YEAR TWO

Telling the Stories:
How churches are contributing to social capital

by
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This introductory chapter recaps the main findings of our Year One report - *Mapping the Boundaries*. It then lays out some of the problems we have encountered in writing this report, for examples, issues of readership and language. The concept of religious capital is then introduced, along with the four central components - values, language, methodology and theology - which this report suggests make up religious capital.

In this chapter, church members and residents of the three communities in Manchester which this report focuses on - Moss Side, East Manchester and Wythenshawe - describe in their own words the social and historical changes that have taken place around them over the past two or three generations. They also speculate as to what the future might hold for them

This chapter explores the values, principles and attitudes underpinning church-based contributions to regeneration and civil society.

In this chapter, some of the difficulties the churches face with language and communication are examined. The rhetoric and jargon of regeneration is discussed, along with evidence that this language is alienating to people at all levels and on all 'sides' of regeneration debates. The cross-over and mutual borrowing from Christian and regeneration language are discussed next, followed by a section looking at the churches use of 'heroic' and 'tragic' stories, whereby the church struggles and suffers in order to gain an ultimate prize.

This chapter explores some of the more difficult experiences of being engaged in regeneration and civil society from the churches perspective, and discovers a gender-based perspective of the experiences of struggle.

This chapter examines the different practical ways that churches are responding to the changing context and needs around them. This gives an insight into how the church is physically contributing to the community through religious capital. Wide areas of overlap are observed as well as distinctive contributions. Three typologies of engagement are offered; the Church as a *learning, risk-taking* and *therapeutic* community.

This chapter examines the theology which informs the churches' expression of religious capital. Several theological themes emerging from our interviews and discussions are examined, including empathy and judgment, powerlessness as power and hospitality. The way in which these theological themes are displayed through the churches physical outworking of religious capital is also discussed.

This chapter develops the idea of religious capital as the combined interplay between the language, values, methodology and theology offered by churches to the wider community. Eight important observations about the nature of religious capital are made.

Introduction

Welcome to our second year report, *Telling the Stories - How Churches are Contributing to Social Capital*, part of our three-year research project entitled *Regenerating Communities - A Theological and Strategic Critique.* For this project, we have taken Manchester as a 'case-study' UK regional city, and explored the different ways that churches in urban areas are responding to the rapid physical changes taking place around them as a result of new forms of urbanisation and regeneration. These physical changes are also reflecting and creating new understandings of community and civil society.

We have focused on three sample areas undergoing intense change and transition - Moss Side; Benchill in Wythenshawe; and Beswick and Openshaw in East Manchester. The decision was also taken to concentrate our attention on the wide variety of church organisations (see Year One report, p.1) operating in these three areas, although other-faith communities (particularly Islamic) also contribute their insights. The map of Greater Manchester, below, shows the location of these areas - Wythenshawe is towards the southern-most point, Moss Side is further in towards the south of the city centre, and the East Manchester area we looked at is around the area marked Audenshaw on the map:
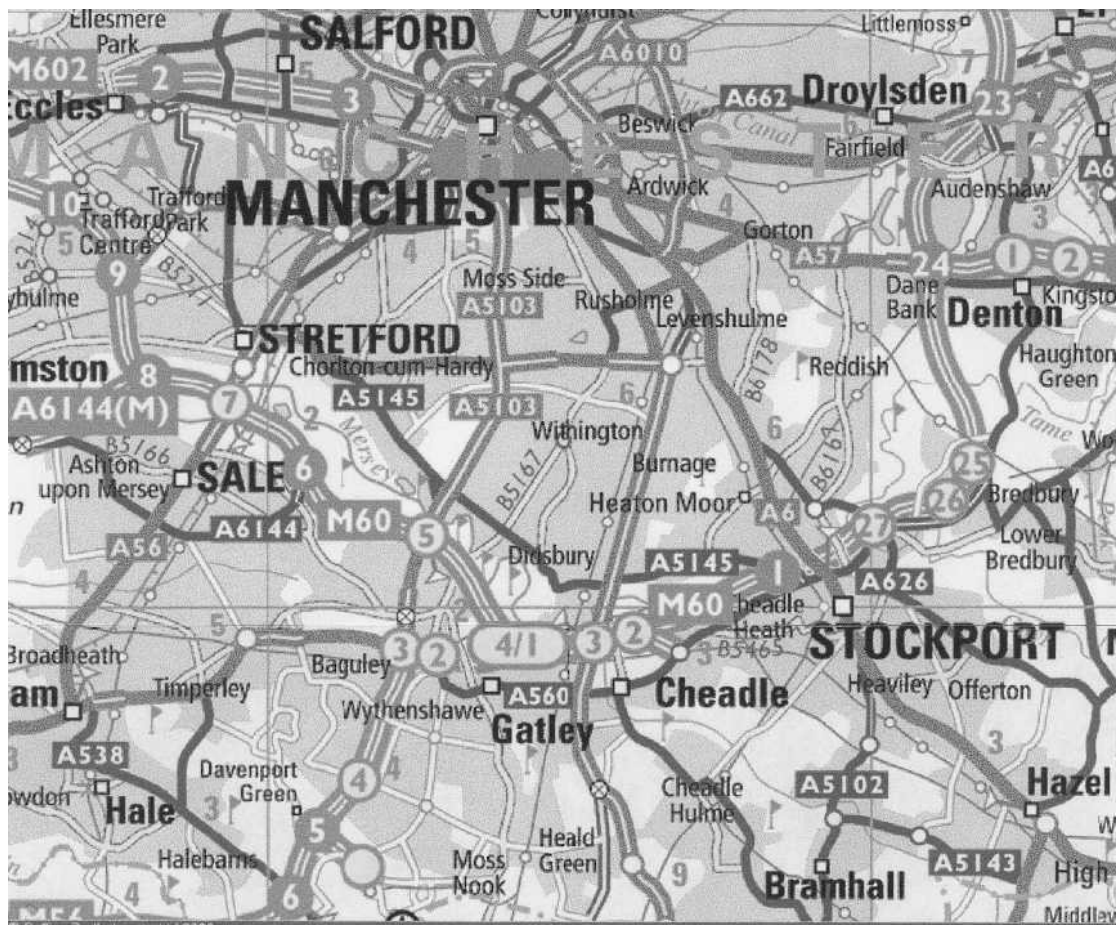
Year One Report

In our first year report, *Mapping the Boundaries,* we gathered evidence about the various background components of this research:

- Physical and statistical changes to our selected areas of Manchester
- Urban understandings of the post-modern, post-industrial city
- Theories of civil society and regeneration
- First hand accounts from all levels of people engaged in community regeneration and urban renewal of their experience of how regeneration is working

This year we have moved beyond general mapping to focus on the key questions that emerged during Year One. These have focused on understanding in greater depth the **role and contribution of churches and church-based projects in post-modern, post-industrialised communities** to emerging understandings of regeneration, civil society and the creation of 'sustainable' communities.

We have focused on this theme by exploring via church visit, semi-structured interview and discussion panel the **values, language, methods of engagement and theology** that emerge in our church-based contexts. Nine churches and church-based projects from a wide variety of theological, liturgical and ethnic backgrounds were engaged in this research. Their responses under these four headings have been organised under themes and principles and evaluated alongside secular-based assumptions and methods within regeneration and civil society.

Two specific problems emerged during the course of Year One which we will be addressing in this Year Two report.

Year Two Report – many sided and many audiences

Whose language do we use?

One of the major problems connected with regeneration and civil society emerging from this year's research is that of language. The rhetoric outlining the aims of civil society and social capital appears contested and confused, even at central government level. For example, the Home Office understanding of civil society stresses law and order issues and what constitutes 'good citizenship'. (e.g. Home Office Strategic Plan, *Confident Communities in a Secure Britain,* HMSO, 2004) The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) favours a built-environment approach and stresses the need to create 'sustainable communities'. (ODPM, *Sustainable communities: Building for the Future,* ODPM, 2003) This type of rhetoric can also be highly technical, leaving many ordinary people struggling to connect. This problem becomes more acute when one tries to bring in faith-based language and concepts.

Throughout this research, considerable evidence has emerged showing the deep frustration that people on many sides of regeneration debates feel about this confusing language. In many cases, this frustration leads to cynicism from community members involved in local regeneration projects, although there are also occasional 'shafts of light' when connections and common understandings are reached.

The limitations of language are a problem that lies at the heart of this research. The tone and some of the concepts and terms which we use will also fall into the trap of speaking its own kind of academic and theological rhetoric which will not always be accessible to all those who have participated in and shaped this research. We are well aware of this and hope that different formats of this report outlining the core findings will help to bridge at least some of the problems to do with accessibility of language. These issues lead to problem two …

Who are our audiences?

Our language in this report, as we have already acknowledged, will sometimes be expressed in an **academic, strategic and theological/interdisciplinary** style. This reflects the concerns and interests of one our audiences. However, this is by no means our only projected readership. Clearly another audience is the **churches** (together with other faith groups who may find the some of the material covered in this report of generic value). Another audience we hope this research will engage is the **local communities** which whom we have worked over the past two years and who have provided so much of the raw material for this research. We hope we have done justice to their work in the words that emerge in this report, describing their experience of change and regeneration in their local neighbourhoods.

Our intention is not to prioritise the needs of any of these audiences, but to keep this report as accessible as possible in order that all readers can be engaged and informed at some level. However, we also acknowledge the stylistic difficulties of this endeavour and realise it may well lead to some apparent mismatches in tone and style. We intend that the findings of this report can contribute to all three projected audiences and aim to communicate different levels of information across the spectrum of readership. An introduction to the main areas addressed for each audience follows:

i) Academic/interdisciplinary/strategic planning readership:

Firstly, church-based contributions to civil society emerging from our research will be examined under the umbrella term '**religious capital**' as a theoretical contribution to the ongoing political debate about the importance of diverse methods of local governance, and social capital in civil society.

The second issue to address is the problem which is raised in Chapter 3 about regeneration and civil society 'language' and its ability to connect across different constituencies. From central government through to grass roots residents the language of 'civil renewal' is acknowledged to be largely elitist, jargonistic and imprecise. It 'traps' both strategist and client alike, to the extent that former Home Secretary David Blunkett said in 2004 there needs to be '**a new jargon on democracy**' and that he was 'open to suggestions' on new terms which could be used.

New contributions to defining what 'religious capital' might be and insights as to how language and values between faith-based and non-faith based sectors can best connect with each other are two substantial outcomes which we hope emerge from this report.

ii) Church readership:

The report clearly lays out patterns of emerging response from the churches to the challenges of 21st century regeneration and civil society. It describes how churches are engaging in new and creative ways to the challenges and opportunities presented by government initiatives and global change in cities like Manchester. The report we hope will be a rich source **of narrative experience, good practice, analysis and theological reflection** which, while emanating from a very local context, will resonate with other situations of rapid urban change within our cities and other European regions.

iii) Local Community readership:

Our aim is to reflect the experience and work of the communities we have encountered. We hope this report will contribute to bridging the gap between some of our audiences by sharing examples of good practice and reflecting the difficulties and frustrations we have heard about. In addition, it is hoped that some of the experiences and themes that have emerged around the nature of community development in increasingly affluent yet polarised settings can be of use for the **strategic community development planning** of local communities in the years to come. This **sharing and deepening of praxis in a practical way** is the aim of Year Three, when we hope to enact what has been a core value of this research - namely that the cycle of mutual interpretation between experience and theory is never broken but deepened for the benefit of all.

Values, Language, Methodology and Theology

The main content of this report has emerged from a creative interplay between the four strands of understanding that churches and others have used to comprehend the wider world, which have emerged during the course of this year's data gathering: values, language, methodology and theology . Taken together, they represent the sum of what one could call the **religious capital** of the churches we worked with on this research. Thus religious capital could be understood to be the combined total of a church's and/or other faith group's contribution to civil society and social capital*, involving the interplay between values, language, method and theology* which creates a dynamic and shifting product, some of which fits comfortably with other types of capital, some of which feels distinctly ill at ease and alienated from the mainstream.

What is Religious Capital?

