

Temple Tracts: Issue 5, Volume 3

Curating Spaces of Hope: A New Definition and Model of Faith Based Organisations

Matthew Barber



William Temple
Foundation

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Shelf Reference: Book 16

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Matthew Barber is a Researcher at Goldsmiths, University of London, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Community Development Worker within the Diocese of Chester, and the Originator, Curator and Facilitator of Spaces of Hope. Matthew has previously contributed to the 2015 'New Spaces Old Mindsets Conference' hosted by University of Chester Centre for Faiths and Public Policy, Link Up and Cheshire West and Chester Council, as well as designing and delivering the 'Kimbilio Sustainability' project with Keele University and Congo Children's Trusts. This Temple Tract is based upon research that Matthew is conducting with Professor Chris Baker, providing a new definition and model for Faith Based Organisations, in a 21st Century context. Matthew tweets [@matthewbarber_1](https://twitter.com/matthewbarber_1) and hosts the website www.spacesofhope.co.uk

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Introduction

It's ten years after the run on Northern Rock, the economic crash ushering in austerity and for the first time, generations of young people being offered the realistic expectation of flourishing to a lesser extent during their lifetime than their parents' generation did (Resolution Foundation, 2017). We have seen and experienced personal, social and political upheaval, most recently signified by radical reforms to public services, a polarising of views within Europe and America and a fundamental shift to a post-Brexit political settlement looming as the UK leaves the European Union. It is against this backdrop that I share Spaces of Hope with you. I will not spend time outlining the backdrop I have opened with. There are numerous resources we can call on for that and limited space here. What I will do, is open up Spaces of Hope such that it gives visibility to what it is and encourages us, by the end of this Tract, to discover what could be. I will share stories that have shaped the emerging Spaces of Hope movement and pedagogy. I will share themes and patterns that I have used to understand the impact and potential of Spaces of Hope and I will provide a derivation and working definition for Spaces of Hope as a new way of understanding Faith Based Organisations. We will link personal stories to structures, share some key literatures, and finish off by looking at some examples of Spaces of Hope.

To begin, I will share some stories from my personal journey, from 2009/10, 2012/13 and 2015/16, to talk about how themes of austerity, localism and partnership working have impacted me personally and my relationship with systems and processes that shape our organisations and public spaces. I will explain the content and expression of these stories, the impact it had upon me and I will point to what emerged as a result.

You might be wondering, why? I have offered this biographical introduction for two reasons: 1) as a practical help, so we can appreciate the nuances at the heart of the literature that I will pick up later, and 2) so that you can journey with me, plugging in the stories from your own personal journey and relate those to Spaces of Hope, as we unpack them over the next few pages.

2009/10 – Rock Bottom – The impact of austerity

I began my university career at Cardiff University in 2006. I studied Environmental Geoscience and was seeking a career in the oil industry. My course linked theory to practice; learning about hydrology and exploration geology as well as using computer mapping software and reading rock formations. My course was equipping me for a working world that was literally laying at my feet. When I graduated in 2009 the landscape had changed. The 2007 recession had hit and the job market had changed. The reality of seeing a career in the oil industry replaced by well-intentioned advice to 'get a temp job' was hard. I was fortunate. An independent sports shop near my home took a chance on me; having spent weekends and summers working there during my A levels. It was a fun job and they are now a flourishing outlet and online retailer. Unfortunately for me, the opportunity they gave to me was withdrawn in November 2009. They could not afford to keep me. The reality of unemployment in a recession set in. For three months, I barely left my bedroom. It was a dark place. In January 2010, I was 21, living in my family home, socially isolated and alone. One day my dad came home. He had seen a job advertised locally. It was a job at the local petrol station. I applied and secured the job, working ten hours per week for the next six months. It was linked to the oil industry, but not what I had in mind. It was not very many hours. To begin with though, it was as many as I could handle.

I have shared this story to highlight three points. The impacts of austerity are a shrinking job market. The impacts of austerity hit those least able to adjust, hardest. The impacts of austerity are not just financial; there is a personal cost paid by a deficit in health and wellbeing.

2012/13 – Mapping the Terrain – Localism and the changing landscape

Two years on, I was studying a Masters Degree in Environmental Politics at Keele University. My area of interest was sustainable community development. I was inspired by the role that the church was playing in communities locally and globally. I attended my local church, who supported me to go on a mission trip to DR Congo. The content of that trip was humbling. I saw expressions of person centred care extended to street children in Lubumbashi; abandoned because of misguided beliefs that they were harbingers of witchcraft. Conversely, I witnessed development work that said that each child mattered. Personal

plans were developed, allowing those that wanted to step off the streets and into a home supported by the Anglican Church; one of the only trusted institutions left within a failed state. On my return from DR Congo, I worked with some great people at the Sustainability Hub at Keele. We developed a sustainable energy project. I secured funds, presented the work at a symposium and delivered my dissertation mapping this work. During this period, I had continued to work at the petrol station and whilst stood behind the till, noticed synergies between my study, my experience in DR Congo and the return to a focus on our communities in the UK. This had piqued my interest. After my Masters, I volunteered as community projects officer at my local parish church. I linked with Christians Against Poverty, the Mid-Cheshire Foodbank and designed and delivered a new cross-sector community festival model in Winsford; hosting a not-for-profit marketplace alongside schools' work, musical performances and arts exhibitions. We did it in a way that saw the church welcomed as host and community partner. The work resonated and the festival we created has run annually, since.

