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Inhabiting the good city: the politics of hate and the urbanisms of hope

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The voice of the Church and other faith groups has become a significant contribution in the civic lives of our cities and the development of urban policy over the past 25 years. National government, regional development agencies, local authorities and neighbourhood renewal programmes all regularly engage with religious bodies as part of the planning and delivery of regeneration and services in urban communities. Of all the faith groups, it is the Church of England, through the ubiquity of its presence and experience, that has accompanied communities, previously designated as Urban Priority Areas, experiencing economic and physical regeneration, often from within broad-based partnerships which have brought about significant change (Graham and Lowe, 2009; Davey, 2000).

Beyond the revitalised city centres and metropolitan hum, the Church has also been present within those communities which even government ministers have been willing to describe as 'disconnected', where

> Traditional, often semi-skilled, industrial jobs have continued to decline, with newly created higher paid jobs are open only to those with higher skill levels. In predominantly white areas, recent migration is sometimes perceived as changing communities in unpredictable ways.... creating new

competition for jobs and social housing. [...] They think their area is changing - they say 'it's not my community anymore'. And feel helpless to do anything about it. 'No one speaks up for us.' (Denham, 2009)

Since the mid-eighties the Church of England has produced significant documentation of urban conditions and spoken of the Church's dilemma as it attempts to remain faithful within an urban parish structure which is increasingly overshadowed by suburban congregational agendas (ACUPA, 1985; CULF, 2006). While there have been calls for a greater awareness of contextual approaches where theological method might provide a common ground for different communities, predominant training and mission agendas have inclined towards suburban models and practice. It is apparent, however, that a distinct dimension within British urban theological practice has been its tenacious interaction with liberation theology, a commitment to social justice and to 'keep faith' by maintaining a presence alongside marginalised communities in such places (CULF, 2006; Davey, 2008; Graham and Lowe, 2009).

Regenerated communities?

Urban regeneration has proved exacting and divisive for some communities. The experience of working in partnership has been mixed: some have found a vitality with many stake-holders around the table seeking to invigorate and rebuild neighbourhood; others have found partnerships to be uneven, and at times token, as concessions are made to a profit-led regeneration industry (Harvey, 2008; Steele, 2009). Despite their own transnationalism, however, faith

communities have often seemed ill-equipped to tackle the global nature of the regeneration industry. Major inward investment has often come from interests with little regard for local impact, remodelling space and markets on a globalised template.

The fault is not entirely with the private sector. Often for the voluntary and faith sectors, regeneration activity has become a scramble for influence and status, or contracts and grants, with attendant risks of collusion in the name of partnership. At times this has meant that the Church and other faith groups have missed or not understood significant shifts in policy, such as the marginalisation of community-led neighbourhood renewal within what is now the Department for Communities and Local Government, and what Allan Cochrane (2007) identifies as the disappearance of a distinct urban policy focus from the political agenda. Justin Beaumont's analysis of the re-emergence of faith-based organisations in the wake of neo-liberal retrenchment of the social democratic welfare state just as government is looking for partners from the community and voluntary sector to step into the breach, neatly captures a further dimension of this greater prominence of faith-communities as political actors, not least some of the more contradictory and frustrating aspects. Certainly, as Beaumont argues, 'we need to conceptualise changing dynamics between religion, politics and post-secular society' (2008: 2019), but the realignments of capital, civil society and the nation-state as players in the regeneration game represent ambivalent opportunities for grass-roots activism. On the one hand, they offer new spaces for innovative forms of engagement, as with the enhanced public profile of faith-based organisations in policy matters. On the other, however, they engender

alienation amongst those who find themselves receiving little benefit from urban regeneration strategies that regard cultural industries or prestigious property development as prime drivers of economic revival (see Graham and Lowe, 2009: 99-114, Harvey, 2008).