The above working definition of religious capital, based on the findings of this research, is a tentative contribution to a concept that is still in its infancy. A Google search reveals several references to local religious involvement being a form of social capital. The Office for National Statistics' definition is a standard example, and in its report, *Measuring Social Capital in the United Kingdom* (Harper and Kelly, 2003), it identifies 'Social Participation' as one of five dimensions of social capital in the UK. The description of social participation reads as follows: 'This is defined as involvement in, and volunteering for, organised groups. Some indicators are measuring *sources* of social capital (e.g. those related to the personal contacts and interactions that are made by meeting people through clubs, **churches,** organisations

etc). Others are measuring *outcomes* of social capital. For instance, voluntary work is an important indicator of people's willingness to undertake activity that benefits others and the wider community.'[Emphasis ours] (Harper and Kelly, 2003: 8)

A place where the words 'religious' and 'capital' do come together is in a paper entitled *Spiritual Capital: Definitions, Applications and New Frontiers* written by Robert Finke from Penn State University in October 2003. In his paper however, the terms *spiritual* and *religious capital* are often used synonymously (as his paper's title suggests), for example, 'Yet the concept of spiritual or religious capital promises to offer several advantages'. (Finke, 2003: 2)

Unfortunately, for the purposes of our discussion he does 'not explore the effects of religious capital on secular behaviours or beliefs, *such as the relationships between religious capital and civic involvement'*. (Emphasis ours) (Finke, 2003: 2) Rather he restricts his remarks to 'how religious capital is related to the production of religion by individuals and organisations'. Thus he quotes Laurence Iannaccone's definition (1990) to the effect that 'religious human capital' is 'the skills and experiences specific to one's religion including religious knowledge, familiarity with church ritual and doctrine and friendships with fellow worshippers'. Finke and his colleague Rodney Stark bring in a more affective element to their updated definition, 'Religious capital consists of the degree of mastery of and *attachment* to a particular religious culture'.(Stark and Finke, 2000:120) However, throughout the paper, whether discussing the impact of religious capital at the individual, organisational or national level, the parameters of the discussion never move beyond the concept of religious capital as a body of knowledge and experience that serves to reinforce personal, ethnic, cultural or national identity and moral behaviour.

Our research will seek to broaden the parameters of this discussion to evaluate the extent to which religious capital can move beyond the confines of the church and be a channel of transferable social capital that serves the wider community while retaining its integrity and identity.

Research assumptions for Year Two

The level of engagement of this research (i.e. at the level of values, language, methodology etc.) indicates clearly that this research has its own value system and way of working. Its values are based on the importance of listening to the narrative and experience of grass-roots communities and churches and other development agencies. This in turn presupposes a more *inductive* approach to research - which means that research instruments are set up in such as way as to allow possible theories and patterns to emerge from the research data, rather than the research instruments being set up to prove or disprove existing theories (i.e. a more *deductive* methodology). In other words, we have tried to create environments where people can be honest with us, and we have tried to openly reflect what they've told us. We have aimed to draw conclusions only after listening to and reflecting on the evidence we have collected.

A further research method which has been used during the course of this year is *participatory action research* (see Whyte, 1991). In this approach, those invited to take part in the research do so as active participants in what is seen as a collaborative

enterprise. This in turn presupposes that both the researcher and the research participants have as an explicit aim the desire to *create change* in ways that 'achieve a more just society'. (Bellah, 1985)

These research approaches have been adopted to offer a piece of research that is outside the prevailing trend within this area to date (see Appendix 2 - Literature search). We also hope that this value-oriented and praxis-based research offers a way forward for further discussion in Year Three, especially for grass-roots and church/faith-based communities seeking to understand more of why they do what they do (i.e. their motives and judgements) and their experience of it, rather than simply understanding the content of what they do. This we believe will offer a thicker analysis of what might constitute religious capital within civil society.

The large number of people engaged in this year's research (up to forty people from across three distinct parts of the city) means that it draws on substantially larger numbers of participants than the comparable studies cited above (typically twenty five). A full account of our methodology employed in this year's research can be found in Appendix 1.

Chapter 1 - Communities in context

This chapter will examine the social and historical contexts of our three research areas. Each section comprises a short introduction, and then allows those we have interviewed to tell the story of their communities in their own words. The interview passages are sequenced so that the past situation of the areas is described first, and these vivid, often first hand experiences paint a picture of the local history. Many of our interviewees referred to a point at which their areas began to 'go downhill', and many describe the painful process of watching as things started to deteriorate and go wrong around them. As a response to this, these descriptive passages follow under the heading of 'The spiral of decline' quoting the precise words used by many of our interviewees. Each section closes with a short note about the different communities' attitude to the future of their area, and again allows the voices of those we interviewed to come through and outline their fears and hopes as they look forward.

Wythenshawe

Community art work depicting Wythenshawe as a Garden City

' … the estates just lost all their stability, and the council seemed to again make the incredibly stupid decision to put a series of problem families in the same street … and they just ran it as their own gang area.'

Wythenshawe was conceived, created and, according to local residents, gradually destroyed, by housing decisions made by Manchester City Council. Slum-clearance in Moss Side/Hulme in the 1930s created the need for new homes, and the idea of building Manchester's Garden City came about. This would be a green, village-esque space, where every resident would have their own garden and be able to participate in

the new, close-knit community. In order to help achieve this 'utopian' dream, only the more economically secure families and individuals were to be housed there.

In the beginning, the Garden City was a great success, and those we spoke to recounted the local pride in the area and the thrill of becoming a resident of Wythenshawe. In fact, it was such a success that in the 1970s Manchester Council decided to see if the positive social effects of Wythenshawe life could rub off on tenants from other areas. So, they changed the policy - from housing the next generation of original Wythenshawe residents near their families, to housing residents from other areas with various social problems in their place. A number of tower blocks were also built on the green areas to accommodate higher densities of tenants.

In principle, this social engineering could have worked; in practice, situating a high proportion of people and families with problems in a small space had disastrous effects. Our interviewees recount how some of these families ran their streets as gang areas, and increased crime was just the beginning of Wythenshawe's troubles. 'Over the years, the area got steadily worse, to the point where people won't even open their doors anymore.' In addition, moving those who had grown up in Wythenshawe to other areas led to breakdowns in the local family support structures and stability that had previously existed. This situation of social upheaval was also exacerbated by the decline from the 60s to the 80s of the manufacturing industries that supported the local economy. Wythenshawe's spiral of decline meant that an area which people were previously proud to live in became stigmatised and was eventually declared Britain's poorest ward in 1997. The residents felt it was a case of 'out of sight, out of mind', as those making decisions about service and money allocation in Manchester appeared to ignore the despairing outskirt estate.

The past

'A lot of people who came to live here were of Irish descent. They came from what they called the slum clearance in Manchester … Moss Side, Cheetham Hill, a lot of people came from … and so when they came here it was wonderful … it was living in a palace and we had a backyard … well, I thought we [were] rich, and everyone worked hard. For it was like coming into the countryside … it was a garden city.'

'…[there was] a great pride in moving into what they saw as being a Garden of Eden, because of the quality of the housing was so great, the fact that there were gardens and the streets were tree-lined. The shops were of a great quality for the time. People still talk a great deal about the Whit walks, when it didn't matter if you were Catholic or Protestant, you would walk on the streets showing off how fantastic your community was.'

' … not long afterwards, the War started and there was a tremendous social life at St John's - the youth club came to the fore and there was a Mother's Union, which was huge, Men's Confraternity, there was a theatre group, Iona Players which did Gilbert & Sullivan … they took children away on holiday, to Ireland. We had parish walks … we walked through the fields to Mass … [there was] the Charleston Tea Rooms … Legion of Mary, dancers, bands. It was amazing … cubs, scout troop, youth, football, and tennis courts in the school playground, and so it was the ideal, really. You know, what you'd like it to be.'

The 'spiral of decline'

'… there's been quite a lot of let-downs in Benchill's history …[in the 60s] the council changed policies from housing the most desirable tenants … in this area, they kind of swung completely the other way from excluding families with problems to having a policy of prioritising families with problems for houses in Benchill and Wythenshawe … the theory behind it was that because it's a nice area then that will help families … but I think what went wrong really was that we went completely from one extreme to the other which had a number of effects. One of them was that the children of the first residents couldn't get rehoused here, so they all had to move out to other areas, so that caused problems for some of the people as they got older, that they didn't have any support locally. And the other thing is that it gave very high density of people in very difficult circumstances, very low incomes, a lot of single parents … and because we're a long way out from the city, it basically put people with a lot of social problems isolated in an area where they couldn't get to the city centre if there weren't any services here for them.'

'At the same time as this sort of social engineering the high rise tower blocks started to be built as well. And certainly in the minds of the community that was when Benchill stopped being a good place to live. And that's when the community and the church both went into decline ... I think that [the tower blocks] symbolise a lot of the council's attitude to the garden city idea and [the community's own perception] of what the council was doing to it … because they didn't ask for tower blocks to be built here. They were very much a sense of that being imposed … the tower blocks were built on the green space …'

'… I mean it was only in 1997 that the community was identified as the poorest ward in the country according to government statistics. I think there was an awareness in this community that things had gone badly wrong by that point, and that because they were on the edge of the city the problems and issues actually weren't being recognised by anybody else.'

'When I first moved to the area 12 years ago the council started doing refurbishment and upgraded of the housing, and basically the way they went about doing it was they started one street at a time redoing absolutely everything … and then they ran out of money after doing about a third of the area, so the other two thirds of the area were left very, with a lot of bad feeling.'

'The area went through quite a rough time, you know, 20 years ago, the reputation of this place had, up 'til 10 years ago … I mean the stigma's still there to a certain aspect with a lot of people … when I'm talking to people … and I say oh yeah, I'm from Wythenshawe [they say] … oh, it's rough …'

'… the people in Wythenshawe will support the local shops. But incomers are people on higher incomes that have got more money to get out of Manchester and go to these big … shopping malls … the shops in Wythenshawe have been going [downhill] for many a year really, but if someone just puts a little bit more money because I think … the people that own the Trafford Centre, own the Civic Centre. But we used to go and have a look at the Trafford Centre, come back and compare it with Wythenshawe Centre. I don't think they spent anything like the same amount of money on Wythenshawe.'

The future

Mixed feelings about the future of Wythenshawe were expressed by those we spoke to. On one hand, the transfer of housing from council responsibility to a housing association five years ago was viewed by all our interviewees as a positive turning point in Wythenshawe's fortunes. However, worries about some of the association's approaches were also expressed, mainly concerning the belief that there are can be no rapid resolution to Wythenshawe's problems and any attempts to find quick-fix solutions, such as evicting 'problem' tenants and issuing anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) to young people who cause trouble, are only superficial measures. In addition, residents are optimistic that the investment in and regeneration of Wythenshawe is making positive changes in people's lives, but worry that the vulnerability and underlying problems in the lives of the community cannot be resolved by physical changes to the locality alone. Pleasure was expressed that green areas are returning to Wythenshawe as selective demolition takes place, but there are worries that local people will not be able to afford the new luxury housing being built, causing a fractured community of wealthy incomers and less wealthy local residents. Further fears about this incoming population were expressed concerning the vandalism and crime they suffer from local residents who feel alienated by these new, gated estates, and the extent to which these new residents will detach themselves from the local community. As a pre-emptive response, one interviewee asserted that he doesn't want any contact with these incomers.

'… my sense about Benchill is that in the three years that I have been here … on the whole people's lives are getting better. I think there's a number of things that have contributed to that. I think the housing association taking over from the council has made a huge difference, and that the quality of people's homes if they live in Willow Park [the housing association who now own the housing] is significantly improved and the streets look smarter and actually that gives a community a sense of pride in itself, and a sense of, you know, self-worth.'

'… the last 10 years or so there's been quite a high level of investment into Benchill and Wythenshawe generally, and that has shown ... they've also done a lot of selective demolition, this SureStart centre that we're sitting in now, before Willow Park there

were houses on this site ... it's also taken us back to a situation where there were waiting lists for people to get houses in Benchill as well ...'

'… there's still a lot of very vulnerable people. There's still a lot of very fragile families and families that don't really work that leaves people very very vulnerable.'