2015/16 – Bridging the Gap – Towards working in partnership

A group called Link Up conducted Faith Action Audits in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester in 2009 and 2013, highlighting the socio-economic impact of faith assets. I was offered work with Link Up, most recently in 2016, completing case studies of faith groups working in partnership. This showed me that there was a strategically significant way of bridging the divide between faith and public sectors. It also showed me I wasn't alone in thinking about the strategic significance of faith based organisations. I learned that in an increasingly uncertain context, it is not as simple as having the will to do something. We have to match that will with action. This might appear to be an obvious point. One thing that is not as obvious however, is how this combination of will and action both manifests itself as a life line to those individuals with a personal deficit, and links in sustainably with the systems and processes that are currently subject to radical reforms. The connection with Link Up helped me begin working through how this connection might be made.

I will conclude here by saying that as part of my journey I have been unemployed; dealt with poor health and wellbeing; worked minimum wage jobs; volunteered for local churches; designed and delivered bespoke project work and undertaken a Masters and a PhD. I have

also experienced first-hand the impact of the shifting political and spiritual terrain we are trying to build upon. Matthew 7: 13-15 tells us to enter God's kingdom through the narrow gate and that only a few people find it. By opening with stories about the road I am walking down, I want to share something of the hope that road brings.

Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) as Spaces of Hope

So far, I have offered a reference point for austerity, localism and partnership working.

These are broader themes shaping our lives, which I have highlighted using examples from my own life. Later, I will unpack four patterns shaping the spaces we are encountering.

Next, I will offer a brief derivation and definition for FBOs as Spaces of Hope.

FBOs already exist within the literature. Current models include: Cnaan (1999) identifying FBOs by scale; ranging from local congregation to religiously affiliated international organisations, and Smith (2002) identifying faith related groups by the role of belief, ranging from faith saturated groups through to completely secular groups. Each model exhibits FBOs on a spectrum, but don't address the role and structures of FBOs in the current context of austerity, localism and partnership working. Herman et al (2012) provides suggested styles of FBO, recognising the spaces created by these styles by the nature of the engagement within them. This introduces a spatial analysis. These are spaces of community, sanctuary, faith, care, learning, market interaction and so on (pp. 63-65). This suggests a contextual element that must be considered. What this does is identify FBOs as intrinsically local.

Spaces of Hope is a new definition and model of FBOs that aims to be fit for purpose for the current policy and political landscape in the UK. It is an evolving idea, but my definition is as follows:

Spaces of Hope are, missional, outward facing and partnership driven expressions of how we serve each other to shape our public space.

Spaces of Hope provide new infrastructure, allowing FBOs to be engaged with in confidence and in a way that combines all of the elements we are including here, whilst changing the emphasis from what they are, to what they do. By identifying Spaces of Hope by what they do, we can say that they will be known by their fruit. I will conclude this section with the following quote from Matthew 7: 15-20: "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in*

sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them"

Patterns Shaping Spaces of Hope:

We have looked at how personal stories help us make sense of themes of austerity, localism and partnership working. These themes help us see where Spaces of Hope might fit. In this next section, we will make sense of the patterns that run through Spaces of Hope. These literatures are the Post-Secular, the Spiritual Turn, Spiritual Capital and the Spatial Turn. I will take each in turn, so that we are equipped to navigate our final section, which will include three Spaces of Hope case studies.

The Post-Secular

This pattern originates in the work of Jurgen Habermas. He notes, "a post-secular self-understanding of society as a whole in which the vigorous continuation of religion in a continually secularising environment must be reckoned with" (2005, p. 26). This is the most empirically accurate and conceptually broad articulation for the post-secular (Baker, et al., 2015, p. 147) and is the means by which we will locate the new visibility of religion in the public square.

Habermas uses three ideas to explain the post-secular. Firstly, that the western world is on a "special path," it has created a distinct understanding of how society is formed. Charles Taylor calls this our 'social imaginary.' Second, Habermas relates this path to the struggles that exist in our public sphere, due to competing world views. Thirdly, Habermas explains the role that translation plays in our public dialogue.