Theologians and faith-practitioners are only beginning to understand the consequences of asking 'Who is the city for?' as part of the 'What makes a good city?' debate. Yet questions of power, participation and the nature of citizenship are still crucial to any future patterns of regeneration, and the current disenchantment with local and national politics has a detrimental effect on the lives of our towns and cities. People are turning their backs on community and civic engagement as they see few prospects with the progress of the recession for the renewal of resources and infrastructure that might make a difference; or worse they are turning to those who offer the alternative scenario of a nation that resists the changes brought on by globalisation and immigration. This finds an outlet in the increasing hostility towards cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism perceived as a conspiracy against the white working class by the metropolitan (regenerated) elite.

Disorder, diversity and division

There has always been a strong theme within urban policy that urban places are disorderly, evidenced by riots and uprisings, as well as street-level crime attributable to the presence of minority ethnic communities (Cochrane 2007: 71). While much early urban policy under New Labour shifted the emphasis of

urban renewal to economic regeneration and the built environment within the rhetoric of social exclusion, there was a persistent fear of, in the words of Tony Blair, an 'underclass of people cut off from society's mainstream without any sense of shared purpose' (Blair, quoted in Lister, 2004: 108). The central efforts of the New Labour's Social Exclusion Unit seemed aimed at the usual focuses of urban intervention and the Unit was launched in 1997 by a prime ministerial visits to the multi-ethnic Aylesbury Estate in South London.

In parallel with this, much of the regeneration activity focused on the built environment has concentrated on a new metropolitan elite who demand 'defended spaces' within the urban core, gated and monitored by CCTV. While urban writers since Engels have celebrated the city as an encounter of strangers, urban restructuring has meant that those encounters with difference have become increasingly limited for those who can afford to 'opt out' from mixed neighbourhoods, community schools and other local interactions (Minton, 2009). An increasingly negative perception of ethnically diverse localities is part of this trend, along with the perceived threats to culture, faith and employment by mass immigration and the association of migrants with crime, disease and disorder.

After Multiculturalism

Tariq Modood has defined multiculturalism as 'the recognition of group difference within the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses and the terms of citizenship and national identity' (Modood, 2007: 2). Britain is a multicultural society, therefore, but the adoption of policies of multicultural*ism*

implies a 'normative response' (Parekh, 2006: 6) to the facts of ethnic and cultural difference. Diversity is upheld and celebrated, but in a way which adopts a highly pragmatic and non-prescriptive approach towards the implications of difference (Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes, 2009: 84-86).

Over the past twenty years, however, significant change has taken place within the interaction of immigrant communities in Britain as the post-immigration discourse of multiculturalism and 'political blackness' began to crack when faith entered the arena. For Tariq Modood, this was no better symbolised than in the battle over *The Satanic Verses* in the mid-1980s, when many Muslims were radicalised and organised discovering a new community identity based on religion rather than colour. This shift had significant impact on multicultural discourse where religion was generally perceived as culturally interesting but waning in terms of political significance. Yet the emergence of Islam as a publicly-articulated mark of identity was perceived as a threat by a secularised media establishment alongside the increasingly Islamophobic right. What is noteworthy in terms of our concerns here is the significance that Modood attributes to the space created by cross-religious dialogue during the Rushdie affair.

> … what was even more striking was that when the public rage against Muslims was at its most intense, Muslims neither sought nor were offered any special solidarity by any nonwhite minority. It was in fact, a group of white liberal Anglicans who tried to moderate hostility against angry Muslims, and it was in interfaith forum a rather than in political-black

organizations that space was created for Muslims to state their case without being vilified. (Modood, 2002: pp)

It is not only the liberal elite or conservative media that struggled with the new, post-secular public space, however. Whilst much of the focus in community relations was concerned with 'multiculturalism' and the presence of Black and south Asian communities as an enrichment of British culture, such an emphasis did little to understand the impact of mass immigration upon white British (or English) identity. Indigenous white culture is often portrayed as eclipsed by a regime of 'steel-drums, samosas and saris' with few outlets other than football, 'chav' culture and the reoccupation of city centres through the night-time leisure economy.