'Well, there's more open spaces as well, because again Willow Park had pulled down flats … so it's left a bit more greenery.'

'I'm not sure whether the Wythenshawe people could be able to afford the prices that they're asking for them [the newly built houses] … the private tenants, private developments that have gone on, they've very much kept to themselves.'

'… the deterioration was allowed to go on for so long, it will take an awful lot of time to turn it around. The antisocial behaviour orders, I mean I'm very much in two minds about them. Some of the young people, they weren't parented themselves … and just to slap an ASBO on them and move them somewhere else is not to deal with that young person's problems.'

'…they [the new housing] have very, very distinct railings and so there is a very clear, physical demarcation ... the small areas of … new housing are the middle of Benchill. They've been suffering from an awful lot of wanton vandalism, broken windows and stuff ...'

Example of clearly demarcated, closed-off new housing in Wythenshawe

'I think they'll [new people moving into private housing] always exclude themselves or both, we'll exclude each other, you know … some of the people of Wythenshawe might look up on them in one way and say well, I don't want to mix with them. The same goes for the people at the top of the ladder looking down saying no … I'm definitely not going to socialise with them.'

East Manchester
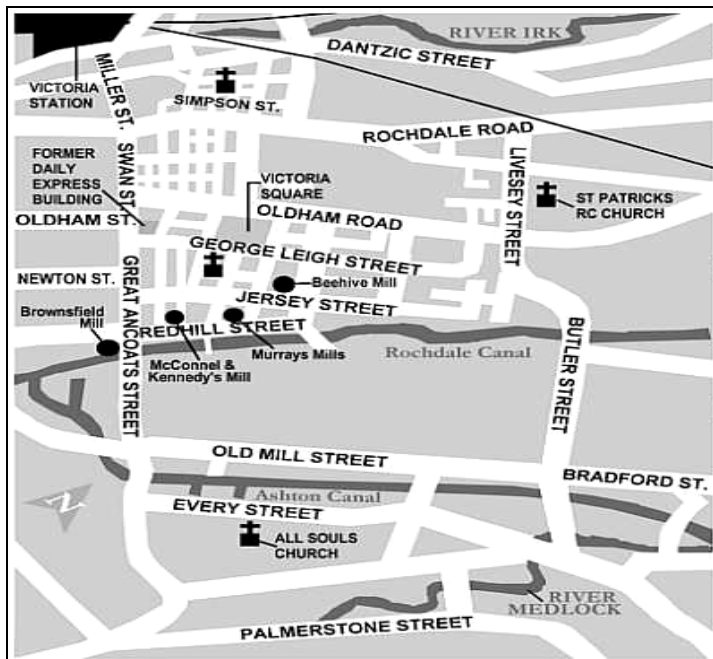
'**There are monuments to the past all the way around, with empty factories and working men's clubs and boarded up pubs, and all these are signs of what it was like ... but now it's a shadow of its former self.**'

The derelict, vandalised buildings stand as towering tombstones, whispering of a heritage, still remembered by a few, but the signs of which will soon be radically altered by the newest phase of East Manchester's regeneration. Listening to the experiences of those who lived in the area during its vibrant, industrial past, and hearing the story of its steady downward decline paints a vivid picture of a community destroyed over time by government housing decisions and economic policies. Those newer to the area add further depth to this picture, describing social problems and low standards of living, existing only a mile or so outside the newly regenerated, wealth-generating centre of Manchester.

The downward spiral of East Manchester began in the 1960s, when slum clearances meant that much housing was demolished and a large proportion of the local population rehoused in other areas. The rapid population drop 'tore the heart out the place' one resident recounts. The factories which had so long sustained the area shut down and the industry moved elsewhere. Rows of boarded up shops replaced what had once been bustling community areas, and there was no profit to be gained in keeping the dance hall, cinemas and snooker hall open. The sixteen local churches, once thriving and well attended, gradually closed until now only five are left. East Manchester's diminished population could only watch as the area became increasingly blighted by crime and physical decline.

The physical decline of the area, coupled with the local feeling that people in East Manchester simply aren't as important to the council, social services and government as those in the suburbs, provides an insight into a community that feels downtrodden and abandoned, where those remaining are referred to as 'survivors'.

The Past

'[This area was] very lively, wasn't it? … well, it was an industrial part of Manchester. The only part that was more industrial was Trafford Park, which is in Stretford really, but many Manchester people worked there. Many factories, some textile mills, textile warehouses - most people worked in industry. And then, oh, I think industry had come to East Manchester in the Industrial Revolution in the 1850s, and then in the 1860s there were plenty of factories around …'

'We had a Boys' Brigade, a Girls' Brigade, we had Brownies, Cubs ... and the congregation, we had two hundred in the congregation, more than a hundred children at any given time…[over a hundred children]used to come regular. [There were] 50,000 people living in this area. We had two cinemas, we had a dancehall, we had a snooker hall … there were sixteen churches in this area.'

The 'spiral of decline'

'… the City Council along with - well, it was the Government of the day said that the slum housing in the industrial cities had to come down and so they started pulling the slum houses down in blocks. But they moved the people out … and of course the families went first so they could move them into better houses.'

Rows of boarded up shops in East Manchester

'… and it went down to absolutely nothing ... all the shops went, all the shops closed as well at the same time. It tore the heart out of the place.'

'…when the people moved out [in the 1960s] they [the factories] closed and moved on elsewhere … [the area] started to go down. The population more than halved, it was 50,000 people living in this area, and it went down to 25,000. Now I don't think it's 20,000, is it?'

'We reached a point I guess in about 70s 80s, and I guess the early 90s, when it would have been some of the lowest points … now looking around we're seeing where there used to be lots of pubs and lots of social things that are now very much just remnants … this used to be a community that was very vibrant and busy, but now it's a shadow of its former self ... I think that what we have now is a very depressed society as well. So the people that are left, what they're left with are burnt out houses, very few pubs, very little work, struggling schools and all that … what's left are the survivors … those that are left … can't move out, that are trapped for whatever reason. So crime here is very high and the health is very poor and it's a very low point ...'

' … there were sixteen churches in this area. And that includes the Parish Church of St Clement's and the Catholic Church of St Anne's. And out of the sixteen, there are

only five left and we're one of them ... and of course they're going to knock us down eventually.'

'… when you first come into an area you see certain surface issues, the more you get to know people and discover, you realise the depth and the complexity of the issues behind, you know, someone who is a heroin user or is an alcoholic and has children or, you know, children that are being neglected, children who in my sort of previous life [living in the suburbs]would have been considered severely at risk who just aren't near enough the top of the social services priority list to even be bothered with really - they live in a house where drugs are regularly used … it doesn't seem to be enough of a risk for social services really to be worried…'

'We're one of the most deprived cities, and certain sections of the City in the country … a lot of the housing are empty and boarded up. They've gated the alleyways, so that if there's any burglaries, they can't dive up the alleyways, so they can't get away quite as quick. But they do try and keep the place clean … it is awful - people come dumping because they know it's like this …'

Piles of dumped rubbish in East Manchester

'Cars are stolen, then set on fire ... crime, drug addiction, gangs of youths, not just in Openshaw but that's also the other wards of Bradford, Beswick and Clayton … oh, it's been rough, it's been really rough …'

'… just by the nature of living here you sort of see things, and you begin to recognise signs which means you notice other things. Alcoholism is huge. But then you've got other things like unemployment, which is a huge thing, a lack of education and - it's not just education as in the schooling, sometimes it's a social, there's a level of social education which people haven't grasped, you know …'

The future

Waiting for the next wave of regeneration to wash over the community, those we spoke to seem braced for further change, though speak with some trepidation about the expected influx of 'new people'- likely to be affluent, young professionals attracted to the new 'city-living' style apartments being built around East Manchester. There is hope that things will improve with the regeneration, but a distinct sense of unease and vulnerability - they trust that they will be given new homes in the area they've lived in all their lives, but can't help thinking they're only being given to them as not enough 'incomers' would choose to live in this depressed area.

'And they're still knocking down, they're still rebuilding or going to rebuild. They're going to - behind the Church or at the side of the Church is a Catholic Day School and they've a very good sports hall there, but they're going to start to knock the pair of them down eventually and they're going to build six hundred houses there … and as they build the houses, and bungalows, they're going to knock the old ones that are already around and put the people into the new ones … but whilst they're doing that they've knocked all the people that were coming to Church down [i.e. knocked their houses down] …'

'Well they're going to rebuild our houses, we accept, and as you move people in to better housing we hope we'll see a change. We hope we'll see the shops coming back again, eventually. The policy is if you live in that house you will go in a house, a new one. Well they're not going to fill them all, are they, in that area …'

New homes being built alongside older houses

'Half of them are empty so they're going to have to take the families and put the families in first … because they always do that. Then they move the single people or the couples. And there will have to bring new people, won't they? … other people will have to come in.'

Moss Side
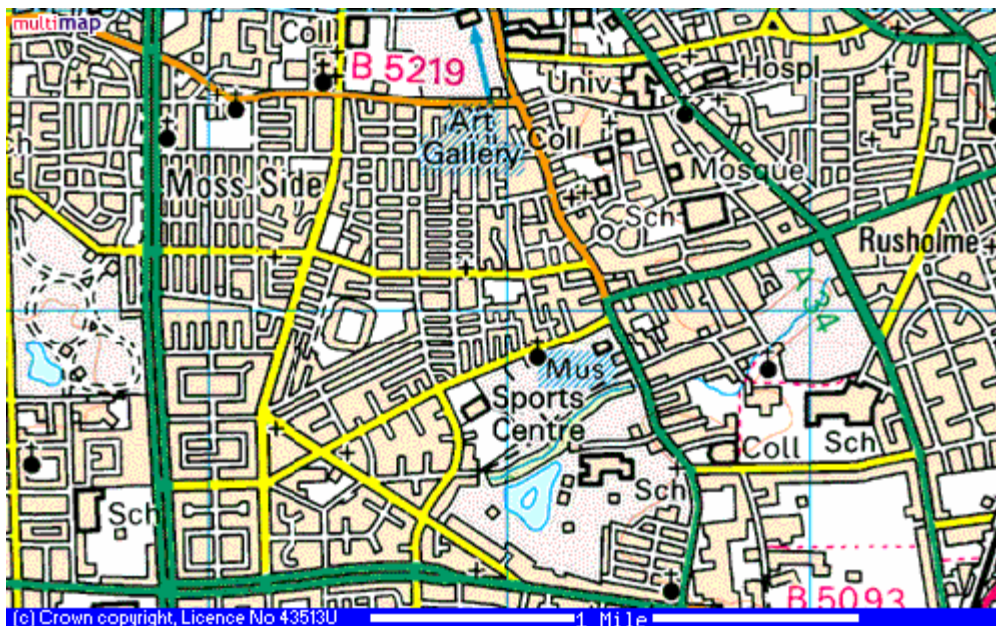
'**Moss Side has been affected, as we all know, by the gang violence, the gang culture. When you look at the black community, young people are more likely to get involved in crime or over-represented in terms of the prison population, the under-achievement in schools, and opportunities seem very much limited.'**

Since the Windrush era of the late 1950s, successive flows of immigration have settled in Moss Side, introducing new cultures and possibilities, and forever changing the human landscape of this once white-majority area. From around the globe these people have arrived, originally as economic migrants planning to earn money and then return home (although many of these early immigrants settled and never left), and more recently as asylum seekers who have made Moss Side their temporary home.

The 'spiral of decline' in Moss Side is distinctly different from those charted in East Manchester and Wythenshawe. In the latter two areas the rapid decline appears to have dramatically affected all aspects of life - housing, education, facilities for local people and, most importantly, the stability, well-being and even physical existence of the community. Meanwhile, in Moss Side, according to those we interviewed, the constant influxes of migrant populations kept the local community growing, diversifying and thriving. Despite the indigenous Moss Side population being relocated to Wythenshawe during the late 1960s, the migrant incomers, over time, successfully consolidated a black identity for the area.