Special Path

Western post-war society is secularised and subject to dynamics of deinstitutionalisation and lessening religious commitments including attendance and prominence. Habermas (2008) describes this as a special path or "*sonderweg*." For a long time, the secularisation

thesis offered the perceived wisdom that modernisation has increased, and so secularisation of society has increased too. There are three underpinning rationales for this:

- (1) An anthropocentric (human centred) worldview has been increasing, with a theocentric (God centred) worldview, decreasing. Scientifically enlightened perspectives have become a driving force in what is for many, a disenchanting society.
- (2) Religious groups have been less visible and have seen their influence over the state and the law diminish. This has been the case for everything from welfare provision to involvement in decision-making. Religious groups have appeared to have engaged in less public matters, such as administering salvation.
- (3) We are in a post-industrial age characterised by reduced risk and a de-mystified understanding of the world. Faith in higher powers has become less important for western society.

Habermas is not satisfied with this though. Habermas (2008) argues that there is a paradox in play. Where people are encouraged to be involved in public debate and influence decision making, some of them are asked not to share what motivates them to hold a particular position i.e. if it is religiously derived, keep quiet. This “laicism” i.e. freedom from religious contributions, prevents the public sphere from fulfilling its primary purpose of allowing all voices in the public sphere to be heard and to be subject to the same regulation.

This wasn't always Habermas' view. As a key voice at the Frankfurt School, Habermas' early work is steeped in Marxist social thought. *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas, 1984) assumed the secularisation thesis was accurate and religion was a functional mechanism for understanding a demystified world. This makes his work on the post-secular and the public inclusion of religion all the more remarkable.

The September 11th terror attacks highlighted a deficit in public understanding of religion. Religious literacy was conspicuously absent as the painfully public and explicitly religious events unfolded. Three other examples stood out for Habermas around the turn of the

millennium, indicating a missionary expansion, the role of fundamentalism and political instrumentalisation of the potential for violence in world religion:

- (1) Religiously charged rioting in France that was put down by 4,000 police directed by the president (Sarkozy).
- (2) The suggestion by the Archbishop of Canterbury that Sharia Law be integrated into family law in some Muslim communities.
- (3) A fire in a German block of flats in which nine Turkish people died (four children) prompted a strong reaction by Turkish media and an ambivalent campaign speech by the Turkish PM during a visit to Germany which prompted German press to react strongly in response (Habermas, 2008).

These examples, among others, point to wider tensions at the heart of the conversation Habermas is having. These tensions point to a wider cultural struggle (*Kulturkampf*) taking place in the public sphere.

Cultural Struggle

We need to acknowledge the impact that religion has on both the state and civil society. The role of the state cannot be to prescribe religious practice, nor can the role of religion be to arbitrate on what the state can and cannot do; at least not to any greater or lesser extent than those of no religion. Religious undertakings have been problematic for a long time and have been bogged down by the *sonderweg* experienced in the West. This is obvious from the examples that Habermas was using from the start of the 21st century and has created an even more obvious tension. At either end of this tension, Habermas (2008) points us towards radical multiculturalists and militant secularists disagreeing about the way individuals integrate into society. This is the *Kulturkampf* Habermas (2008) refers to. His aim is to avoid a straight dichotomy between these polemic positions. At the heart of Habermas' (2008, p. 27) argument is an attempt to both go beyond a politics of identity and to avoid another extreme; an anti-racist racism. Or more hopefully, for everyone to be able to

receive representation, as part of an inclusive civil society where equal citizenship and cultural difference complement each other.

Habermas helps define exactly why we need a religious voice in the public sphere and also directs us to the consequences of a negatively defined public sphere that deracinates and dilutes one at the expense of the other. Between these two poles is a space that allows different voices to be heard. Habermas' final idea to help us counteract this diluting i, translation.

Translation

If our 'special path' and 'power struggle' offer the impetus for a new negotiation of language, then citizens and decision makers alike need access to religiously oriented language and motivations as well as mechanisms for their inclusion. The positions we take and the convictions we hold are often formed before getting involved publicly. They are influenced by society, culture and religion. These 'pre-political' positions often motivate our public undertakings (Habermas, 2010, p. 6), and finding appropriate ways of communicating these positions, and the way they motivate our public actions is a step towards interreligious and intercultural discourse. Habermas has led by example, through his 2004 dialogue with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). They help us move from *modus vivendi*, to embracing cultural difference. Matthew 7 vs 2 says, "you will be judged in the same way you judge others. You will be measured in the same way you measure others" - or as we understand it in terms of Spaces of Hope; "by their fruit you will know them."

If we are to make the most of the space afforded by the post-secular, then the conversation must not only utilise and expand the ideas that Habermas has provided, but also understand the new dialogue around religion, belief and its public impact, its influence at a personal level and how it has changed over time. The second pattern that we can see in Spaces of Hope is the spiritual turn.