Some attempts have been made, however, to address this lack of attention. The Runnymede Trust, 'an independent policy research organisation focusing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society', recently published a document *Who cares about the white working class?* (Sveinssson, 2009). Exploring how issues of ethnicity and class play out in a constantly measured and monitored multicultural society, educationalist David Gillborn warns of the danger of creating 'white racial victimhood' and the myth of advantage given to minoritorised children in the education system, as well as the potentially negative effects policy changes could have.

By warning of the danger of inflaming support for racist parties, what actually happens is that politicians and commentators invoke the threat of

racist violence as a means of disciplining calls for greater race equality. [....]Official statistics reveal that most groups in poverty achieve relatively poor results *regardless* of ethnic background. (Gilborn, 2009)

Similarly, a recent report commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government argued that the successful integration of migrants into local communities is significantly conditioned by local, predominantly economic, factors:

... we found that in those [places] where social and environmental conditions were better, there was ... less apparent hostility to minorities [...] By far the most frequent context for referring to ethnic minorities is that of perceived competition for resources – typically housing, but also employment, benefits, territory and culture. (Garner, Cowles and Lung, 2009: 6)

Such resentment, whilst reprehensible, has to be seen as one response to economic pressures. Black and ethnic minorities and the forces of 'political correctness' are held up as scapegoats in a context of perceived unfairness of access to material benefits; and in a political climate in which the biggest threat to our way of life is often equated with so-called 'radical Islam', it is timely to consider how such attitudes feed into the activities of far-Right political movements which represent, arguably, a far more tangible threat to democracy and social cohesion.

The 'post-secular' public space

As Modood comments, multiculturalism itself is in many respects a child of liberalism. It is founded, conceptually, on differences of ethnicity and 'race', reflecting the preoccupations of a relatively secular generation of social science which took little substantial account of religion as a marker of identity. This has led, increasingly, to criticisms of the public sector and local and national government, for example, for their lack of 'religious literacy' in taking account of the needs of different sections of the community. Many commentators (see especially Dinham, Furbey and Lowndes, 2009), argue that the emergence of 'faith' into the multicultural pot has led to significant reappraisal not only of the liberal roots of multiculturalism but a recognition that questions of identity and allegiance across different communities in Britain are complex and fluid. As local and national government and other policy-makers are rapidly discovering, religious affiliation and identity cannot be bracketed out of these contentions.

But the debate continues as to the appropriate kind of engagement by people of faith in the public domain. On the one hand, we have the greater public profile of faith-based groups as active participants in civil society; on the other, those who continue to believe that adherence to the demands of any kind of theology represents a denial of liberal values with an inevitable retreat into more pernicious forms of segregation and extremism.   A recent contributor to the debate has been Alan Billings – priest, broadcaster and New Labour apologist. In *God and Community Cohesion: Help or Hindrance* (2009) Billings presents a pessimistic approach to attempts to establish common ground among faith

communities and shared vision within diverse cities. He notes the precariousness of attempts to build cohesive communities at a time when the legitimacy of pluralism is barely acknowledged internally within religious traditions.

As a result, there has been growing attention to the question of the public role of religion in a multicultural society. Most prominently, and most controversially, of course, is the debate about social cohesion and the perceived 'threat' of radical Islam, and the implementation of policies such as PREVENT and 'Face-to-Face and Side-by-Side' (DCLG, 2007). There is criticism that the PREVENT agenda fails to address issues of non-Islamic extremisms and violence, not least that provoked by the presence of the British National Party and English Defence League (see Kundnani, 2009). There is also wide misgiving amongst faith communities themselves, especially within Islam, of the way in which faith-based organisations are being instrumentalised, almost as vehicles of social control, and that the predominant paradigm of faith and its public impact on the part of government is that of 'delivering' particular social outcomes. The bizarre reverse side is that Christian leaders find themselves having to explain to Muslims that they have no contact with or control over the BNP despite its claims of Christian identity.

More benignly, perhaps, is also the potential of faith groups to participate in programmes of social, cultural and economic renewal, and even, on the margins of mainstream political life, to take up certain aspects of welfare provision. So we have begun to see how so-called 'faith communities' are being brought into

processes of governance and participation: as sources of capacity-building in local communities and constructive agents in programmes of social cohesion, as well as in the prevention of religious and political extremism.