Such a description of Moss Side may appear to be at odds with the lingering notoriety the area still suffers from as a result of the riots in the 1980-90s. However, residents we spoke to explained that these riots were drug/gang related and so don't reflect on the community as a whole. The local community during the riots were involved to the extent that they were forced to live amidst all the 'uncertainty … and destruction', but the riots did not represent the state of the local population collectively. The riots certainly contributed to a sense of decline, leading to fear, mistrust and inevitable fragmentation, but despite this, those we interviewed spoke of strong, cohesive local communities. These communities are apparently aware of their pressing social needs, such as increased facilities and opportunities for young black men, but are also pleased with the changes to Moss Side they see happening around them, and are optimistic and defiantly hopeful for the future.

A spiral of decline, however, can definitely be observed in other aspects of Moss Side life. Housing conditions, our interviewees told us, were in steady decline until very recently, and the creation of the infamous Hulme Crescents and Alexandra Park Estate in the late 1960s/early 1970s are described as 'disastrous'. There is also local concern at the continuing gun and gang culture as young black men underachieve at school and cannot find employment.

The Past

'Pre-war, I would say that Moss side in 1939 was a quiet place, no empty houses, clean streets, cinemas … during the war we had fog, plus the blackout and you had no fear at all, you could go anywhere … no fear of being coshed or whatever, and everyone seemed to work with one another. It was what I would call a real community then.'

'Where the history of the community of Moss Side is concerned … in the old days it's more of a close knit community where you couldn't walk down the road without seeing four or five people that you knew … and there was a sense of a common purpose, which was to live a peaceable life, to make an honest living and to raise your family ...'

'I started going to St James's 1959 … at that time, in Moss Side there weren't many West Indian people as such. They were just beginning to emerge, so the church was more or less white-dominated.'

'The people who came here, came with one purpose in mind - to return after five years. Most of them have multiplied that six and seven and eight times. Like, my

colleague I buried on Friday, he came here 1956. I don't think he's ever been back to Jamaica.'

The 'spiral of decline'

'… they did massive clearances in the 60s and 70s of Moss Side of housing, because there was an awful lot of slum housing … [and] what they did was move people out to places like Wythenshawe that were fairly newly built and they said, you know, we'll shift you out here, then we'll move you back, when your house is rebuilt or renovated or whatever it was that they were going to do with that, and they didn't. Most people did not get moved back into the area.'

'… an entirely new population was sort of dropped into Moss Side, and that started with people coming in the sort of Windrush era, you know, people coming to work from the Caribbean, who were invited to come to this country, to come and fill the jobs that we wouldn't do. And loads of them came to settle in Moss Side, so we had a massive African Caribbean population building up. So there's - historically that's why there's very few white people that live in Moss Side, from the original sort of settlement, is because they were all shifted out with the clearances and never brought back so it's a predominantly black community now ...'

'In the early 60s when the housing weren't good - when we came in, people move out and the council decide to modernise Moss Side, which it did, which was disastrous … I remember when we had consultations we told them not to spoil Alexandra Road as such, because it was a wonderful shopping centre - you could get anything on Alexandra Road - you know? They built this monstrosity they call the precinct.'

'… the odd gun goes off, but it's mainly between the young West Indians from Longsight vying with a group in Moss Side. Unfortunately sometimes people can be in between. One of our congregation was living at Great Western Street. Luckily she wasn't in her front room as you call it, the parlour at the front ... and she was in the rear, and somebody - one fired at another, it misses who they were firing at and goes through her window …'

'Moss Side has been affected, as we all know, by the gang violence, the gang culture. When you look at the black community, young people are more likely to get involved in crime or over-represented in terms of the prison population, the under-achievement in schools, and opportunities seem very much limited. So over the past ten years really, things in Moss Side doesn't seem to have moved on in terms of progression, in terms of, you know, like the wealth of the young people, jobs etc.'

'… in terms of the opportunities for the young people and what young people have achieved have been fairly limited. And … I think a lot of that's to do with probably breakdown of the family structure and support structure within the community, which then impacts that community. And I just believe that's - I'm not trying to say there's one reason why, you know, there's been a lot of violence in Manchester and gun culture, there's lots of things. But what I recognise from my experience … there's lots of issues that wasn't being addressed within the black community which have led to the things that we have seen recently.'

'… I remember the riots in 1982; I remember, you know, the uncertainty. I remember the destruction, seemingly the destruction of the community then …'

The future

The future for Moss Side, according to those we spoke to, really is bright. The money being spent in the area by the government is acknowledged as contributing to great improvements for the area, and the quality of the physical environment and housing is increasing. Many second generation immigrants are now well-established in their careers and have settled permanently in Moss Side, bringing money into the area. The Churches we spoke to are committed to leadership and involvement in the regeneration of these areas, physically, socially and spiritually (as shall be outlined in detail later in this report). However, there is still concern that not enough is being done to cater for the needs of the black youth, and also undertones of concern about racial tension between some of the different immigrant populations. The transitory nature of Moss Side was also frequently referred to by our interviewees, many mentioning how the 'comings and going' of non-permanent groups such as students and asylum seekers affect the area. However, overall, those we spoke to displayed a hopeful outlook for the future of Moss Side.

'… since [the riots] the government's recognised that, you know, a lot needs to be done in terms of building up the community, so over the past ten years now we have seen that there's lots of money that's been pumped into the Moss Side area …'

'… living has gotten better. I was … driving through Alexandra Park a week ago and I was saying wow! it looks like human beings are living here at last, you know. You have homes with lawns, gardens – it's a totally different world to the 60's … quality of life has changed considerably.'

Community park and play area in Moss Side

'I mean, [the people who moved here and stayed] have moved on in life, and most of them are living a kind of middle class English life. They don't have the middle class culture but they have the trappings, you know. They wouldn't live well in suburbia, but they have the trappings. Several cars and all of the mod cons in their homes. So yes, things have changed a lot.'

'… we have twenty seven different refugee communities in Moss Side. And yeah, that creates interesting dynamics. Particularly, [an]enormous Somali community has arrived in the last few years and that's reflected in our church school which is a third Somali children now … and we do receive people all the time, which has implications for the life of the churches, because people come and go regularly… if they are asylum seekers, particularly from Africa … a lot of people are from a Christian

background, come to their local church, and they're in temporary accommodation as asylum seekers and then they move on when they are permanently housed.'

'I think because Moss Side in some ways is a transitory zone, there are a lot of students here that come and move on. So, for the last twenty years or so - particularly more so now I'd say - with a lot of global unrest, civil problems, civil uprising - you have a lot of refugees coming in. These groups are usually economically deprived, displaced, marginalised.'

Chapter 2 – Emerging Values and Attitudes

The purpose of this chapter is to outline some of the values that emerged during panel discussions that constituted the third round of the data gathering process (see Appendix 1 for full details). While these values stand in their own right, they can also be combined with the other three elements of language, methodology and theology as one possible description of what religious capital might be (see Introduction).

The research panels (one in each research area) included people from church and other faith-based perspectives; community development; housing association residents; and regeneration managers. The primary purpose of the panels was to create a forum where perspectives on language and the values of each member could be explored in an attempt to define the nature of church/faith-based groups' contributions to the regeneration and civil society debate. The four questions put to each panel were as follows:

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1 : What are the forces that are changing your area most? (over the past five years)

2 : The government talks a lot about 'civil society' and 'social capital'. What do these terms mean to you? Are these terms helpful or empowering?

3 : The government talks about the need to engage faith communities in regeneration. Is there a faith-based language for talking about these processes?

4 : Does a faith-based language add or detract from the possibility of change?

Identifying Core Values

The underpinning values and resulting attitudes towards local engagement and church action are closely interlinked in the responses from our interviewees. However, an attempt to isolate foundational values might reveal the following list of values that churches feel are significant:

- Seeking forgiveness
- Promoting intimacy
- Valuing the individual
- Caring for those in need
- Expecting transformation
- Promoting empowerment
- Seeking justice and equality

The values and attitudes that emerged from the panels can be summarised as follows:

1) Valuing the intangible - 'the small picture'. This value emerged from the East Manchester panel during discussion around Question 1. The 'large' and 'tangible' forces of flagship regeneration initiatives, such as Sport City (comprising the Commonwealth Games stadium, leisure and sports facilities, new 'city-style' apartments), Asda Hypermarket and the business parks that have sprung up in East

Manchester are supplemented by more intangible and social processes which are less easy to quantify but which are significant. One panel member refers, for example, to the careful planning concerning how public money (via the New Deal for Communities Programme) is spent and sees this as an 'incredible sort of shift' in the way local communities are now involved. Another panellist says that local people 'understand the processes of regeneration better'. Local communities do sometimes have an influence on what happens to the wider picture - even if in a quite unpredictable way that is 'ad hoc and does very often scupper even the best laid plans.' However, the local forces of influence are hard to 'judge' and 'measure' and these are labelled as 'the small picture' compared to the 'big' and 'visible' picture of how East Manchester is being changed.

2) Being a good neighbour - treating others as you would like to be treated. This value emerged during a discussion on the Moss Side panel between Muslim-based and Christian-based housing association officers discussing the need to break down the rhetoric around civil society and social capital into a 'language that a lay person will understand'. The Islamic officer uncovered a definition that spoke of civil society occurring 'when and where people are aware and behave in a considerate way in a public zone'. He continues, 'Now when someone uses this 'civil society' language to me, I don't think I have an idea, but if someone talks about being well-behaved and considerate this is language we can relate to'. His Christian co-worker reinforces this perception, 'It's about relationship, you are relating with other people … it's about treating people the way that you would like to be treated. So it's about being a good citizen really'.

This insight from both Muslim and Christian perspectives is strongly reminiscent of the so-called Golden Ethic (see Kung, 1993) at the heart of all religious traditions which advocates treating your neighbour as you would like to be treated yourself. It appears to lie at the very heart of what the government defines as civil society and social capital - i.e. being a good neighbour.

3) Offering of service to the wider community - regardless of whether or not that service is recognised. This value emerges from the Moss Side panel during discussion regarding how recent government emphasis on social capital and civil society (see references in Introduction) has 'hijacked' the language and values of the churches and other faith communities. 'They've stolen our words and not recognised us, not recognised what we're doing.' These strong remarks appear to be based on a number of interlocking criticisms:

- A sense that churches' and other faith groups' contributions to civil society, which predate the current government talk about it, are only now being given official encouragement and recognition. 'The faith communities get involved in regeneration whether the Government wants them to or not. They don't need asking because they have been doing it for years.'

- A sense of frustration that the language previously used by churches and other community and voluntary sector partners is now being promoted by central and local government as the language of regeneration that has to be used in order to secure funding bids. This feels 'devaluing' because there is no sense in which the origins of this language have been acknowledged.

- In the rush by other sectors involved in regeneration/civil society to use regeneration language, it has become a 'label' - a type of product that is required to be on display. 'They (other regeneration agencies) have got to get all these words in the document and we're thinking - it's so frustrating. I think it starts to lose its power … you know, once the language is hijacked then it actually starts to lose its power.'

- Churches don't receive core funding from central or local government for the ongoing and daily social capital and regeneration work they do

4) Acknowledging the messiness of everyday life. This value emerges from the East Manchester panel in relation to comments about how civil society rhetoric can ignore the complexity of everyday life at local community level. The view is expressed that although civil society is about harnessing 'human potential', the language tends to 'dehumanise' that potential which in reality is 'very messy … and complex … people are complex and situations are complex'.

5) Understanding the importance of healing and forgiveness. This value emerges from the Wythenshawe panel in relation to the current regeneration strategy for the area, and reflecting on past government decisions. 'I feel strongly as faith-based communities we already hold within our grasp this language of transformation. Within repentance there is that joyful point where things can be changed and there is no longer a need to continue down the road that's leading to destruction or nowhere else.' With repentance, it is suggested, comes the opportunity to move on from the past, 'so many old views, so much baggage and there's so much maybe *unforgiven'*. There is an idea from some of the panel that this repentance could form some kind of public liturgy - 'a sort of dedication service or ceremony or prayers or just something that would help the process … otherwise the hurts and resentments and the unforgiveness goes with us into the future.' This is offered in the belief that regardless of faith perspective, 'the power of saying sorry releases something'. The purpose of this process would be to:

- 'Say sorry for what we have said and done in the past'
- Have a fresh start
- Get a vision for the future of Wythenshawe
- 'Embrace the councillors and officials that are working hard on behalf of the council'

It is worth recording that not all panel members are convinced. A non-faith-based member says, 'I'm not saying there is no value in it but I don't think a lot of people would trust that the apology was real … people just think, yeah right'.