The Spiritual Turn

During the second half of the 20th century, we experienced what Houtman and Aupers (2007) call the 'spiritual turn.' This describes a significant change in the way we interact with religion. This has been driven by the confluence of unwavering secularisation and religious deinstitutionalisation, coupled with spirituality as counterculture in the 1960s, through to New Age thinking in the 1980s (page 305 - 306). This change has been described as "Do it Yourself Religion" (Baerveldt, 1996), "Pick and Mix Religion" (Hamilton, 2000), or a "Spiritual Supermarket" (Lyon, 2000) and even "eclectic if not kleptomaniac process ... with no clear reference to an external or deeper reality" (Possamai, 2003). This points to a thoroughly subjective experience of spirituality. What we have seen is the jumbling together of various religious ideas from all the world's main traditions, with people sifting through and sorting out what works for them at that point in time, all relating back to people's sense of self (Aupers & Houtman, 2003). Where once Christendom defined our western context, we have experienced an increase in subjective spirituality. This is seen by some as a total rejection of institutions because they make you 'sick', due to the negative impact of obligation and coercion (p. 11) and the deification of the self as a result of the rationalisation and disenchantment of the West (p. 15). Secularist Steve Bruce reads this change as a confirmation of the demise of religion. In his book *God is Dead*, he says "I can't see how a shared faith can be created from a low salience and do it yourself view of religion" (2002, p. 105). But this dismissal of institutions and the embracing of subjective spirituality is not indicative of decline. Peter Berger, a noted authority on the secularisation thesis, drew different conclusions to Bruce; "[The world] is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists . . . is essentially mistaken" (1999, p. 2). So, if secularisation theory isn't holding together, but there is definitely a confluence of deinstitutionalisation and increased spirituality taking place, what is going on?

The Kendal Project addresses this point. This work showed spiritual practices that improve wellbeing have grown, in contrast to religious adherence to obedience to an external God, which has halved relative to population, since the 1960s (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). This experience is representative of new forms of fluidity seen in shared public spaces including Kendal, Glastonbury, at events and festivals and increasingly online (Baker & Dinham, 2017).

This increased fluidity is synonymous with the increased social prevalence of the 'nones' - those who express no religious affiliation, whilst still retaining space for the possibility of faith in something (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). Graham notes that there has been a consistent reduction in numbers identifying as Christian in the UK from 71.1% to 59% from 2001 – 2011, whilst non-affiliates increased from 14.8% to 25.1% over the same period (2013, p. 6). These trends have continued. 46% of the UK population professed no religious affiliation in 2015 (Woodhead, 2016). Figures released in September 2017 note 53% of the population now profess no religious affiliation. 41% profess Christian faith; Anglican (15%), Catholic (10%) or other (17%). 6% of the UK population profess a non-Christian faith (BSA, 2017). The spiritual turn reflected in these cultural shifts has highlighted difference as a central characteristic of our public spaces. This is an important point, not only for informing policy and practice (Lee, 2016) but it also offers us space for sharing 'ideas and aesthetics, alongside a radical openness to seeking authenticity and truth' (Baker, 2016, p. 265).

The spiritual turn gives us a sense of the diverse range of identities within our public spaces. This provides us with a context for understanding identity within Spaces of Hope. Matthew 7 vs 6 suggests that we should illustrate discernment and self-understanding and verses 7-12 encourages us to take this forward asking, seeking and finding as we go; sharing what we have with others, as we would have others share with us. We'll now explore the political and civic implications of the spiritual turn within Spaces of Hope, by considering spiritual capital.

Spiritual Capital

Religious and spiritual capitals have referred to "practices, beliefs, networks and institutions that have a measurable impact on individuals, communities and societies" (Iannaccone & Klick, 2003). This has been a helpful reference for the content of religious or spiritual spaces, but we need a far more rigorous understanding of these terms.

Chris Baker and Hannah Skinner conducted research on behalf of the William Temple Foundation (2006). They identified spiritual capital within regeneration work in Manchester, in the early 2000s, which was characterised by neoliberal and secularising narratives. They found limitations were being placed on faith groups, whereby they were involved in partnership work, but also had to frame their activities in specific and narrowly drawn ways.

In return, they were afforded access to secular funding (Baker, 2009, p. 107). However, these groups felt like their identity had been hijacked and their religious capital appropriated at the expense of what they stood for, for the sake of a box ticking exercise by funders (p. 108).

The William Temple Foundation provided working definitions for Religious and Spiritual Capital. Religious capital; “The practical contribution to local and national life by faith groups”, was *what* was on offer. Spiritual Capital; “energises religious capital by providing a theological identity and worshipping tradition, but also a value system, moral vision and basis of faith”, was the *why*.

