

# **Seeking hope in the indifferent city - faith-based contributions to spaces of production and meaning making in the postsecular city**

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## **Introduction**

‘Marx has yielded the historical stage to Mohammed and the Holy Ghost. If God died in the cities of the industrial revolution, he has risen again in the postindustrial cities of the developing world’ (Davis, 2004: 30).

This typically understated view of Davis is a useful way of introducing the theme of the postsecular city and setting the scene for the emergence of faith-based engagement and theory concerning the purpose and direction of the indifferent and postsecular city. By indifferent I am referring to Fincher and Jacobs’ notion of ‘cities of indifference’ in which corporate, profit-led and alcohol-dominated nights do little for developing meaningful and humane public urban spaces (Fincher and Jacobs, 1998). However I would also want to expand the notion of indifference to refer to the wider ambience of much public space in our cities, which in the words of Ash Amin, is characterised by ‘growing urban segregation ... an eroding urban commons, and increased legitimacy for group isolationism in private and public life’ (Amin, 2006: 1016). In other words, ‘indifference’ as in a generalised but growing indifference to the wellbeing of one’s neighbour or fellow citizen.

By postsecular, I am referring to the re-emergence of faith into the public realm of civil society and the built environment, as well as an often critical enquiry of the wider mores and customs of public life. This re-emergence has occurred at a time when some commentators assumed that the rolling out of secularisation theory would inevitably see the issues and practices of faith relegated to the private sphere.

We now proceed from this point of introduction by locating Davis' assertion within the emergence of what Cochrane has described as an 'urbanism of hope' (Cochrane, 2006: 143) – in other words, the possibility, in the terms of Lefebvre's notion, of a transformed and renewed 'right to urban life'. As we shall see, the articulation of an urbanism of hope is closely linked to the belief of the importance of ethics, values and indeed sacredness and spirituality (in its broadest sense) as building blocks in the construction of the city. This urbanism of hope powerfully cites the possibility of change and transformation (what I call *transformative* narratives), in sharp contrast to what I am calling *deterministic* narratives, which see no alternative to the current development of urban space within the priorities set by the neo-liberal economic agenda of globalised capital. In these 'synedochal' narratives (Massey, 2007: 88) the financial and business part of the city (i.e. its business and services district) is made to stand in for the whole.

Having laid out some of these shifts towards the language of hope and transformation in urban theory, I will look at two case studies of faith-based engagement with urban civil society in particularly excluded communities. In order to analyse these case studies, I will use an economic framework of interpretation devised by Chatterton and Hollands (2003) to describe the uneven development of the night-time economy via the creation of what they term 'brandscaapes' in gentrified city centres. This process of gentrification replaces the former leisure and cultural sites associated with the old industrialised working class communities, often located in the middle or on the edge of gentrified zones, with themed pubs and niche clubs and eateries, wireless networked cafes, restaurants with galleries etc. The old spaces are considered 'residual' to the agenda of the rebranded city centre, and are so replaced with more 'productive' spaces catering for the post-Fordist agenda of individual choice and diversity.

I will propose that an aim of some faith-based engagement within these old residual industrial communities, is to consciously provide the soft tools of regeneration (such as confidence, valorisation, self-esteem) alongside more specific economic and development outcomes. In this way, I will argue that faith groups can contribute to the creation of spaces of active production in former industrial communities. Having said that, it will be important to assess critically the claims made by faith groups about their work and this I shall attempt to do before a conclusion which points the connection between urbanisms of hope and theologies of hope.

**An urbanism of hope – and the shift from locational-economic to locational-ethical discourses on the city**

Current ideas associated with an urbanism of hope revolve around two related aspects – the rediscovered political, cultural and (as we have intimated) spiritual significance of local space within the globalised flows produced and required by the neo-liberal city and networked capitalism. Second, the valorisation of diversity and plurality within localised space, in which one's identity becomes essential but not *essentialised* in the negotiation with other identities (the multi-faceted Other) with whom one is now required to share urban space in close proximity. The complexity of this task of negotiation of identity within close proximity need not detain us at this point. What is more significant is the way in which these twin themes of diversity within locality are theorised and presented as evidence for an urbanism of hope.