The Problem of Whiteness in a multicoloured society

But does this re-emergence of faith as part of a 'thick description' of modern citizenship actually disenfranchise some people? Ted Cantle, author of the Report into the Oldham riots of 2001, has remarked that 'the majority population have always felt unrepresented by the notion [of multiculturalism]' (Cantle in Lowndes, 2009: 93). He continues, 'if you ask white people, for example, if they have an ethnicity, they don't seem to appreciate that they have ... They also see 'diversity' as something that is only relevant to minorities. Similarly, most [white] people see faith as another dimension which doesn't include them – the British tradition has been built upon the submerging of faith differences in the public sphere.' (Cantle in Lowndes, 2009: 93) So there are ways in which 'multiculturalism', if not *failing* the indigenous white British population, has proved wanting in terms of white 'buy-in' which furnishes them with the means to construct an identity or self-understanding to match, and negotiate with, that of others. Stuart Hall is convinced, however, that while negotiation is critical over conflicts of 'outlook, belief and interest' they must not assume 'Eurocentric assimilation' as the starting or end point:

> The specific and particular "difference" of a group or community cannot
> be asserted absolutely , without regard to the wider context provided by
> all those "others" in relation to whom "particularity" acquires a relative
> value. (Hall, 2000: 234)

Assumptions are made about cultural homogeneity by those contesting a community, as well as by the media and commentators. It is apparent that white, African-Caribbean and Asian communities all contain elements of difference and hybrity that require internal negotiation, as well as challenges being made to an older leadership concerned with influence and stability, often through violence or indifference (Amin, 2002).

To what extent are Right-wing extremist groups exploiting that vacuum in white communities? The re-emergence of faith in terms of identity, rather than practice, gives rise to many tiny 'clashes of civilisations' which offer little space for greater and smaller narratives of interaction and negotiation between and within communities. There is certainly evidence to suggest that Right-wing extremist groups and movements are shifting their rhetoric increasingly towards Islamophobic statements and actions, as in for example, the mobilisation of the English Defence League to demonstrate against what it terms 'Islamic extremism' in places such as Luton, Rochdale, Birmingham and Manchester (*Searchlight*, August 2009: 8-9). Nick Griffin, leader of the BNP, has described Islam as a 'cancer' that needed 'chemotherapy ... to save civilization' (*Searchlight*, August 2009: 10).

What is intriguing is the attempt by many of these groups to hijack a 'Christian' identity around which they hope to rally indigenous White support that perceives itself as having been disenfranchised by the ideology of multiculturalism. So for example, the English Defence League reproduces images of Crusaders in its publicity, with a poem that includes the lines:

> The crusaders were once strong, now all but gone
>
> ... But im [sic] here sword out of sheath ...
>
> ... My thirst [f]or blood grows stronger
>
> The pain cant take no longer
>
> For foreign blood I hunger' (Bartholomew, 2009).

In the campaign for the European elections in June 2009 the BNP produced an image of Jesus on a poster which was driven round northern cities on the back of the party's 'truth truck'. The post carried a quotation from John 15:20, reading, 'If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you', and the commentary, "What would *Jesus* Do? – Vote BNP". The two Archbishops of Canterbury and York felt moved to issue a joint statement, together with a letter to be read in all parishes, repudiating these connections, saying:

> Christians have been deeply disturbed by the conscious adoption by the BNP of the language of our faith when the effect of those policies is not to promote those values but to foster fear and division within communities, especially between people of different faiths or racial background. (Joint Statement, 24 May 2009).