Understanding our public spaces as simultaneously comprising both *what* and *why* helps us understand the contributions of faith groups, but leaves open the question, what about those not in faith groups? Baker and Miles-Watson's (2008) work on secular spiritual capital gives space for the 'nones,' including different beliefs, values and worldviews. Baker (2009) explains that this shared understanding of spiritual capital can give different agencies access to common values and methodologies (p. 117), which is reflected in Baker's (2016) rephrasing of the term, “spiritual capital: the motivating basis of faith, belief and values that shape [our] concrete actions” (p. 268).

A key finding of the primary research into spiritual capital from the early 2000s was that secular agencies were unwilling to, or uncomfortable recognising the faith that was intrinsic to the concrete actions that were taking place (Baker & Skinner, 2006). This highlights both a disconnection between partners and indeed from the evidence. Putnam's (2000) work mapping the decline of civic associations and social capital in America found that faith groups represented 'bulwarks' against erosion of social capital, and 'incubators' for volunteering and local leadership skills (p. 66). Unruh and Sider (2005) note that this is because of the relational and resilient foundations that faith groups build upon, premised on being open about their shared *why* (p. 226). Sharing our *why* creates a potentially mutually re-enforcing social and political dynamic and the language of Spiritual Capital, whilst admittedly open to functional critiques of capital theory, represents an interdisciplinary access point yet to be superseded (Baker, 2012). One point that is worth emphasising here is that the application of social capital was underpinned by neoliberal presumptions that paid little regard to the *why* behind *what* was being relied upon to

generate strong connections within our public spaces. This was shown clearly when the Big Society simply failed to resonate with society (Ferragina & Alessandro, 2016).

Identifying that we all possess spiritual capital helps us capture a common pattern for expressing the *why* behind the concrete *what* in our public spaces. Where people felt let down, having to leave something of themselves at the door (Baker & Skinner, 2006), our past experience and current context point to the value of the content and expressions in our post-secular public space; “you need to not only work with the religious capital, but the spiritual capital as well” (Baker, 2016, p. 268).

To draw this section to a close, I am going to look at the original work by Baker and Skinner (2006) to see why we should bother seeing our *why* as a key pattern shaping our public spaces. Spiritual Capital comprises seven strands, which when combined illustrate the fullest extent of the way our *whys* can interact. The first of these strands is “hope and transformation” (p. 13). This is a personal, spiritual and physical transformation and is encouraged by the capacity to view potentials and realities beyond the prevailing circumstances; a view of hope. This strand does not assume that everyone shares the same faith, but does assume that we are all part of the same created order. By thinking about the content of our *why*, we are potentially accessing deeper sources of hope and transformation. This sense of hope and transformation allowed people to see the regeneration process for both what it was, and what it could be. This had a direct role in developing wider senses of wellbeing and happiness. The hope that is being talked about in Baker and Skinner’s work isn’t the sort of hope created, for example, by the remote chance of winning the lottery. Rather it is a deeper sense of hope that that encourages a ‘deep-seated and qualitative change’ (p. 14).

So far, we have looked at three patterns that help us to understand our public spaces. The post-secular showed us that there are specific public spaces where religious content is critical and that it is possible to work together to embrace difference and to do so by working to standards that we ourselves are happy to be judged by. The spiritual turn showed us that the content of our public spaces is complex and being shaped by a paradoxical shift shaped by institutional change, decreased attendance, an increase in religious informality and open and authentic dialogue about our beliefs, values and worldviews. It is ok to work through that personal process of discernment and to knock,

seek and ask, as we will find what we are after from others as we deliver it to them. Finally, spiritual capital, is the expression of the *why* behind our *what*, and details how both can be brought into closer contact with each other in policy contexts, allowing hopeful and transformative public spaces are to be built and sustained.

The final pattern we are going to look at is the spatial turn. Having navigated our way through Matthew 7, we can now think of this final section as the foundations upon which we are going to build Spaces of Hope (Matthew 7, vs 21-22). This section will draw on the lived experience that we began with, integrate the wisdom we have shared and provide us with the mechanism that we can see playing out at the heart of Spaces of Hope. This is a mechanism that can be used to move towards a spatial theology, as well as mapping Spaces of Hope in terms of policy and practice. We will look at three examples of this in the final section.

The Spatial Turn

First things first, we need a definition of the spatial turn. The spatial turn is “an exponential increase in multiplicity, fluidity and the collapsing of traditional hierarchies and boundaries in both lived and virtual space” (Baker, 2013, p. 209). This is a shift in both our thinking and in the way it manifests itself, and it is showing up in the way that we organise (p. 211).

To help us put this into terms we can work with, I want us to think of it as the consequences of connectedness. What we are about to do is show that within Spaces of Hope we can see connection with ourselves, connection with others, and connection between public spaces and systems.