As we have seen, it was Allan Cochrane, who in a recent review of urban policy (see above) coined the phrase an 'urbanism of hope'. He drew down this concept from the writings of UK geographers such as Ash Amin, Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift, who themselves draw on the work of Lefebvre as they advocate a common right to the city based on, for example, what Massey in her latest book on London calls 'a networked, configurational, local politics'. (Massey, 2007:155).

### **A return to the sacred - the work of Leonie Sandercock**

As well as emphasising the importance of the politics of place some writers included within Cochrane's 'urbanism of hope', have also drawn attention to the importance of values and ethics in the definition of urban space. Thus Amin refers to the importance of articulating the good city, which he defines as, 'an ethic of care incorporating the principles of social justice, equality and mutuality' (2006: 1015). Canadian planner Leonie Sandercock meanwhile argues passionately for the importance of locating ethical values alongside notions of the 'sacred' at the heart of the planning process (i.e. consultation with local communities) as well as at the heart of urban space itself. What she proposes is a *volte face* of everything she was trained to do as a planner within the modernist tradition, although she still defines herself as a secular humanist. Her thesis is that the quality of urban space designed at the height of Modernism (from roughly 1920s to the 1970s) has generally had a detrimental effect on the quality of community life, based as it is on the eradication of history and memory. This eradication was itself predicated on ideologies of mass production and efficiency, both in the relation to the original inhabitants of communities now being replanned or regentrified, but also in relation to the land itself. She argues instead for new urban spaces to be developed on the principles of memory,

desire and sacredness (Sandercock, 1998, 2003). Space does not allow for a full elaboration of these ideas, except perhaps for her interpretation of sacred space which is as follows:

How can cities/human settlements nurture our unrequited thirst for the spirit, for the sacred? In the European Middle Ages it was in the building of cities around cathedrals. But that was long ago. In the more secular cities of today... life does not revolve around the cathedral, although in many communities the church, synagogue, mosque continues to play a vital role in social organisation. But if we look at cities as centres of spontaneous creativity and festival, then we come closer to an appreciation of spirit around us... The nourishing of the spirit or soul needs a daily space and has everyday expressions; two women on a park bench 'gossiping'; a group of students in a coffee shop discussing plans for a protest; and old Chinese man practising his tai chi on the beach or in a park... Rational planners have been obsessed with controlling how and when people use public as well as private space. Meanwhile, ordinary people continue to find ways of appropriating spaces and creating places...to fulfil their desires as well as their needs, to tend the spirit as well as take care of the rent.

(Sandercock, 1998, 213/4)

However, in her view, it is not only space that is important to imbue with a sense of the sacred. The *processes* by which urban space is created also need to be shifted away from the dry, technical rationality of top-down masterplanning to something far more local and organic. She talks about the 'tacit knowledge' of local communities which needs to be engaged with if new communities are to be formed out of old ones. The role of the planner is one who facilitates discussion and multi-media scenarios (including drama and art) to ensure a progressive but sensitive cultural 'fit' with the existing conditions on the ground. She sets her methodologies and aspirations for creating truly diverse and sustainable urban space within the overall framework of her own 'faith', which she breaks down into the following components: First, an 'extraordinary openness', which she defines as a willingness to engage in a 'thousand conversations' and to be fully 'present' in those conversations by means of a mindful awareness – the general antithesis (in her opinion) of bureaucrats 'usual going through the motions'. Second, is the importance of a real sense of interdependence which is expressed through relationship and compassion – a 'we-philosophy'. Finally, a recognition

that a sense of sacredness and magic, and that bringing out the best in everyone, requires opportunities for celebration, ritual and play.