The BNP response was to issue a leaflet, distributed outside a number of churches and cathedrals, entitled *Judas Archbishops*:

> All over the UK pews are emptying; churches are closing down and turning into mosques/ temples. Our distinctive Christian heritage is disappearing as whole regions of Britain become Islamified. [...]The cowardly 'yes men', functionaries and time-servers leading the Church of England have consistently failed to lift a finger in defence of Britain against those who would destroy it. Cocooned in their ivory towers from any meaningful contact with the outside world, real life or ordinary people, they pass one surrender motion after another. (*Judas Archbishops* – BNP leaflet May 2009)

Much of this association may appear irrelevant, particularly for anyone with any direct experience of the demographic profile of the twenty-first century urban Church. It is remarkable to consider how far all the Christian denominations, including the Church of England, depend increasingly for their continued viability on members whose personal or family backgrounds originate in Africa, the Caribbean and, increasingly, Eastern Europe or Latin America. The local is also the global; but it is emphatically not the racially pure English Church of BNP or EDL fantasy!

But this use of religion – or at least a discourse of a particular construal of religion – does seem to be a critical aspect of the rise of the far Right over the

past couple of years. And this threat is not theoretical, since two BNP candidates, Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons, were elected to the European Parliament for the North-West and Yorkshire & Humberside regions respectively. The BNP's electoral strongholds seem to be in predominantly white working-class communities with higher than average levels of unemployment and economic decline: post industrial areas or large social housing developments. Admittedly, there were particular factors behind the success of the BNP in the local and European elections of May 2009, such as a slump in the traditional Labour vote, and widespread revulsion at the MPs' expenses scandal. Yet this may still be regarded as consistent with the opportunism of the far Right in exploiting people's disaffection with mainstream politics, including policies of multiculturalism and regeneration that are perceived as unfairly favouring ethnic minorities and metropolitan elites. It adds up to a serious problem of voter disengagement, a 'democratic deficit', that moves swiftly into the electoral vacuum of White British/English identity with dangerous consequences.

Alongside the democratic deficit comes the cultural deficit fed by a general religious illiteracy. Questions of identity are raised for the majority when the religious difference of 'the other' is perceived in public space: through civic celebrations of Eid or Diwali, the wearing of headscarves or turbans, the requests for prayer rooms or specially prepared food. The BNP's advocacy of Christian identity comes at a time when the reassertion of identity is encouraged by Bishops and other leaders, whether it is the public wearing of crosses and crucifixes, the civic acknowledgement of Christmas as a Christian festival, or the

establishment of St George's Day as an English public holiday – all of which have found their place in the BNP's campaigns as tribal totems.

The right to the city

What are the tools and resources which might enable the Church to rebuild its understanding of civic engagement in a culturally and religiously diverse society in the face of economic interests, disaffection with the political system and organised racism?   The ability to mobilise across communities is critical to an urban rights discourse which has significant connections with a liberationist perspective, as well as the concerns of the emergent public theology movement (See Davey, 2008) ; but we have yet to develop an understanding and vocabulary that enables us to develop a theologically rooted progressive urbanism that overcomes alienation and celebrates the contribution of ordinary citizens through engaging outside the Church's traditional comfort zones.

Influenced by the work of Henri Lefebvre leading urbanists have identified the concept of 'the right to the city' (*le droit à la ville*)as a critical resource in the neoliberal, postsecular city. Access and participation in urban life and spaces needs to be reasserted as cities restructure spatially, economically and socially. David Harvey argues that, 'The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is...one of the most precious yet neglected of our human rights' (Harvey 2008). Ash Amin has written of the need to fashion a 'politics of well-being and emancipation out of multiplicity and difference and from the particularities of the urban experience' (Amin 2006). It is a critical question for

urbanists how a wider spectrum of interests can play a crucial part in reimagining the city and staking a claim to common urban future. It is vital that the discourse and activities of urbanists are not another reason for the alienation of the urban dispossessed. Patsy Healey's often quoted phrase about the common quest about 'how to manage our co-existence in shared space' is a starting point (Healey, 1997:3). That shared space might be the neighbourhood, the municipality or the society. Finding commonality will move us to the edge of the concerns of funding and policy.