6) Promoting 'connectiveness' - valuing each other. This value emerges from the Wythenshawe panel and reflects the opinion that connectivity between people is what allows transformation and repentance to happen. It suggests the importance of being in an environment where one is valued and supported. 'The connectiveness … that kind of faith-based language where there's that intimacy between groups of people and individuals within each group.' The aim of churches and faith groups according to this panel is to promote the conditions whereby this 'connectiveness' is maintained.

7) Actions speak louder than words. This value emerges from the East Manchester panel, in connection with the discussion prompted by Question 3. In this panellist's opinion, the search for a distinctive faith-based language to contribute to regeneration and civil society can be 'something of a sidetrack'. It is 'faith behaviours' rather than faith language, it is suggested, that in the end will be more influential in regeneration and civil society. 'You talked about behaving with integrity and consistency and so on. I think sometimes we have reflected that it's actually our behaviours that are more influential than necessarily our language.'

8) Transformation of values and behaviour, as well as physical well-being. This value emerges from the Moss Side panel in relation to the importance of 'getting round the table' with those making key regeneration decisions in order not only to have a say as to how physical resources are used, but also to highlight the importance of looking at the values underpinning people's behaviour. 'It is by 'getting invited round the table' that the faith communities can ask the more searching questions about changing people's values as well as the physical structures. This is important if civil society and social capital are to provide a more sustainable community. 'If you change the people that are eventually going to live there you will provide lasting and much more sustainable communities than originally planned.'

9) Commitment to real engagement. This value also emerges from the Moss Side panel, and contrasts the difference between 'real' engagement and 'token' engagement. Real engagement is when the decision-making process is truly inclusive. Token engagement is summarised by the 'tick box approach' which, it is implied, is still the prevalent culture within the local authority when it comes to engaging with faith communities. 'It's not just saying oh the Government is telling us to involve faith groups, oh you Muslim, oh you Hindu, you Christian, what do you want and then tick a box to say you've engaged with them.'

10) No false consensus. This value emerges from the East Manchester panel in relation to the idea that the best kind of civil society acknowledges diversity and plurality, without diluting the integrity of groups such as faith communities. One Christian-based panel member links this notion of diversity to the notion of consensus. 'I think under the surface there isn't a consensus … and I think that somewhere it's (i.e. conflict) got to come out. A consensus would only come from a really, really profound and deep engagement with people.' She gives examples of situations where in her opinion difficulties and conflicts will have to 'thrashed out' for the longer-term sustainability of projects and partnerships (for example women's networks and churches).

11) Empowerment. This value emerges from the Wythenshawe panel in relation to Question 3. One panel member differentiates between faith-based and non-faith based understandings of the word 'empowerment.' For non-church-based sectors, *empowerment* 'means … bringing people up to the same level ... I think a lot of people think that it (i.e. empowerment) could be done just by involving more people … but you don't necessarily give them more power'. From her faith-based perspective, empowerment means, 'that other people have to release power … some people have to release their power in order for other people to have that power'. A further perspective on empowerment emerges from another panel member. 'I think

empowerment is a reflexive verb, and you can only empower yourself, you can't be empowered, you can be enabled, but you can only empower yourself.'

12) Integrity and Consistency. These two values emerge together from the East Manchester panel in relation to an 'incarnational' understanding of Christian mission and identity, which is defined as an open-ended, transparent yet connected living out of Gospel values in community for the community. 'That's kind of Eden's being an incarnation thing … just trying to kind of be part of the community and live out faith in the community rather than separate from it. I mean we have just tried to be *consistent* with … how we relate to our neighbours, how we'd relate to agencies and stuff. We try and just be *transparent* and have *integrity* in who we are and sometimes that means people don't want to work with us, other times people see the fruit and what we do and think well, actually this is good stuff and … kind of a good relationship is built with them over the year.'

13) Justice, Equality and Well-being. These three values emerge as linked together from the Wythenshawe panel. In direct response to Question 3, the following response is made by a panel member. 'The obvious one that comes to mind for me is justice, because it is a very strong faith-based word and concept, and I think if we can help others to recognise that is what we have been discussing because it is about us - it is about faith, it is about equality and about well-being.'

Spectrum of values

Looking over these thirteen values highlights a spectrum of responses. Some responses are more concerned to articulate important beliefs about the importance *of getting process of regeneration right,* such as valuing individuals, listening, being connected - for example, 1, 4, 5, 6. Others are values relating to *more abstract principles* which speak generally of concern for the poor and marginalised, the importance of proper political representation, the importance of be being true to oneself and one's (religious) identity, and transformation of human values as well as physical infrastructure.

Taking together both *process* and *abstract* values, the evidence implies that faith communities are particularly interested in the 'added-value' dimensions of regeneration and civil society. These 'added-value' aspects of regeneration would include:

- Discovering and articulating the values within regeneration and civil society (for example, 'the small picture' and 'connectiveness' between people within groups)
- Changing people's values (for example, along the lines of being good citizens)
- Intervening at a deeper level of community process in order to achieve better long-term results (for example, the role of repentance and forgiveness and transformation)

- Paying proper attention to the experience of participation in regeneration and civil society, not just its outcomes, especially in relation to meaningful participation rather than 'token' participation

This church and faith-based interest in values and processes can be called 'added-value' because these are the more 'intangible' processes of regeneration and civil society that cannot so easily be measured or 'tick boxed'. If some of the above elements could be brought into the formation of policy documents, consultation processes and monitoring and evaluating procedures, they would definitely 'thicken' the whole way in which governance, civil society and regeneration works, especially at the local level.

The above list would suggest that if central government and local authorities want to engage more effectively with faith communities in civil society then these sorts of processes need to be more on the agenda of meetings and partnerships. These are the areas of interest to faith communities that would allow them to play to their existing strengths and help them feel more included in the civil society debate.

Conclusions

Firstly, the churches and other faith groups do not have the monopoly on expressing or reflecting upon values. Two examples of reflective interventions from non-faith-based participants on our panels will suffice. The first concerns the complexity and political difficulty involved in trying to convert the rhetoric of civil society and social capital into a process that works and delivers results everyone can 'own'. A non-faith based panel member in Wythenshawe expresses considerable anger and cynicism when discussing local ownership of the area's regeneration. The following extended passage from this discussion describes what is perceived by some to be a fairly exploitative process.

> 'People have had so long of feeling as if the regeneration agencies are sort of taking their ideas from them and … if anything is successful for them, the Wythenshawe Partnership has in the past been so quick … to just put it in their glossy brochure …Wythenshawe Partnership has 'set up and supported this group and it's all because of us that this thing's successful and we're so brilliant we have made this happen.' And (local) people are thinking hang on a minute, we put our life and souls into this project and now it's become a Partnership project … but if it wasn't for those people these projects would never have been successful because they have been community-led, that's why they have been successful. And it's portrayed as being because the City Council has supported them, *that's* why they are successful. And it just makes you angry, it makes you really angry.'

What appears to be expressed clearly here is a value ethic that endorses local community activity and rejects (albeit unintentional) exploitation. It also expresses the value that honest emotion (such as anger) is sometimes appropriate even if it possibly contributes to tension and confrontation.

The second example involves the value of inclusivity within the context of plurality and diversity. A regeneration industry panel member acknowledges that the old 'liberal consensus' value system he operates by within his own sector is not only intolerant and 'suspicious' of working with faith-based groups, but also has within it the tendency to homogenise - to reduce everything to a 'kind of blandness and a sort of monochromeness that is part of the problem when people say well, we want to engage in this but we don't know how'.

He stresses the importance of allowing a vision of civil society and regeneration that respects the identity and integrity of faith groups, and allows the embracing of diversity and difference even if that brings potential disagreement. 'I suppose the bottom line is, are we doing sufficient justice to people's integrity and identity when we engage in these sorts of things? Is there a practical vision of regeneration that can hold these things to get them in some sort of creative tension or is it always that you must kind of go for the lowest common denominator?' This last point is a question that goes to the heart of this research and reflects a value system that is attempting to respect openness, inclusivity and integrity among different partners.

Secondly, the fact that the churches and other faith communities on our discussion panels have espoused values does not automatically mean that these values are fulfilled. There emerge strong critiques from our panels, questioning some churches' ability to translate their thinking into values and action that have will have real impact in local communities. 'I'm not sure that the churches are actually talking or doing anything particularly radical in terms of challenging what is going on … because they are so focussed on their own internal demise in many places.' This impetus caused by imminent demise has led to what one panellist in East Manchester considers to be an inappropriate response by churches to local regeneration. 'For some church people it's a solution to some of the external problems that the institutional churches have around buildings and failing congregations and how to manage their resources and all that.' In her opinion however, 'that is not what regeneration should be about either in the community or in the churches. And I fear that we're not actually having a regeneration within the churches'. This raises the serious question as to whether regeneration is simply being used as a means of 'propping up' weak churches rather than allowing more radical and creative solutions to be considered, such as closing down and being 'reborn' in another form that is more sustainable and better connected to changing patterns of community.

Finally, there is an important reference within the East Manchester panel to the need for 'acts of translation' to *translate* terms like civil society and social capital from one group to another, not as a one-off translation, but 'constantly going over and reinterpreting the language that other people have used in both directions, it's not just a one-way closed circuit'. An interesting case study of translation offered by the panel involved the word 'faith' itself, and the recognition that the value that lies behind that word is not unique to faith communities alone. 'You cannot engage in regeneration without *faith* - it may not be a religious faith, it may not be a faith in God.' The qualities of this 'non-religious faith' are described by one panel member as:

- Hope triumphing over pessimism
- Belief that things can change

- That there is a better tomorrow

Another panel member refers to this as 'a very religious eschatological type of language'.

However, it appears that those moments of connection are few and far between, and it also seems a rather one-sided flow of language and communication. The churches have become used to incorporating the secular concepts of regeneration into their way of working and into their funding bids. But encouraging the flow of language the other way is 'very difficult'. *How do the churches get their language of deep and sustainable transformation via the experience of repentance and forgiveness 'which can be so empowering' into the wider regeneration debate?* This is a consistent theme from the research panels. The occasional instances where mutual enrichment appears to occur between faith-based groups and other regeneration sectors are constantly thwarted by a lack of a road map of how to take these things further.

Looking back over the evidence presented from the panels (which we haven't had space to outline in detail) the main stumbling blocks to more effective communication can be summarised as:

- Growing lack of understanding within wider civil society of the nature and contribution of churches historically to the welfare of their communities
- A lack of understanding as to the nature of church engagement in the wider community outside Sunday services - i.e. from 'Monday to Saturday'
- An ongoing hostility and suspicion of churches and other faith based groups, especially by the Local Authority (as part of the 'liberal consensus')

For their part the churches have expressed the following frustrations:

- Their contributions to civil society and regeneration are not valued in their own right
- Their language and values have been 'hijacked' by other partners because for the sake of 'tick-box' expediency
- Government rhetoric on engaging faith communities and local government implementation of this rhetoric is largely tokenistic in the sense that faith communities are often absent from the 'tables of power'

It is clear that relationships between churches/faith groups and other sectors of the regeneration/civil society matrix are characterised by a perceived absence of trust and understanding. It is perhaps not surprising that finding a common ground between churches/faith groups and other partners is generally difficult and tenuous, especially given the contested nature of what civil society and social capital is within government. From the evidence so far, it is more likely that common ground will be found in values and shared perspectives rather than language.