At the beginning of this Tract I began by talking about my experiences. The purpose of this was to help us examine our personal situation with respect to the things around us, but it was also to identify apparent contradictions that are at the heart of our circumstances. I was socially isolated and struggled with a perceived lack of capacity. This does not mean that I actually lacked capacity, however. The pain that I felt at that time was real, but there were not necessarily outward signs of it, nor did it define everything about me at that time. Did the people I served at the petrol station know I was socially isolated and hurting because of it? I don't know. Did it impact my ability to do my job? That's for others to decide. If we were not experiencing austerity, would I have been working at the petrol

station at all? I don't know. Is it right to take these things into account in that situation, as it is with every other? Yes, it is. Does taking these things into account mean that the experience at the till in the petrol station will be transformative for those involved? Maybe not there and then, but as part of the spatial turn, we are able to note a paradigm shift in the way we see the world. The point here is that we can't say with certainty what it is we are encountering within these shared spaces, so we need to make a judgement call. Was I a sales assistant serving a health care professional that could see my circumstances written all over my face? I don't know. Was the customer a vicar who offered me a warm word? Yes, on a number of occasions. Was the customer someone who I felt might need some help and support themselves? Yes, often. Did customers act antagonistically and require me to be gracious to them when all I wanted to do was give them a piece of my mind? Frustratingly, yes. The point here is that the more informed we are about the other, the better our judgement and our capacity to act. Where we can't know about the other, how do we judge? Well, we can approach a situation accounting for multiple possible judgements and act accordingly. We can treat every scenario as unique, or as a singularity, and see differences at the heart of each encounter. Ontologically, this is a process of 'becoming', which represents a paradigm shift in the way that we can see the world (Baker, et al., 2015, p. 34) and the rock upon which we are going to build Spaces of Hope.

To map this process of 'becoming', we will use some new terms, to briefly consider the scenario at the till. The reality of daily life is that there are internal contradictions. We need to acknowledge these. We might identify things that will challenge us, for example. This could be the unseen difficulty of a mental health issue being overcome whilst simply standing and operating the till. In the same way, it could be the visible idiocy of someone who wants to pick a fight being met with a smile and a warm greeting as opposed to a punch in the face. In order to factor this in, we can use the idea of disjunctive synthesis or "the apparent human capacity to hold a particular set of beliefs and then to contradict these through actual implementation" (Baker, et al., 2015, p. 57). The idea of disjunctive synthesis allowed the early Christians to consider the Kingdom of God as arrived on earth without there being any outward material sign of it (p. 58).

Multiplicity is the Deleuzian concept of objects; that's me, the till and the customer, each being made up of pairs of considerations at the same time. Essentially this idea means that

within one object, there are two parts that can't be separated (Baker, et al., 2015, pp. 60-61). The concept of 'univocity' allows us to address this seeming contradiction. Univocity lets us see all objects within an assemblage; me serving a customer at the till, as comprising two parts that are very different, but also indivisible from each other (Baker, et al., 2015, pp. 61-63). So, we can see both the potential material connections of the objects and the non-material connections of the objects, as one. At the till, allowing for univocity, we could be witnessing someone serve us for our fuel whilst mentally they are thinking of how their circumstances might change, in order to prevent the tears that thoughts of their social isolation cause, from rolling down their cheeks. In our other scenario, a high quality of customer service might mask a deep frustration at the idiocy being shown by the customer and hide thoughts of vengeance. These pairs of considerations are equally applicable to the *what* and the *why* that we identified with religious and spiritual capital. Why was it that looking beyond tough circumstances, helped? Why didn't I lash out, when everything about my circumstances made it feel like a perfectly natural thing to do? Multiplicity, univocity, objects and assemblages provide valuable descriptions of the connection within ourselves, the internal contradictions, and our connection to others. Seeing objects in the assemblage as both common; i.e. as objects, and differentiated; comprising a multiplicity of different considerations, allows us both to examine ourselves and our differences as part of a common structure. Practically, this makes use of our innate capacity to hold things in tension.

We started this Tract by looking at our internal contradictions and by looking at wider themes that are shaping our existence. This can help us take on a non-anthropocentric stance, i.e. we are one object within a much larger set of assemblages, all of which are with respect to common themes and patterns that are shaping them. Deleuze referred to these as lines of flight or 'vectors of freedom' (Bonta & Protevi, 2006, p. 106). What I have talked about was a personal, real and at times painful process of transformation, evacuating pride and being built up in humility, as one object of many that are all intimately connected. The process I have described is not about the imposition of one object over another; my experience as socially isolated as a determining characteristic of who I was, or my role as a sales assistant as a measure of my capacity, but rather a fundamentally relational attraction

of different objects into an assemblage, the interplay of the contents and expressions of those assemblages and the capacity for new things to emerge as a result.

The paradigm shift that we can see shapes how we understand the relationship between politics and power dynamics as part of the spatial turn too. The relational nature of the interaction between objects in an assemblage and the affect that they have on each other suggests a far more democratic engagement (Delueze and Guattari, 2008, pp 237). We can understand the relationships that we build differently and see practical, social and systemic implications for that.