These three practical contributions to diverse and sustainable planning are predicated on a spirituality which in the words of the Quaker educationalist Parker Palmer is based on the 'diverse ways we answer the heart's longing to be connected with the largeness of life'. Sandercock argues that the values based on this spirituality include a list of universal beatitudes that are available to all: 'to moderate greed with generosity, to conjoin private ambition with civic ambition, to care for others as much as or even more than ourselves, to think as much or more about future generations as we do our own, to thoughtfully weigh the importance of memory alongside the need to change...' (Sandercock, 2006: 66)

Thus the work of Sandercock, Massey, Amin and others could be argued to represent the emergence of a counter narrative within human and urban geography that is interested in asking explicitly (rather than implicitly) the key moral questions – 'Whose city is the city?' and 'What makes a good city?' To develop a little the helpful term coined by UK-urban theologian Andrew Davey, could we locate this emerging trend as a shift from *location-economic issues* (i.e. the study of global cities as nodes of neo-liberal capitalism and the impact of the neo-liberal space on locally-lived space) to one which stresses the ethical dimensions of city growth and seeks to locate the values-base by which cities should develop in the future (i.e. *the locational-ethical*)?

In a moment we will describe two case studies of faith-based practice praxis within the postsecular and neo-liberal city and attempt to evaluate their effectiveness. But in order to do that, we will briefly explore the theoretical framework described by Chatterton and Hollands in their analysis of the processes by which former derelict sites of working class leisure and entertainment are converted once again into productive sites of consumption within the 'brandscares' of the gentrified city centre. Their narrative of urbanism could be said to be representative of what I have called the deterministic narratives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century city – i.e. part of the dominant discourse charting the inexorable rise of the neo-liberal city from the 1980s onwards. Whether commentators are in favour of the neo-liberal city for its potential to create economic growth and personal self-development (e.g. Florida (2003), Garreau (1998) or sharply critical of its social impacts (e.g. Castells (2000), Bauman (1998), Smith (1996), Harvey (1989, 2003) there is a general analysis which holds out little possibility of deviance from the logic and priorities of neo-liberalism, and

the intractable conflicts of interest and space that it creates, and which are usually resolved in its favour.

### **Nightlife – imbibing hedonism and fun in the urban brandscape**

As Chatterton and Hollands correctly point out, 'fun, hedonism, socialising, sexual encounter and drunkenness remain long-held motivations for a good night out' (2003:69). However the mechanisms by which such experiences are mediated and controlled are increasingly 'mainstreamed' and 'gentrified'. This mainstreaming has been largely driven by the rise of the new consumer whose tastes and spending power are more refined and enhanced than that available in the traditional working-class and largely male bastions of entertainment originating from the industrial era – pubs, music halls, working men's clubs, bingo and pool halls, picture palaces etc. These new consumers are professional women, gentrified members of the gay and lesbian community and students with higher levels of disposable income and closer access to the city centre thanks to the expansion and relocation of student accommodation nearer to hubs of city centre activity. These consumers have helped shape what has been dubbed the 'brandscape'; i.e. a central urban area dominated by a 'symbolic' landscape of globally recognised images and products that promise a wide variety of themes and 'structured fantasies' (Chatterton & Hollands, 96). These will include sports bars, sushi bars, Moroccan bazaars, Aussie and Irish pubs, beach bars. As Chatterton and Hollands explain, 'The logic of such easy to read themed environments is that their legibility stimulates our propensity to spend. In short, people like to be entertained while they spend money.' (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003: 97)

However, these brandscapes offer more than entertainment – they also speak of social status and economic spending power in a hierarchical zoning of space. At the bottom-end of the market are the large capacity (1000 plus) themed venues that offer their owners the best opportunities for economies of scale and profit maximisation. They appeal to the widest possible audience with design features such as 'bright walls, rock and pop music, legible signage and well-known drink brands' (2003:98). A UK example of such a franchise is J.D Weatherspoon with its cheap beer, no music or TV, 'just a pub' philosophy. At the higher end of the market are the 'yuppie bars' (such as the Slug and Lettuce chain) aimed at affluent young professionals, and offering premium food and quality beers. JD Weatherspoon attempts to cater for this market with its Lloyds No 1 franchise. Meanwhile, Bar 38 franchise (part of the Scottish and Newcastle group) incorporates zones within its premises for eating, drinking and socialising but all

placed in such a way as to increase flows of people circulation. They also include cash points and intensive CCTV operations, but all tastefully concealed within an esoteric yet minimalist décor – stripped wooden furniture, metallic walls and glass frontages.