Chapter 3 – Language

Before beginning to outline the arguments concerning language usage in regeneration discussion, it is helpful to define what meaning is conveyed by certain terms.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) definitions employed throughout this paper are as follows. **Rhetoric:** '1. effective or persuasive public speaking. 2. Persuasive but insincere language.' **Rhetorical: '**1. relating to rhetoric. 2. Intended to persuade or impress.' **Jargon: '**Words or phrases used by a particular group that are difficult for others to understand.' A further frequently received understanding of 'rhetoric' is **Spin:** defined by the OED as 'a favourable slant given to a [news] story' or 'a favourable interpretation of events'. [1]

Regeneration Language

In this chapter, the rhetoric, jargon and spin used in regeneration language will be discussed, and problems associated with this highlighted. Findings from Year One research in this area will be recapped, and new conclusions from Year Two outlined. In addition, some interesting conclusions from a recent conference at which language was discussed by many involved in regeneration are identified. As part of this examination of regeneration rhetoric the issue of academic language will also be raised to acknowledge the way in which such linguistic devices are used within academia and research. The question of whether a new language for regeneration is necessary will be raised, based on perspectives gathered during the Year Two interviews.

Year One

In the Year One report a number of conclusions based on discourse analysis regarding usage of the semantic and lexical choices outlined above were delivered. (See Appendix 5 for two examples of our discourse analysis in Year One).

We concluded that the rhetoric, jargon and spin of the regeneration industry, although used by practitioners from differing perspectives within the regeneration debate, was experienced by those using it as inadequate to convey their meanings. The language used within regeneration seemed to be perceived by many of its own speakers as limiting, frustrating and prohibitive to clear communication of personal narrative.

Year Two

The Year One finding that there is recognition among all levels of involvement in the regeneration industry that the current language usage is problematic has been

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[1] It is important to note that rhetoric, jargon and spin are not devices used solely by those at 'the top' or holding the most power in regeneration debates. In fact, any group can use its own rhetoric, jargon or spin for any of the purposes outlined below. The use of such linguistic devices is not limited to any particular socio-economic group, and therefore cannot be polarised as a tool of the powerful to marginalise those at 'the bottom'.

supported by Year Two research. This sentiment has been explicitly stated by a number of interviewees:

> 'I felt sick and stupid that I did not understand the jargon. And everybody else nodded and I was like, I'm the only one here! But in talking to people afterwards, most people didn't understand the job but just played the game and pretended they knew. And it's so difficult to get beyond that because those that seem to have the policies and the money, they at least pretend that they know what's going on and leave us feeling inadequate.'

It is also evident through discourse analysis of the transcripts. One important usage of rhetoric and jargon in addition to those outlined above occurs when no other language is available. In these incidences, the language is often relatively new, having been introduced for a specific purpose. Often, when a speaker uses rhetoric or jargon because no other language is available their discomfort with it is evident through the sudden introduction of hesitancy and non-fluency into the speech pattern '… there is a huge amount of room for churches in this area to work together and for them to have a policy, almost, this is all very non-church talk …' The speaker will also often show embarrassment at using the unfamiliar language by reverting immediately before or after to very colloquial language '… just to slap an ASBO on them …' .

There appears to be agreement between many involved in the regeneration discussion that the current language is serving to disengage and disempower all participants. The situation could be perceived to be a crisis stage for the language of regeneration, with people from all perspectives acknowledging the need for new ways of communicating which include and engage all. This acknowledgement that the present language is not working, and the shared agreement of the need for new language, provides a valuable opportunity for considering the possibilities of a newly created language for regeneration.

Community Pride Initiative conference

The assertions outlined above were supported through participation by the research team at a conference in late 2004 which brought together the community and voluntary sector; regeneration professionals; Home Office workers involved in civil renewal; academics; church and other faith group leaders; and community activists. The issue of language was raised during a group-work session, and a group member commented on the large amount of jargon used by widely varied speakers at the conference including local Councillors, academics and grass-roots workers. This assertion was discussed, and during conversation other group members commented that levels of jargon used in areas such as the regeneration industry, government strategies and academic theories prevented understanding and engagement with other sectors. The group (mainly grass-roots community workers) then raised that this jargon had been being used throughout its discussion and had entered their own language. This point was generally agreed on and unease demonstrated at this fact.

Later in the event, a speaker from the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit addressed the conference. He began his talk by acknowledging that 'Civil Renewal' and much of the language he would use throughout his talk wouldn't mean much to 'ordinary people in Manchester and Salford'. He asserted that 'Civil Renewal' was simply a

jargon term for community engagement, and commented that effective and meaningful engagement with local communities will not be achieved through the use of such language. He described 'Civil Renewal' jargon as 'just something we use in central government to try and get things done'. The speaker's sense of feeling trapped into using such language was palpable, especially as he used the jargon terms throughout his talk despite having outlined their weaknesses and irrelevancy. He commented that the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett, has spoken of the need for 'a new jargon for democracy', and is 'open to suggestions' on new terms which could be used.

Therefore, a number of key themes relating to language emerged from participation at this conference:

• Grass-roots workers in the voluntary and community sectors expressed the feeling of being marginalised and disempowered by the use of jargon and rhetoric which does not appear to have any meaning or relevance to their situation

• However, these people, consciously or not, adopt such language into their own discourses on topics such as regeneration. There is discomfort at this.

• There is awareness in the Home Office of the irrelevance of such jargon and technical language to the lives of many of those it directly affects

• However, in order to 'get things done', this jargon continues to be used by Home Office professionals. There is an understanding that this is the 'accepted' language of regeneration/civil renewal, and its use is necessary in order to engage at strategic levels of power. Meanwhile, even the highest levels of authority in the Home Office are aware of the inadequacies in this approach and have stated the need for alternative language.

A number of questions are raised by these conclusions: who has accepted this disempowering jargon as the standard language of regeneration? Why is it standard? With all this jargon and rhetoric being used, where is the real engagement and discourse happening ?

As acknowledged in this report's introduction, we have come up against a number of language problems ourselves. In attempting to communicate with a number of readerships, we have been confronted by problems concerning the type of language we use. In addition, we have been constantly aware of the way in which academic language can fall into the trap of using jargon and rhetoric just as much as that of regeneration or 'Civil Renewal'. We have had to ask ourselves regularly if it is necessary to accept the limitations imposed by regeneration jargon.

A problem with the current language of regeneration

Language is fluid. It is always open to change and being shaped by new influences. Perhaps this demonstrates one of the reasons for the breakdown in communication between some sides of the regeneration discussion. The formation of regeneration language has not been an evolutionary process created by the blending of different influences. Instead, the language has been presented as a fully formed product. This is

an unnatural phenomenon, and explains why 'ordinary people' who have received the language are disconnected and disempowered by it. However, even professionals who use language more similar to civil renewal jargon are uneasy with regeneration language. This was demonstrated in Year One's research when the regeneration professional appeared over-familiar with this language and yet repeatedly hesitated, used false starts and showed other signs of discomfort. This unease shows that even if a level of familiarity with the vocabulary is achieved, users of the language still don't feel that they are sufficiently expressing their meanings through it.

Attempting bilingualism

A possible alternative to collusion with the current language is through attempting bilingualism. In this, the speaker/author acknowledges the restrictions of using jargon and accepts that it is disempowering and excluding. However, due to the need to speak this language in order to 'get things done', one also speaks another language which allows for the meaningful engagement of others. The call for this came through clearly from some of our Year Two interviewees:

> 'I think that there needs to be bilingual facilitators and advocates, those who actually come from the community and speak both languages, and know when they're steering meetings when a black lad comes in, he sits down in the meeting and he says well, I think my area is bad and it may well be that that is interpreted by the facilitator as the community's bad, literally … when in fact he is using a colloquialism that means good … so the language has to be bilingual so that the relevance of regeneration is something that the community are partnered in.'

Creating a new language?

Approaching bilingualism raises questions as to why one should bother interacting with the current language of jargon and rhetoric at all. Why is this language necessary in order to 'get things done'? Why not stop speaking the old language altogether? Could a new language be created to 'get things done'? Is this possible, or is discussing the creation of a new language merely an academic discussion, detached from 'reality' and having no concrete affect on the day to day lives of 'ordinary people'?

An important contribution to this discussion was provided by participants at one of the panels we held. It was interesting that at the beginning of the meeting some panel members responded negatively to phrases such as 'social capital'. They described such terms as 'jargon' and indicated that they mean 'nothing at all to us'. However, when the issue of creating a new language for talking about regeneration was raised, the response was also negative. One response was that such an idea would create the need for many more meetings which would create merely hypothetical scenarios.

A second issue raised by the panel was that although no one really knows what each other are talking about with the current regeneration language, and that this is highly frustrating, there is a positive side to this non-engagement. It means, one contributor explained, that no 'side' in regeneration talk really has to get involved. No one ever really has to get into the painful, 'nitty-gritty' issues, but is able to skim over this, leaving any raw-ness protected. The panel concluded that it is helpful 'to be able to

get in and out of discussions quickly, just touching on the big, obvious issues, leaving all the micro issues for people and organisations to deal with privately'.

Church Language

Having looked in detail at the language of regeneration and some of the problems and opportunities created by it, the language of church members will now be examined. As those we interviewed are all involved at some level with regeneration, whether simply living or attending church in an area undergoing regeneration or involved in a more formal way, the similarities between church and regeneration language will be discussed, especially the way in which the churches use rhetoric. A closer examination (following on from the material already highlighted in Chapter 2 on Values and Attitudes) of the way in which the churches 'Christianise' regeneration rhetoric, and the extent to which some regeneration language is borrowed from Christian symbolism will follow. Some distinctive features of congregational language, based on the findings of James F. Hopewell and supported through Year Two's research, will conclude this section.

Church rhetoric

Our interviewee responses have been examined for evidence of church rhetoric, using the previously outlined definition of rhetoric, as effective, persuasive but possibly insincere language, designed to impress or maybe convince. As they knew they were being interviewed for this research, some interviewees may possibly have been telling us what they think we 'wanted to hear', or strove to get a particular perspective included in this research. The responses have been examined for evidence of this.

One theme which is expressed by many respondents is that the physical side of regeneration is effective and is having a positive effect on local areas:

> 'But the area is being regenerated … there's new schools going up, there's a big new community centre going up, there's old houses some old flats being pulled down and things being put up in their place …'

However, when pushed further almost all interviewees reveal some levels of dissatisfaction with the changes happening around them. Many respondents assert that regeneration will not be effective until it manages to change people's hearts, as well as their living conditions and local facilities. The churches are seen as having a large role to play in this inward change in people, and many respondents cite the transformative power of God as being of key significance in the processes of change:

> 'It's about helping people to live better lives and that includes helping them regenerate their spiritual life and their relationship with God so it really is every single aspect of life … as a church we're called to not focus our attention too much on one or the other, either the practical or the spiritual, but to be doing all of those things, to try and regenerate communities and regenerate individuals, I think that's what we're called to do as God's people ...'

'I emphasise that at the end of the day there can be no true regeneration unless it is spiritual … because you have this inner change ... it might be crude but it does not matter what you do with a pig, you could bathe him in Chanel 5 or 19 or anything, he is by nature a pig and he is going to turn your house upside down if you let him … at the same time, you could change people's external environment, but if you don't change them inwardly you will find that the external will soon become bad as the original place those people came from.'

Therefore, it can be asserted that within the responses there is an expressed hope in the regenerative process. Interviewees acknowledge that places look better, and suggest that things are improving in their locality. However, beneath this there is evidence of a less positive attitude - the interviewees suggest that they do not see change in the lives of their communities, and believe that this will prevent any sustainable improvement for the locality.

Another example of the interviewees attempting to persuade or impress concerns the extent to which church leaders and members are involved in and influencing the regeneration processes. There is evidently a high level of participation from the churches in regenerative and community initiatives, and the list of groups and committees to which our interviewees belong is long and varied (for full list see Appendix 4).

'… we have both formal and informal links with things like Moss Care Housing, and also with the City Council through the people who are sort of representing us from Moss Side, who are our local councillors and, you know, are church members.'

'… we have a link with Learn Direct from having a Learn Direct Centre in the church. We also have the church hall which we let out to a large number of community groups. We have Homestart who are our permanent tenants in the offices. Then we have the army cadets, karate, brownies, guides and rainbows, we have BESS doing street dancing twice a week, we have tea dancers who come on Thursday afternoons, we have the Benchill outreach play project who do their playschemes here every holiday basically, we have Morris dancers on Wednesday night, we have Slimmers World in ... another BESS project for after school, club for children that meets on Saturday afternoons …'

However, despite these many impressive involvements and commitments, there is some evidence of a sense of disempowerment and the feeling of being ignored by others involved in the regeneration industry, **despite initial claims about their involvement in regeneration.**

'… I don't know if our voice would be heard that loudly really…. Well, our voice isn't heard as a church, in a way, I don't think.'