To help us visualise this we will use two metaphors, namely a tree and a rhizome. A tree is an interconnected, but sequential system with specific functions i.e. the roots, the trunk, and finally the branches (p. 213). In contrast, rhizomes are fluid and connected networks that elude hierarchical structures and controls. These metaphors represent either end of a spectrum of organisations.

What we are currently seeing in our public space is a shift towards a rhizome model, which has already taken place in other spheres of society (p. 215) for example, the private sector and areas within the public sector. These metaphors are organic in nature. This is intentional in multiple ways. Firstly, Delueze and Guattari (the originators of the wider body of work we are relying upon here) use the subterranean nature of rhizomes and the unseen or hidden way that they manifest themselves, to encourage us to capture how they work (Bonta & Protevi, 2006, pp. 136-137). This speaks both to the informal nature of our community networks and to the social, cultural and spiritual forces that are driving our actions i.e. our spiritual capital. Secondly, there is a clear distinction between trees, characterised by repetition or linear progression; root to trunk to branch or A to B to C, and rhizomes, characterised by difference; everything is a singularity or a new occurrence (Baker, et al., 2015, p. 35). This captures our ontological distinction and lets us incorporate Habermas' idea of embracing difference and challenges the assumptions that we make about different identities. The spiritual turn comes into play here. Finally, our metaphors intuitively help us understand one (tree or rhizome) among many (trees or rhizomes) within a wider created order. So, the structure we are using has been designed to capture our imagination, locate itself within our created order, and is ontologically oriented to see each version as new i.e. by their fruit you will know them (Matthew 7, vs 20).

Spaces of Hope offers a common paradigm for all objects and assemblages, which is premised upon us being uniquely made and requires us to embrace difference. Spaces of Hope links the personal journey I described to you in our first section; going through the narrow gate in Matthew 7: 13-15, so that it is directly relatable to you as someone I've never met, and your journey, of which I know nothing. The Deleuzian concept of univocity, at the core of objects within Spaces of Hope, takes the spatial turn to the point of introducing the idea of a spatial theology that is able to function as part of a complex system. In the final section, I will provide three examples of how the ideas we have discussed play out.

Curating Spaces of Hope

The case studies that we are about to share show us just three ways that Spaces of Hope can be brought to life. Each example is a manifestation of the spatial turn playing out in a way that links gatherings of different objects into an assemblage, each with the freedom to express themselves. New content was shared in a manner that transformed the assemblage and provided rich content to be disseminated and taken into new Spaces of Hope. You will see that the learning that took place mapped the patterns and themes that I have expressed in sections one and two of this tract. You will see that the internal contradictions of the space were laid bare in a way that gave rise to missional, outward facing and partnership driven expressions of how we serve each other and shape our public space.

October 2016 - Finding Common Cause in Disconnected Communities.

On Thursday 20th October 2016, academics, policy makers, faith leaders and project leaders from across the North of England, gathered at St Thomas' Church in Stockport. We gathered to conduct a mutual learning experience, an experiment really, which crossed academic and policy lines, but also faith, community and public-sector lines. With the support of the Rector of St Thomas' Church, Rev Andrew Lythall and Prof Chris Baker from University of Chester at that time, we took a chance, asking people if they would join us. We sought to link the personal stories that informed FBOs in our communities with the systems in other sectors and discern a shared next step. Chris Baker and I introduced Spaces of Hope to the group and set a foundation for others to share stories. Hannah Skinner, academic,

entrepreneur and curator of the faith based community hub, HOME in Didsbury, shared her vision of hope. She said,

“[hope is] being there, showing up, opening the doors every morning and saying welcome to you and welcome to your despair, and not only that, but here is ours too. We are all struggling, we are all trying our best, and yet we believe that gathering around a table, not rushing through the hard times, finding a rhythm that encompasses all of life, is itself an act of hope and creates a space where people, relationships and community can flourish and all can know and be known, perhaps that is the deepest hope, maybe it is all we can hope for?”

Hannah’s words captured the mood of the room. As we drew to a close later that afternoon, Cat Duncan-Rees a facilitator from Stockport Council fed back to the group that what we were hearing was *“a really good way of the church restoring its original vocation”*. Carolyn Anderson, another wonderful facilitator from Stockport Council, fed back shared values that emerged: *“listening, relationship, humility, a sense of belonging, empathy, creativity, honesty, discerning truth and building trust”*.

What emerged from the day was a shared appetite for change and greater understanding of the spaces that we share with those who are different from us.

April 2017 - Preventing the Enemy of Isolation, in Partnership.