In recent years Church interventions have revealed a range of intersecting and opposing views of urban life, diversity, the power of urban structures, the meaning and pitfalls of living in close proximity to mainstream policy and solutions. Just as Alan Cochrane describes government interventions as a 'policy area presenting different forms of utopia' (Cochrane, 2007:.145) we need to consider the Church's theology and work on the urban to be the construction of a vision or imaginary that needs earthing. Those utopias are imagined as part of a strategy for developing an understanding of the underlying values of the desired city (kingdom) and the activities (praxis or performance) needed for brining it about. Decisions about how church property is used, how mission is carried out, how the church engages in the wider civic realm and identifies allies will all have implications for how the identity of the church forms among its members as well as within the local community. Who is the church there for? What will be the impact of those decisions on different faith or ethnic communities? Those performances are often matters of contestation as different imaginaries comes into conflict: unambiguous evangelism among migrants or the pursuit of mutual

action; the sale of a piece of land to fund new projects or social and affordable housing; a profitable lease to a private nursery or a volunteer playgroup; an academy school or a community college. Some of those choices may be counter cultural acts, or the creation of new 'habits' that   resist   the often overwhelming cultural, theological and political pressure for caution and security we find in the church and our urban communities.

Ash Amin writes of

> … the good city as an expanding habit of solidarity and as a practical but unsettled achievement, constantly building on experiments through which difference and multiplicity can be mobilised for common gain and against harm and want. [Where a] civic politics of getting the urban habit of living with diversity right is one way of thickening the ways in which an increasingly fragmented, disoriented and anxious society can regain some mechanism for the distribution of hopefulness… (Amin, 2006)

In what ways might the Church's action and theological interventions be expanding the habits of solidarity? Three case studies follow, which illustrate possible ways in which the Church within its community context has begun to articulate constructive forms of engagement with the political situation. We cannot pretend that by themselves they constitute decisive arguments in favour of maintaining the status quo, but maybe they start to indicate some of the principles for both Church and society on which any civic role of religion   might rest.

The first example shows how churches worked to build a positive political coalition in the fight against extremism. In advance of the June elections to the European Parliament, it was known that the BNP were statistically close to winning some seats, so a broad-based alliance called *HOPE not Hate* was founded, sponsored by trade unions, anti-fascist groups and the investigative journal *Searchlight*. Faith groups, including and especially Church of England leaders and staff, were also prominent. In the NW, for example, the *HOPE not Hate* campaign was launched at Manchester Anglican Cathedral, and the resources of the staff of the diocesan Board for Ministry and Society kept up much of the momentum. Unfortunately, of course, the voting maths only limited the scale of the BNP 'break through', but the campaign has continued to mobilise, for example to ensure that there was a prominent Christian voice in the cross-community opposition to the EDL rally held in Manchester in October 2009.

One framework for understanding the contribution of faith-based organisations to the public realm has been social capital theory. For Robert Putnam, a healthy civil society rests on people's capacity to be active citizens and to contribute to their communities, which is dependent on the skills, values and resources at their disposal that enable them to mobilise and to form relationships both within and between immediate communities of interest (Putnam, 2000). It has been further noted that religious people and organisations are particularly rich in sources of social capital, because they have strong values, a clear collective identity, possess buildings and physical resources that offer good facilities, and

are well-connected to local, national and global expressions of their faith (CULF, 2006; Baker and Skinner, 2006).

Nick Lowles, editor of *Searchlight*, writing in advance of the Euro elections, uses just such a model of faith groups as invaluable repositories of 'faithful capital' in reflecting on the *HOPE not Hate* campaign:

> Faith groups will be crucial. They have a credibility and authority in many of the communities where local politicians have disengaged. In Greater Manchester alone, the Anglican Church has over 500 full-time employees and a similar number of part-time workers, and the church as a whole has the largest community outreach project in the country. Give these people the arguments and tools to take the message to their congregations and we are really beginning to motor. (Lowles, April 2009: 5)

The second example may be familiar from the BBC TV series, *The Choir: Unsung Town* (2009), This featured the community of South Oxhey, in Hertfordshire, a large post-war social housing estate, with many of the characteristics of high unemployment, low educational achievement and social problems; a community often considered out of place, or out of step, with the surrounding affluence of the Home Counties. The musician and conductor Gareth Malone established a community choir which has had notable success and continues to this day, despite initial problems of apathy and lack of confidence.