### **Residual space – home of the flawed consumers**

The logical implication of this zoned and hierarchical understanding of city centre space is that the lower down the socio-economic chain you are, the less choice and opportunity you have to participate in the night time economy. This is especially true of those younger people who are the direct or indirect descendents of the industrial working class communities who prior to the de-industrialisation of the 1960s had direct access to the city centre and whose cultural and entertainment needs were met by its many spaces for socialising and discussion. Due to a lack of spending power the best this group can aspire to in terms of participation in the city centre is at the lower end of the 'brandscape' spectrum, where their presence is viewed with suspicion and subject to disparaging labelling such as 'chavs', 'slappers' etc. At worst, when even participation at the lower end of the night time economy is denied them the only remaining 'space' open to them for entertainment is their 'home' environment – a few remaining pubs on estates or those parts on the edges of city centres awaiting 'refitting', but more typically street corners, parks, shopping centres and localised gang cultures (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003: 189). Homeless people (i.e. those most excluded from participation in what the city centre has to offer) will often be subject to official harassment or attack from other users for whom 'kick the beggar' might be one further addition to the night out menu (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003: 192).

These spaces are what Chatterton and Hollands define as 'the residue' spaces – non-productive spaces (in terms of globalised turnover) lying in the shadow of the 'bright neon of youthful gentrified nightlife consumption' and 'marginalised by new urban brandscapes and the commercial mainstream' (2003: 175). Originally useful in the industrial city, these residual spaces are now 'surplus to requirements' (p.175). Zygmunt Bauman in one of his most striking sociological typologies defines two broad categories of citizen in today's 'liquid' modernity (2000). One group are the 'cash-rich but time poor' citizens who are broadly affluent and secure, but whose lifestyles and choices are constantly being dictated by the work ethic. Consumption of new products and experiences is the reward offered by the market for their endless flexibility, mobility and hard work.

The other group are the 'cash poor but time rich'; those whose lack of appropriate skills and economic status mean that they increasingly struggle to participate in the consumer economy – these are the redundant and the dispossessed and therefore by definition, the most stigmatised and potentially most criminalised. However, their greatest 'crime' according to Bauman, is their unwillingness or inability to play their part in the new forms of production – i.e. consumption. The poor, in Bauman's terms, are therefore 'flawed consumers' and thus undeserving of either respect or compassion.

### **Faith-based projects– seeking to create new spaces of production and alternative spaces of hope in the indifferent city**

In a previous publication (Baker, 2007), I have described the impact of two contrasting Christian faith-based community projects in highly marginalised and excluded communities in Manchester, 'contrasting' in the sense of theological perspectives. Both FBOs (Faith Based Organisations) have evolved since this publication, but their ethos and methodology remain broadly similar. One FBO, Community Pride Initiative (CPI) could be defined as operating on a radical-liberal model, strongly influenced by the methodologies of Liberation theology. Its primary purpose is to witness to its Christian identity through initiating, in an inclusive and non-dogmatic way, political empowerment strategies for the local community as a whole. CPI therefore operates at a more implicit model of Christian identity based on unconditional contributions to the common good.

The other FBO is a more orthodox and evangelical community called the Eden project, one of a series of independent church-based communities established since the late 1980s by a Christian charitable trust called The Message Trust. Their primary purpose is to provide services and support for highly disenfranchised young people who are experiencing difficulties with education, crime drug abuse and disruptive family backgrounds via means of support networks and youth services provided from bases in the local community and working in partnership with public and private institutions. Alongside their socially-based work in the community, their aim is also to grow and develop their church communities by means of evangelism and invitations to consider the Christian faith, albeit at times and places that are clearly signalled and based entirely on choice. Eden therefore appear to operate at a more explicit model of Christian service based on unconditional service combined with overt evangelism. Both FBOs recently had their initiatives assessed and evaluated by independent reviews commissioned from academic institutions.

## Eden Harpurhey Youth Project

This project was established in 2001 under the umbrella of The Message Trust, to work with young people in Harpurhey, in the north east of Manchester.

