of actors (worshippers, owners/managers) and practices (rituals, conventions, theologies) are central to the production of contingent and makeshift sacred spaces. They represent creative uses of space, making-do with available facilities, and using them for devotional needs. There is an adaption of space – either through gradual modification or maintenance that secures a longer-term use, or for arranging the space to facilitate devotion.

This paper contributes to the growing geographies of religion through outlining the significance of the contingent and the makeshift for emerging spatial theories of worship. These concepts, informed by Lefebvrian theory, address the issue of producing sacred space beyond sacred settings,

problematizing sacred/profane and 'official'/'unofficial' distinctions. Such circumstances are common for many non-Christian faiths in post-Christian settings, as well as for Christian denominations, including challenges in meeting upkeep costs for bespoke buildings (which may be consecrated but redundant). The divergence of form-structure-function has implications for fostering an affective sense of sacrality and for fulfilling particular devotional rites. In discussing these aspects, I have emphasized the value of Lefebvrian theory in examining the production of everyday sacred spaces, beyond the initial focus given on capitalist processes, enabling understanding of subaltern religious groups' often precarious place in contemporary multicultural societies. In providing such sacred space, institutions should consider their obligations to employees and students, and ensure that facilities are developed through dialogue.

More broadly, adopting Lefebvrian notions of diversion and appropriation allows an understanding of precarity. Groups such as Muslims in western Wales, without longstanding facilities and discourses of absence regarding their presence, do not have the resources to secure bespoke facilities. Consequently, they rely on their own abilities to negotiate access and the piecemeal development of facilities, and on other actors' hospitality. These groups also have a limited capacity to adapt facilities and are reliant on negotiating further accommodation. They also face challenges of transience, having to sustain facilities with a steady turnover of residents, and key individuals often leave every few years. Yet, these facilities should not be dismissed as poor substitutes. They serve as key nodes in local networks, allowing people with the same beliefs to bond, enabling a sense of community and belonging; they augment religious practice, giving a glimpse of these groups' limited visibility in the region. As Barack notes, 'I think on the whole it does probably meet the needs of a relatively small Muslim community here'; this framework allows an understanding of what it means to be part of a precarious community, which are missing from the literature.

I conclude by identifying themes for further investigation. Firstly, more work is needed on ritual in producing sacred spaces. Aspects of embodiment are evidently important, but so, too, are transcendental concerns and the spatial context of the ritual. Secondly, I echo Finlayson's (2012) call for more research into the design and rationale of sacred spaces. While she advocates research with architects and planners, I argue for research with users and controllers of these spaces (worshippers, managers, bursars, etc). The former's perspective is that of conceived space and of representations of space; the latter explores how space is adapted and modified, bringing a perspective of representational space. Thirdly, more attention is needed on sacred spaces' diversity and multi-functionality, including a more critical take on producing sacred qualities. In particular, there are opportunities to explore multi-faith spaces, such as interfaith chapels. Investigating these under-

researched spaces, which allow interfaith encounters through their design and use allows understanding of the entwining of sacred poetics and politics. Exploring how sacred spaces are adapted in processes of negotiation and diversion encourages more nuanced accounts for understanding modification, compromising, and deciding on material and *matériel*. Considering these issues allow understanding of sacred productions is in everyday life.

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ⁱ The university is anonymized as part of agreement for reproducing the archive material. [This minimizes the identification of individuals \(both staff and students\) who did not foresee their private correspondence entering the public domain twenty years later.](#)

ⁱⁱ All participants are referred to by a pseudonym to maintain their anonymity.

ⁱⁱⁱ I refer here to rooms that give privacy, rather than privately-owned spaces.