'I don't think [my church] is visible enough. And I think, you know, we're not part of the community in that sense anymore … in the local vicinity … I think if they asked people along [the] street, which is the … wouldn't even know that we existed.'

There are many metaphors and illustrations used within the interviews that could be cited as jargon or the kind of church image that is used so often that it ceases to have much meaning. For example, images such as 'open doors', 'lighthouses', 'beacons', 'salt and light', 'taking love to the people' are used repeatedly by interviewees, irrespective of background or denomination. Some may argue that these examples represent clichés of church language, and are empty of meaning or purpose beyond providing a quick and easy response to familiar questions. However, it can also be asserted that these images are highly significant, and deeply ingrained with meaning. The repetition of a familiar motif invigorates and renews the transcendent significance behind them, reminding the speaker of their church identity and remaining loyal to what the interviewees declare to be at the centre of their congregational existence - the Gospel. As James F. Hopewell asserts, in church language the 'reference to its mythic framework is to provide a fresh way to characterise its corporate life'. (Hopewell, 1987:140)

Many incidences of church clichés are supported by the speaker with examples and stories which bring the cliché to life and move it from being familiar to being a fresh characterisation of the outworking of the congregation:

> '… it's the sort of the open door policy of looking after your neighbours. They are the ones that do it. They are the ones who when they hear a young person in the chemist who hasn't got enough money for the prescription for the baby, they hand the money over and it's not a problem.'

> '… we persuaded Learn Direct to spend three hundred pounds on the buffet and you know those passages in Isaiah, 'come to me if you are hungry and I'll give you something to eat', it seemed that was what it was about, and actually that we were feeding people at several levels. We were literally feeding them but we were also feeding them in terms of spiritually and emotionally and intellectually.'

Christian use of regeneration rhetoric

A number of the purposes of rhetoric, jargon and spin outlined in the definitions at the beginning of this chapter were employed by the churches we interviewed. It was interesting to note how the strategic, professional language of regeneration rhetoric was used by churches in order to fulfil various purposes:

- **To demonstrate knowledge** 'I also think we ought to be able to be one, the key or one of the key providers of youth and family intervention work'
- **To make others believe that a situation is better than it actually is** '… they're looking to do a full cross section thematic strategy type ...'
- **To communicate exclusively with users of similar language** '… it's about mobilising the church for community … and it's about evangelising intensively'
- **To convince someone/people of something** 'So I think Christians need to impact upon all levels of society and effect change'

Given that many of these speakers criticised the regeneration rhetoric, it was interesting that they used such phrases, and this perhaps affirms the earlier assertion concerning the lack of any other language. It is also possible to assert that use of such

language bolsters the speaker's sense of self-worth or significance. After all, if this is the language needed to 'get things done', why not speak it? Talk of 'strategies', 'policies' and 'five year plans' (all mentioned by the interviewees) is the language that is used in order to progress regeneration, and it seems that in some cases, churches are picking up on this language in order to engage with what's happening around them, and therefore bolster their significance in the regeneration/civil society debate.

Some church leaders and members are also becoming very familiar with the regeneration rhetoric through the same process of over-exposure which Year One showed regeneration professionals to have undergone. This demonstrated that professional practitioners were very used to, but also very uneasy with the regeneration language which they had no choice but to use. Discourse analysis shows some of these factors are now evident in the speech patterns of the church members interviewed, i.e. non-fluency, hesitation, qualifiers, changes in tone such as the immediate move to colloquial language before or after the rhetoric:

> '… maybe, we should, a sort of cohesive strategy'

> '… some sort of social exclusion'

> '… a policy of prioritising families with problems … because it was more, you know'

Regeneration language borrowed from Christianity

In addition to this Christian use of regeneration language, many interviewees recognise that much distinctly spiritual language has been adopted by the regeneration industry for their own purposes. The process of claiming this language back for the churches seems to be occurring in many of the responses where the interviewees answer the question, 'What is your understanding of the word Regeneration?' in explicitly Christian or spiritual language:

> 'I would say it is to make new, revival - to strengthen and resolve. It's got echoes of morals as well as far as revival's concerned …'

> 'I think resurrection is actually a much more appropriate way of talking about it from a Christian perspective. And I think that not least because it represents, it recognises honestly the amount of death there is about. And the suffering and the pain, which I think is a much more resonant way of talking about people's real experience … it's very clear to me that the issues in this community are not just physical, but they're spiritual, because of the terribly broken and fragmented lives people live.'

> 'I think my personal understanding is that it kind of ties in, I suppose, with the whole resurrection idea to me. For me it's about where a community or a person or a building or whatever has reached a low point in its life, it's about that upward turn and rebuilding something.'

This reclamation of regeneration language by the churches is significant as it potentially allows for their involvement. Terms such as 'resurrection', 'breathing new life', 'revival', 'suffering' and the many other such phrases used by interviewees help to 'make it their own'. After all, this is language they are familiar with and issues they are used to talking about, and triggers an empowering process of involvement in other themes of regeneration**.**

The distinctive language of different congregations

A number of features from our interview data coincide with theories developed by James Hopewell in his book *'Congregation: Stories and Structures'.* An important idea for him was that language and nature of congregations were shaped by more than just creedal beliefs. In addition, he noted that all congregations are particular and unique, even when located very close together, drawing membership from the same area and belonging to the same denomination. He concludes that *all congregations develop narratives and languages which are specific to them and serve a number of crucial purposes in the life of the church*, His findings, based on observation of three churches indicated that most of what constructs a congregation is not consciously planned, instead:

> … a particular language developed among the members, an idiom that came to bind their actions and perspectives. Though its terms were drawn from the vast world repertoire of religious and social imagination, they were particularised in a local language that expressed our own views, values and actions. Together we wove a network of audible and physical signs that, informed by humanity's symbolic struggles for community, now shaped our own. (Hopewell, 1987: 4)

When asked about the image of God that lies behind their work, a dominant theme for many of the churches we interviewed concerned love and the knowledge of God's concern and interest in the individual and community. However, churches expressed this in noticeably different ways:

- One church spoke of God's love creating the impetus to go out and 'meet people where they are'. The word 'Love' is mentioned twenty six times by one interviewee, and is a heavily present semantic field in the responses of other interviewees from the church. Other members of the same church also expressed this desire to extend love outwards into the community - 'practicing love', 'show love to the person, the community' and 'moving out' into the community to touch people and express that God loves them.

- However, in another church's responses the word 'Love' is conspicuously entirely absent. The lexical choices of 'passion', 'concern' and 'forgiveness' are instead employed. '[a] God for all, a God … who cares passionately about people and their lives and what happens to them, and a God of justice and mercy.' 'God that's concerned with every individual and has a relationship with every individual,' '… we are all worshipping a very forgiving God.'

In both churches, the belief that God loves them and the communities around them was clear. However, they expressed this entirely differently. The first church was

explicit in its understanding of love, and their responses created a dynamic sense of God's love as being the stimulus for activity within the community. The second church approached and worded their responses very differently - 'love' itself was not mentioned once, but dimensions of God's loving nature were articulated. This is just one of many examples of how the churches responded to questions differently, whilst expressing much of the same meaning.

It is also interesting to note here the consistency of styles of response within these two churches. The interviewees were spoken to separately and the conversations were semi-structured, allowing for some freedom of conversation and topic management. However, each of the interviewees responded correspondingly with responses given by others in their congregation. In keeping with Hopewell's findings, the churches were using an idiom particular to them:

> … a group of people cannot regularly gather for what they feel to be religious purposes without developing a complex network of signals and symbols and conventions - in short, a subculture - that gains its own logic and then functions in a way peculiar to that group. (Hopewell, 1987:5)

History and memory

At the beginning of each interview, interviewees were invited to describe the history of their church and community. These descriptions were deeply revealing and insightful, demonstrating, in some cases, close familial and other ties with the church attended reaching back for many years. The affection and familiarity which interviewees had for their congregation's history was evident ; these responses were frequently the longest responses gained from the whole interview (see Chapter 1).

The extent to which these congregational histories are retold and transmitted within the churches was evident from the way many of the interviewees responded that they could only pass on what they'd heard elsewhere:

> 'I'm a relative newcomer, I've been there for about 12 years now ... so some of what I know of the history is probably folklore and hearsay rather than fact.'

> 'What I've heard is that the Church started in one of the member's cellars and that's the place that they used to worship. One day one of the members saw a local Church being advertised in the newspaper and the rest is history …'

Many such responses were gathered, indicating that even those who have not been present since the beginning of a congregation's life feel they have heard the story retold enough times to be able to speak at length about the history.

The retelling of birth and growth stories such as these is a common feature of public life. It nourishes the identity of the group, allowing it to share in a continuing story with a wider significance than the empirical present. The retelling of stories creates 'a community rooted in energizing memories and summoned by radical hopes.' (Breugemann, 2001) The energizing qualities of these memories is evident through the way in which when a congregation is threatened, the need is highlighted to retell the story to highlight the importance of remaining strong and present:

'And, I was talking to people at church, saying … we have got to get across to people our beginnings - how we started, where we came from, and hopefully where we're going.'

It may be expected that for faith communities, such as the congregation members we interviewed, the history would have an extra significance as it allows the believer to highlight how God has affected and been present in the growth or decline of the worshipping community. However, there is a marked absence of the attributing of the Church's history to God. The development, progression and growth/decline seems to be entirely linked to the actions of humans, as opposed to being the acts or even the leading of God. The interviewees spoke of how God affects them personally, but didn't mention how God has led the congregation, 'I do try to listen sometimes and that's when the Holy Spirit jumps in and says, got ya.'

Romantic, tragic, comic and ironic tales

'Story expresses the intricacy of congregational life. Though widely regarded as merely a form of entertainment or illustration, stories are an essential account of social experience', writes Hopewell. (Hopewell, 1987: 46) There is a high usage of stories and narrative within the interviewees' responses - each being used differently to communicate incidences from within the life of the church. The three functions of narrative, according to Hopewell are:

1. The congregation's self-perception is primarily narrative in form

2. The congregation's communication among its members is primarily by story

3. By its own congregating, the congregation participates in narrative structures of the world's societies (Hopewell: 1987: 46)

Hopewell also identifies four types of narrative ('tale')used in congregational life – romantic, comic, tragic and ironic. Whilst these four categories to do not encompass every style of congregational narrative, they are prominent in church story-telling. However, only two of these styles are identifiable within our interviewee responses.