Harpurhey is located on the edge of a huge new business park, but despite significant inward investment into the general region, it has been designated the second most deprived neighbourhood in England (see DCLG indices of deprivation). Eden's initial purpose was to establish partnerships with local institutional churches (one Anglican and one United church) to set up a Youth Project. The Project has grown into a multi-service deliverer for young people including:

- Tuesday Youth Club – for 11–16 year olds providing sport, games, cooking and craft activities
- Chaos 2 – for 12–16 year olds providing sports and craft activities
- Made It – a mentoring scheme partnered with the local secondary school combining creative arts with addressing issues of non-attendance
- Detached – a street-level outreach programme on Harpurhey's housing estates
- Groovy Chicks – for girls under 12 offering social activities and a space to discuss informally life issues
- Monday girls – a similar group for 13 – 15 year olds
- football teams and two or three overtly faith-based activities.

All these services are run by a team of three full-time youth workers, supported by fifteen volunteers, all of whom live within Harpurhey. Other partners include Greater Manchester Police, local schools and the North Manchester Youth Inclusion project, a statutory agency run by the Youth Justice board.

Alongside this impressive range of youth projects, other programmes exist which demonstrate a further level of sophistication and innovation.

Firstly, Eden's work emerges from close consultation with the service users (i.e. young people in Harpurhey) but is also reflective of current academic research and government policy. The connections with research-led policy developments are impressive, and their report, *Building a bridge to inclusion for the young people of North East Manchester* (2005) was produced by the Centre for Citizenship Studies at the University of Leicester.

Secondly, the Project has developed two innovatory pieces of community development and social enterprise that take forward secular-based praxis. One is the *Matrix Mentoring* programme that creates 'multiple mentoring points' for individual young people. This means the current practice of statutory mentoring, usually delivered from one fixed point (a school or youth club), is expanded to provide what Eden call a 'fabric' of support through projects and adults who are connected and regularly communicate with one another. This is possible because of the distinctively Christian nature of the Project's methodology – namely a radical discipleship and incarnational model of community engagement (i.e. all its workers live in Harpurhey). This 'community-within-a-community' model allows a constant low-key presence to be maintained (through the various youth club 'delivery points' mentioned above) which is open-access, informal and non-judgmental but also well-connected to statutory agencies who can provide further support and advice. Thus the Project works as a 'gateway' to other services – for example, help with dyslexia or self-harm behaviour. The Matrix Mentoring programme's strength derives from relationships created with those excluded from accessing other services (perhaps because of a criminal record or exclusion order).

The second concept Eden offers directly addresses the economic deficits a community like Harpurhey experiences in the face of global expansion. The *Entry to Enterprise* programme helps young people develop enterprise skills and set up their own micro-enterprise ventures. Thus 14–19 year olds using Eden's mentoring schemes are offered opportunities to visit local businesses prior to undergoing placements with them. These opportunities are linked to other strands – building up confidence, addressing communication and presentation skills, CV writing, enhancing emotional intelligence (i.e. addressing issues of anger or low self-esteem). The Entry to Enterprise scheme develops partnerships with a variety of businesses and builds up the competencies of young people to an entry level of emotional and practical competence as potential micro-entrepreneurs. It thus augments the economic and educational capacity of a disadvantaged local community to compete against some of the global forces washing around its borders. It will help attract flows of income into the local community and create opportunities for young people to stay in Harpurhey and invest their human capital there rather than in the city centre and beyond.

### **Community Pride Initiative**

The Community Pride Initiative (CPI) was established in the 1999 under the auspices of another national Christian charity – Church Action on Poverty. It has

built up an impressive portfolio of engagements with a variety of partners across Manchester and Salford and currently has a staff of ten. Its mission is to address issues arising from a lack of empowerment due to poverty and exclusion. In CPI's view, this inequality to accessing power is linked to inequality in the distribution of information and lack of public space where that information can be shaped and challenged from the local perspective.

CPI's theological roots lie in a more liberal *kerygma*. Its gospel presentation is based on shared praxis rather than an explicit commitment to share the message of the Good News which lies at the heart of Eden's ethos. It is also more rooted within an overt liberation theology tradition. This means 'engaging critically' in strategies and policy debates that affect the lives of poor communities around the 'core issues of poverty, social exclusion, urban renewal and debate' (EIUA, 2005: 7). It also means implementing development strategies used within the poorer South; a participatory budgeting scheme in Salford borrowed from the Porto Alegre model in Brazil; comic strips to explain regeneration policy to local groups; running Schools of Participation with leaders from ethnic and other local groups, also based on Latin American models.