The invitation to the BBC to make the programme came originally from the local Anglican priest, Pam Wise. Whilst much of the narrative of the subsequent series focused on the stories of individuals, the Church was a constant source of support, providing an office base for Malone and a significant volunteer base. Once again, it is Lowles' evocation of the grass-roots activism both of *HOPE not Hate* and of the churches in general, that is probably the most critical role for the Church in such areas where there are significant extremist threats. It is in the Church's localism and its capacity to mobilise a wealth of local social capital that can potentially pay dividends in the shape of new and robust articulations of civic pride.

South Oxhey Community Choir is in many respects a classic case study in social capital, in that it illustrates how the revival of the instruments of local civil society helped to rejuvenate local community pride. Furthermore, a 'coda' to this story offers further suggestions that the choir has succeeded in fostering an alternative account of civic identity that is less prone to the resentments highlighted by the Runnymede Trust and DCLG. The British National Party had earlier experienced some electoral gains in south Hertfordshire, including the election of a candidate to the county council. When the councillor concerned offered a portion of her discretionary budget to the choir to appear at a sponsored event, however, the choir refused, a decision that drew considerable media coverage. (Lancaster Voice, 2009)

In Lancashire, the church's response to the 2001 riots and the subsequent report's assertion of spatial and cultural segregation has been focused on the

Building Bridges in Burnley programme which seeks to 'achieve a shared sense of belonging amongst the people of Burnley' through a 'broad range of activities delivered create opportunities for people from different faith, cultural, socio-economic contexts' (see http://bbburnley.co.uk/FaithFriends.aspx). The programme has had major influence in communities where there had been little encounter or mutual understanding, particularly among young people. Activities have included intercommunity encounters, the development of 'faith friends'- a shared chaplaincy programme in local schools, pilgrimages and participation in mainstream events such as interfaith week. A significant decision to base the programme in a mosque, rather than a church, provided a clear statement on the sharing of resources and access. On a recent visit the Archbishop of Canterbury commented:

> I think the depth of friendship there is between representatives of different faiths here is pretty impressive in itself, but also listening to a twelve year old talking about her part in building bridges between communities and the work that's done to keep children of different communities in touch with each other and sharing experiences, that is so precious and so unusual I think, in terms of the country as a whole, is something that ought to be bottled and exported from Burnley. (Radio Lancashire 5th November 2009)

Building Bridges in Burnley has stood alongside similar programmes and interventions attempting to foster new links and confidence in the future across the town. An indication of the change experienced in Burnley since 2001 might

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be seen in the radical reduction in the BNP presence on the local council from twelve councillors to three.

Conclusion

In the examples above and many others we see the possibility of new forms of civil society emerging from the new, post-secular contentions of religious identity and race. The reproduction of social capital is not always a natural outcome of the presence of faith in the public realm, which often enters that space out of the frustration and anger of groups which have been marginal to the economy of urban regeneration in the past decades. Violent competing claims are often local reactions to, or refractions of, wider structural forces played out on a global stage. The 'othering' of groups within our cities and towns, be it the racialized othering found in popular press portrayal of Muslims and other Asians, or the pseudo-sociological rhetoric of chavs and underclasses find immediate scapegoats but fail to take into account issues of power, access to education and employment or the superficial appeal of pejorative media representation.

Urbanists often invoke the contested nature of urban space as a source of the city's dialectical creativity (see Merrifield, 2002). These points of friction will need to be acknowledged and negotiated innovatively, rather than ignored or accommodated, if the urban is to be diverted from the dysfunctional and dystopian realities we have been describing. The Church's engagement with the public realm of post-secular cities in the twenty-first century will need to shed its political naivety and class predisposition if it is to be alongside the struggles for

social justice in cities that are increasingly diverse and in danger of being increasingly segregated.

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