On Wednesday 26th April 2017, our second Spaces of Hope gathering took place at St Mary’s Church in the Marketplace, in Stockport. This event built on the success of the first, 6 months earlier, identifying a shared matter of concern in our communities; social isolation and loneliness. This event attracted public funding and partnership from Action Together, Stockport Together and Social Movements in Health GM. We utilised the same format, sharing the Spaces of Hope narrative to open the day, before relating it to Stockport Together’s strategy for Healthy Communities. We were blessed to receive personal stories from Pam Robinson from the Olive ROC Centre in Edgeley, Maddie Watts, a Parish Nurse in Great Moor and Marie Flint, Children and Families worker at St Alban’s Church in Offerton. The stories they told were of humble, committed and rigorous contributions to their communities that supported everyone from young children, to young mums, to elderly people, all reducing social isolation and loneliness. There was a shared recognition of the

value of the Spaces of Hope these people curate with their colleagues and volunteers. One delegate fed back *“The people who deliver these projects are like gold dust and should be treasured”*.

The Bishop of Stockport, Libby Lane joined us, listening to the stories we shared and responded with her own. Bishop Libby discussed challenges to identity, belonging, sense of place and purpose and helped us relate these, both to the connectedness of faith communities, but critically the everyday and often overlooked encounters that can manifest like evocative and beautiful cracks in the pavement. Of Spaces of Hope, Bishop Libby noted the gathering itself was a Space of Hope, adding *“the uninvited, unexpected and maybe disruptive people who just wander in [can] force us to stop, make space for them to be present and heard and to participate, albeit in a transitory way. That might be the more important Space of Hope”*. (You can watch Bishop Libby’s whole interview at www.spacesofhope.co.uk)

What emerged from the day was a shared vision for the role Spaces of Hope can play in our communities. The connection between personal stories and systems thinking, as well as the gifts and gold dust that we can find in the cracks of the pavement all encouraged an exploration of Spaces of Hope in Stockport. In January 2018, the Spaces of Hope Community Hubs Network is launching, to discover Spaces of Hope and to ‘cultivate connectivity’ alongside 6 other principles of Spaces of Hope, to combat social isolation and loneliness.

Chester 2017 - Unlocking the Potential of Performance, in Partnership.

Our final example comes from Chester Cathedral in Diocese of Chester. Following the emergence of the Spaces of Hope work in Stockport, then acting Vice Dean, now Acting Dean of the Cathedral, Canon Jane Brooke, invited a Spaces of Hope Conference. The purpose of the event was to inform the Cathedral’s strategy for the period 2017 – 2019 and to understand how the Cathedral could develop its contribution to the life of the city. Whereas the Stockport Spaces of Hope spoke into the practices of the partnerships themselves, the Cathedral event opened up the theological debates and questions underpinning the performative contributions of faith communities. Under the guidance of keynote speaker Prof Elaine Graham and guest panellist Bishop of Chester Rt Revd Peter

Forster, we were able to explore the theological content of our shared spaces and inform the mission strategy of the Cathedral for the next two years. Canon Brooke noted *“[Chester] Cathedral can be a Space of Hope for everyone, and that is exactly what it should be”*. Bishop Peter noted, *“the thing I was left with having read the introductory material [for the conference] was that verse from John’s gospel ‘I have come that they may have life, life in all its fullness’. If I were trying to name in a contemporary spirituality what people in our society strive for, it would be something like that, ‘life in all its fullness’. I think dialogue between people of different faith communities, people of no faith and people with an interest in human flourishing to gather together and to explore what human flourishing might mean in today’s world and our society must be a good thing.”* Prof Graham noted, *“in some ways the future of our democracy is at stake and we are in for some tough times. Following on from what the Bishop said, we need to hold to what we value about human dignity and what makes a good society and we need to find the wellsprings of that hope and resilience and try and embody that for other people”*. Prof Graham continued to shape this vision saying, *“if doctrine divide then let service unite”*.

The outcomes from the event reminded us that our faith needs to be both as old as the hills and as fresh as the morning, encouraging rhythms of worship and prayer in the spirit of St Chad and St Werburgh, whilst seeking to combat isolation and loneliness, understand Spaces of Hope further within both urban and rural contexts and develop a multi-agency steering group to guide future partnership working. The steering group convened on the 7th September and is due to meet at in December 2017, with a vision for further symposia and Spaces of Hope development in 2018.

For media associated with all the examples given here, please visit www.spacesofhope.co.uk

For Reflection

What do Spaces of Hope mean to you?

What are the barriers to the spaces you occupy becoming Spaces of Hope?

Where does your story interact most powerfully with Spaces of Hope?

Are there things that you now feel able to share with others, having heard about Spaces of Hope?

Do you have any critical reflections on the literatures that shape Spaces of Hope?

How does this combination of personal stories and systems thinking make you feel?

Do you feel that you already curate Spaces of Hope for yourself and others?

Do you see any value to Spaces of Hope input in your area?

Do you have any comments or feedback? If so, connect. I'd love to hear from you.

Do you feel moved to curate Spaces of Hope of your own? Happy to help you get started!

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