There are two elements of Community Pride's work which are distinctive. First is the unique mixture of skills and approaches held within a single organisation. The sheer diversity of groups and networks that Community Pride works with is immense; local community networks, New Deal for Communities programmes, a Gender and Engagement project, tenants' associations, local churches, café projects, leadership programmes for young people, community organisers' programmes, national programmes on Active Citizenship, establishing disability networks and funding a deaf linkworker, as well as annual conferences on local democracy. To resource a client group as diverse as this requires an extraordinary range of overlapping but also distinctive skills and competencies that have to be well managed and co-ordinated.

This is a powerful example of social entrepreneurship but with added value. That added value is directly linked to what CPI call 'a desire to make real the values of the Christian Gospel' (EIUA, 2005: 6). In other words, the breadth of issues and groups covered by Community Pride's work reflects a belief that every aspect of a person's well-being needs to be addressed when talking about civil renewal – political, social and economic. A CPI worker once told me that Community Pride's *raison d'être* was to bring 'life in all its fullness'. In a three year impact report written by the European Institute for Urban Affairs at Liverpool John Moores University (2005), the following distinctive elements to

CPI's *modus operandi* were identified from interviews with both users and partners;

- a firm value base that allowed it to 'go the extra mile'
- a moral force and impact beyond its numbers
- a sense of sharing that leads to mutual support
- a belief in partnership
- a commitment to trailblazing and identifying needs that are not otherwise being met
- creating self-sustaining structures, not dependency
- creating a niche market of operating that mixes both analysis and group work skills
- recognising the significance of power structures
- keeping up to date with current policy initiatives
- translating knowledge and information for those who are affected by the decisions of others
- feeding intelligence back to the policy makers (EIUA, 2005: 8).

Central to CPI's stated way of working is the commitment to 'participate in learning and exchange with organisations and networks with similar aims and methods across the UK and internationally' (EIUA, 2005: 7). This commitment is a key element in the construction of an alternative local political economy because it helps ensure a freshness and flexibility of approach.

Through these initiatives, those experiencing low self-esteem and low expectations and aspirations within excluded communities which are often deemed 'surplus to requirements' in the rebranded city (especially young people) are provided with the necessary opportunities and skills to become active producers of their own stories, identities and futures, rather than passive role of flawed consumers.

### **How effective is FBO engagement in providing alternative spaces of hope in the postsecular city?**

There are a number of ways of looking at this question. We have focused in this paper on local initiatives, rather than the considerable impact that faith groups can still have on wider civil society via faith-based charities and designated service providers. A recent survey by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO, 2007: 15) concluded that nearly 24,000 charities in the UK had 'religious activity' as one of their objectives with a combined income of £4.6 billion to invest in charitable activity. In the United States where individual FBOs

(read mainly churches) still have a strong profile within civil society (due to the historically-devolved relationship between church and state), extensive research has been undertaken into the distinctive nature and impact of faith-based engagement in civil society. For example, an authoritative commentator (Smidt: 2003) reviewing much of the existing US literature identifies five ways in which faith based social capital (what he calls religious social capital) differs from general American social capital. These include:

- Higher quantities than other forms of social capital due to the prevalence of American churches in civil society – it is alleged that religious affiliations account for half of all US social capital
- May be more durable because of the motivations that religious people bring.
- Has a wider range which is reflected in the diversity of American congregations.
- Norms of trust and reciprocity developed in congregations are transferred into sustainable social capital in the wider community.
- Confers advantageous forms of capacity building (skills sets/confidence building etc.) for individuals not usually available within wider American society.

However, emerging research into the nature and identity of British faith-based engagement in civil society (across both rural and urban environments) suggests a more ambiguous picture. Many faith groups in the UK are much smaller and more fragile than their US counterparts and some commentators are raising questions about the capacity and ability of faith groups to deliver what the UK government is asking of them, especially in relation to major social problems such as social cohesion and the delivery of public services to marginalised communities (Lukka (2003), Furbey (2006) , Baker (2009) et al). This government approach in the UK towards faith communities is being seen as increasingly instrumental and functionalist (i.e. seeing faith groups as a 'cheap resource' for what they can deliver, rather than acknowledging why they might want to get involved in the first place), thus making relationships with FBOs potentially problematic (NCVO,2007: 18). There is some evidence to show the distorting effects that major funding programmes can have on the fragile ecologies of voluntary organisations such as small to medium FBOs, because secular funding regimes often ask them to move into new areas of language and accountability that take them away from their usual support base and cultural norms (Lukka, 2003). Meanwhile, recent research further afield from Tanya Winkler (2008) reflecting on the role and contribution of FBOS to civil society in the port-of-

entry Hillbrow area of Johannesburg finds that institutional barriers between FBOS and secular/government agencies (in the form of respective political and institutional cultures) allow only a nominal shift from defensive positions to ones that are more bridging. Winkler concludes, 'Existing relational ties, a motivation for action based on 'hope', a predominant focus on individuals and the state's morality perception of the South African faith sector, are insufficient conditions for effective transformation.' (Winkler, 2008: 69) Winkler's research therefore is an important corrective to rather vague and ill-defined aspirations focussed on words such as 'hope' and 'transformation', and a warning to both urban geographers and theologians alike, that a rhetoric of hope needs to be seen to deliver hard evidence of demonstrable change in people's quality of life (including political as well as economic and human happiness outcomes) if it is not simply going to be a meaningless or easily manipulated rhetoric.

### **Theologies and Urbanisms of Hope**

In conclusion, despite obvious challenges, some of which I have outlined above, I think it is possible to locate faith-based engagement within the postsecular city. As we have seen, the post-secular city is becoming an increasingly theorised space within urban geography with regard to the significance of values, ethics, sacredness and spirituality, as well as the traditionally strong element of social justice. The postsecular city is therefore, at one level more tolerant, even welcoming of the contribution of faith and religion than its secular predecessor, even in those public spaces of political governance and community-building where it often values working in partnership with faith communities on issues of common and public good and on common agendas. Andrew Davey acutely reflects that this is perhaps not as strange as it may sound. The task of building and striving for an urbanism based on hope and transformation, rather than one predicated on the TINA principle (There Is No Alternative) in respect to the emergence of the neoliberal hegemony, is a common endeavour which should unite all peoples of good-will, be they working with explicit reference to a faith or religion or not. Davey refers to the importance of an urban praxis that in the words of Andy Merrifield 'is incorporated in flesh and blood, that does bring real people – everyday people, to the fore, who in big and little ways somehow make a difference: they change a world that is changing them' (Merrifield, 2006: 17 – quoted Davey, 2008: 43). Practices cited by Davey, often originating and located within a faith environment and aimed at making the city a more sustainable and just space, include fair-trade households, churches and other faith groups,

businesses and places of work, living wage campaigns aimed at ensuring local people who service global industries have a wage that recognises the impact of global forces on local costs of living, the Critical Mass cycling campaign against the dominance of fuel-based transport - and so on (see Davey, 2008: 45).

In other words, what the postsecular city does is allow faith groups to create alternative spaces of hope, when before, it would have tried to control any attempt to work outside the self-evident laws of secular modernism and the role of the expert. As we have seen in our two case studies and others, these spaces alternative spaces may be *economic* (such as mentoring schemes, business placements and training schemes in social enterprise), *physical* (such as night-shelters, youth projects, fair-trade retailing outlets) *symbolic* (spaces of public worship, prayer, silent witness, public art) or *political* (community empowerment networks, demonstrations, single-issue protests).

And whilst affirming all that is good in the buzz of the gentrified and rebranded city, the role of churches and other FBOs will primarily be to remind the wider community that for a healthy, balanced city we still need to provide spaces of *production* rather than merely passive consumption – spaces where people generate stories and visions and a sense of meaningful identity as well as contributing culture, enterprise and a public sense of the common good to the spaces in which they are located.

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