Romantic

Romantic tales, sometimes referred to as Heroic, convey a sense of adventure and excitement. 'The hero or heroine leaves familiar surroundings and embarks on a dangerous journey in which strange things happen but a priceless reward is gained. Good and evil are sharply delineated in romance, protagonists and antagonists clearly displayed.' (Hopewell, 1987:58)

A romantic tale is clearly told through one of our congregation's responses:

> '… I was offered the job of being the team leader and accepted that through a fairly lengthy process of lots of soul searching and not particularly wanting to move to the North from the South … so, I moved in May 2000, and in between May and November 2000 we …had sixteen people move into the little community … people from all different sorts of backgrounds', '[we're] giving them something to aspire to', '… we're like, oh great … we have just

moved two hundred and sixty miles to live here and they're going to knock it all down', '… one of the problems is … all the regeneration people are all people that drive in from the suburbs, so they don't actually understand the complexity of the issues in a way that, as I said, from living here four years we're some way to doing …'

Through our interviewee, the heroic story of the congregation that leaves the familiar to embark on a difficult process in a strange place is told. 'They' - the regeneration professionals are clearly delineated from the congregation and community. The purpose of this romantic mission, and the ultimate reward for the endeavour, is expressed through a desire to emulate the life of Christ, which is also portrayed in explicitly heroic terms:

> '… we would talk about a God whose love and compassion for people is worked out through people, that the mission of God doing his missionary bit by coming from heaven to earth is replicated by Christians who will continue to live out that purpose and emulate, in as far as it is possible to emulate the life of Jesus, showing compassion … putting himself into places of darkness'

Tragic

'Tragedy portrays the decay of life and the necessary sacrifice of the self before resolution occurs.' (Hopewell, 1989 (7): 60) It is similar to the romantic tale in many ways, but to the tragic character, the world is a harsher and more dangerous place. As in romance, the self is heroic, but in tragedy the hero must endure death in order to achieve resolution. Hopewell ties this closely to the story of Christ's crucifixion:

> When portrayed as tragic hero, Christ accepts the cross … Those who follow the way of Christ live their lives tragically in the shadow of the cross. They suffer; they die to self and gain justification only beyond, and through, Christ's death and their own. (Hopewell, 1987:60)

The good news for a tragic hero is that if they are identified with the will of God and have faith in the cross, they are saved. The tragic hero's salvation comes from identification with the transcendent pattern of tragic life. Tragic stories are expressed frequently throughout the interviewee responses. One such example is seen in the attitude of a congregation towards a Learn Direct project based in the church building:

> 'We had all these burglaries last year … and in that I was very aware of the cross and how actually we were called to be faithful in spite of the painfulness of that, and when the Learn Direct Centre which had been going so well was closed down by the carjacking in January there was a real sense of death and of loss and of brokenness … when people started saying to me 'Is there anything we can do to get Learn Direct started again?' it struck me that the whole point of the cross is that you accept the suffering that you are involved with it because there is something more important and better, and God's faithfulness is about believing that God's goodness is stronger than the evil and destructiveness that people can show … I think the PCC were very

clear that actually if we chose to start the Learn Direct Centre up again, we were choosing to be burgled again. Reality is what that means … to take up our cross, but that that was what we as a Christian community were called to do.'

This narrative contains strong themes of loss and despair, but the prevailing feeling of hope in something greater than the surrounding tragedy is tangible. Faith in the ultimate goodness of God justifies the suffering, providing a promise of ultimate reward.

> Tragic heroes are wrapped in the mystery of their communion with that something beyond which we can only see through them, and which is the source of the strengths and their fate alike. (Frye, 1957:208)

Comic and Ironic

Comic stories in Hopewell's definitions are not humorous incidents, but incidents with a happy ending brought about by realisation of a previously unknown truth. This revelation (or gnosis) dispels the crisis, and the narrative moves from problem to solution. 'Created in misinformation, and convoluted by error, a comedy is resolved by the disclosure of a deeper knowledge about the harmonious way things really are.' (Hopewell, 1987:58) Ironic stories challenge the heroic. Things are not what they seem, and good is not ultimately rewarded. 'Miracles do not happen; patterns lose their design; life is unjust, not justified by transcendent forces. Trapped in such an ironic world, one shrugs one's shoulders about reports of divine ultimacies and intimacies. Instead of experiencing such supernatural outcomes, one embraces one's brothers and sisters in camaraderie.' (Hopewell, 1987:61)

Neither comic nor ironic narratives are found within the responses. When searching for explanations for this, one notices that in comic and ironic tales, it is the self who is in control. In comedy the self experiences a revelation and is able to see independently the solution to the problem. In irony, the self rejects the transcendent, choosing instead to rely on one's own understandings and the support of human companionship.

However, in romance and tragedy the self is reliant on a greater force in order to justify and explain the suffering. Within the responses gathered, the stories of romance and tragedy narrate selves who become players with a cosmic understanding. They accept suffering and hardship, trusting in the ultimate power and control of One beyond their mundane experience - God. The romantic hero believes that things won't get too bad if one is willing to adventure with, and trust in, God. Meanwhile, the tragic hero believes that things will and must become awful in order for God's ultimate purposes to be revealed and to achieve the ultimate reward. However, both of these types of hero are surrendered to God - their purposes and wills are bound up with faith in Him.

This surrender and dependence on the transcendent power of God in the narratives, however, does not resonate with an explanation which may seek to equate this with a disempowered, 'knee-jerk' response of needy individuals to attempt to put meaning and purpose into the suffering encountered. Instead, the characters appear to

consciously choose, after consideration and reflection, to bend their will to God's and endure suffering as part of their response to Him. Striving to emulate Christ's surrender and knowledge of ultimate destiny and reward, the actors in the narratives make strong, empowered decisions to place their faith in a God whose presence they interpret in suffering as well as faithfulness.

Chapter 4 - Exploring the Experience

As has been explored in the previous chapter, the narratives related in the interviews are heroic, romantic tales, and tragic tales. The heroic narratives convey drama, fight and victory, whilst the tragic narratives express death and sacrifice as part of the process of victory, but the narratives' styles have a number of common factors. An exciting battle, transcendent awareness and intervention, heroes and heroines striving for victory against the odds. It is significant that the interviewees chose to relate their congregational experiences in this manner, demonstrating the pressures and joys which they perceive as characterising their faith community. However, it is also interesting to discern if another side to the presented story lurks below the surface. It is possible that the interviewees wished to convey certain themes and attitudes, and that other stories or thoughts may have been concealed beneath the heroism and tragedy. A deeper level of analysis of the transcripts revealed other themes, such as sadness, frailty and mundane existence and survival. Such themes were not as evident as the other narratives presented, but their existence was evident from repeated small comments, some discourse analysis and certain anecdotes related.

The fact that these themes were not as prevalent as other stories of survival and hope is significant. Possibly, the interviewees feel more generally positive than negative and this is simply reflected in their responses. However, another possibility is that the interviewees hoped to portray a positive attitude for the sake of this report, believing this is what we (the interviewers) or others wanted to hear. They maybe felt that a positive attitude reflected better on their congregations or communities, and were keen to achieve this. Whatever the reason (and it is probable there are multiple reasons), partly concealed negative themes emerge throughout most of the interviews, and this chapter will examine these.

Before outlining the negative strands running through the transcripts, it is important to stress that these themes are not prominent. A general overview of the responses prove them to be neither significantly positive or negative. The best way to describe the over-arching attitude emerging from the transcripts is **realistic**. Some positive attitudes are held, some negative. There is a relative balance between the two attitudes, and thus this section on the negative side must not be interpreted as of higher significance than any positive approaches examined elsewhere in this report.

Overall, many of the churches choose to express their experience of what has happened to their communities in generally cautious tones of optimism, even in terms of confidence and hope (see Chapters 5 and 6). However, there are notable occasions where comments refer to an ongoing darker reality in many of the communities undergoing regeneration and 'civil renewal'. These comments range from quiet concern to outright anger and cover at least three areas of ongoing concern.

Lack of real change

Several members of black led churches question the effectiveness of regeneration policies for black and ethnic communities. They perceive a worrying continuity of hopelessness caused by ongoing alienation from the mainstream of society which regeneration was supposed to have addressed.

> 'Over the past ten years we have seen a lot of money being pumped into the Moss Side area … in a sense Moss Side have been affected as we all know, by gang violence, gang culture. When you look at the black community, young people are more likely to get involved or over-represented in terms of prison population, their underachievement at schools and opportunities seem very much limited. So over the last ten years really, Moss Side doesn't seem to have moved on in terms of progression in terms of wealth or jobs …'

The interviewee paints a bleak picture of a community still slowly fragmenting. 'And that's down to a lot of I would say … I won't just say the failure of the education system or the local authority or the political system … a lot of it is due to with the breakdown of the family structure and support structure within the community.'

Another interviewee reflects more philosophically on the question of whether or not there are some groups of people whose lives will never be improved by regeneration. The following quotation is also a good example of the way many participants reflected their thoughts and feelings back to us. It is a moment of epiphany or insight, focussed around an ordinary everyday case study and related in narrative form.

> 'I often look out of my (office) window and there's a row of houses there, and I say how have these people's lives been changed for better or worse? The sixty million or thirty million in the five years so far. And there's just a row of eight houses and people always coming in and out of tem. They don't look like they have got shed loads of money or anything and they sit out sometimes in the summer and last year stole the wheel off my car … and I just look and think well, what's regeneration for these people?'

Lack of power or control over regeneration

Another theme that is expressed, often in a quieter way, is the feeling that although some of the community *is* benefiting and a small level of confidence is returning, local communities still feel vulnerable and anxious. The reason for this seems to be that they feel have no stake in the changes that are being undertaken on their behalf. They don't feel in control of what is happening to them and in the case of one interviewee, local communities are frightened regeneration will disappear (as presumably it has done in the past). 'Regeneration's something that is being done to them … it's coming in from outside. It's not something that is part of the community.' From the perspective of this interviewee such feelings of being 'done to' produce an ongoing legacy of 'vulnerability' and 'fragility.' 'There's still a lot of very fragile people and families that don't really work that leaves people feeling very vulnerable.'

A sense of former vibrant communities being taken over by wealthier and more productive social groups emerges from East Manchester where six hundred old

houses are being demolished as part of a Housing Renewal Pathfinder Scheme. 'Well *they're going to rebuild* our houses, we *accept,* and as you move into better housing *we hope* we'll see a change. *We hope* we'll see the shops coming back again *eventually*.' The close proximity of the italicised words suggests a vaguely located aspiration that the community might improve, but the power to improve the situation has been handed over to outside agencies. The role of the host community, decimated by thirty years of deindustrialisation and the downward spiral of crime and poverty that ensued, is simply to 'accept' the changes being planned for them.

Erasure of references to previously 'dysfunctional' communities

The tone of quiet concern or weary despair turns to anger when the implications of local ward changes are fully realised. This is a theme which strongly emerged in our Year One mapping when we observed the way in which strategically important areas close to the city centre or important hubs such as stadia or airports were either renamed, 'spruced up' or re-planned to minimise crime occurrence. In one of our research areas, Wythenshawe, exists a ward called Benchill, until recently designated the poorest ward in England and Wales. However, 'exists' has turned into 'existed' because the community of Benchill has been erased from the local government map. Its name was associated in some people's minds with high crime, failing schools, poor housing, high unemployment. Now, says a local resident whose family has lived in Benchill for two generations, '… a lot of new houses are not being built for the people of Wythenshawe or people of middle income … it's people moving into Wythenshawe from outer areas that have got the money ...'. It is (at least in our interviewee's perception) in order to attract these new high income earners who will be able to afford the £200,000 four/five bedroom homes now being built in old Benchill, that the abolition of the name has been allowed.

This fact however, is not the worst of how he feels as a local resident over what has happened to the name of Benchill. The old community is not being given the chance to change in its own name or take any credit for the improvement. '… the Government has said it is the roughest area, but it doesn't mean to say that the people who are there are the roughest people in the world, you know, there's some very nice people. You get good and bad wherever you live.' He suggests that the community should have been given the chance to redeem the name of Benchill. 'I don't understand why the Government would want to change the name of an area. Why not keep the name of the area and prove its worth and show the people what they have done for the ward of Benchill, how they have regenerated and revived Benchill, rather than trying to sweep the problem under the carpet?' One of the most distasteful aspects of this erasing of Benchill's name for our interviewee was the sudden way it was done. According to his version of events, 'It was the way it was kind of brought in very abruptly and said, right, next year, Benchill won't exist'.

For those residents currently living there, proud of their working class traditions and forms of extended family community, the process of rebranding has felt like the community has been given 'a big kick, a big smack in the mouth really with a big kipper across the face.'

Scepticism and Disillusionment

There is some evidence of scepticism or disillusionment with the regeneration industry, as well as evidence of disbelief of government statistics and some anger towards regeneration in general. This is in contrast to other comments on regeneration that appear to view it as positive for the locality. Evidently, it is to be expected that different interviewees may hold different views, but in some cases the contrasts are marked. A current of distrust and even indignation seems to run below the surface of many of the interviews:

> 'Regeneration, in my eyes, really is just another bunch of businessmen getting very rich very quick off Government grants, probably. And there was a ward in Wythenshawe called Benchill … this ward was one of the poorest in the whole of Britain … but because it was one of the poorest neighbourhoods or wards … they decided to do something about it and make sure there was no more poverty in Benchill, quite simply by saying Benchill no longer exists …'

> '… when the regeneration band arrives in town, it brings with it a whole set of values like work is good and you must work and you must get paid, and you must volunteer, it just opens a whole shed load of stuff that comes with it, with the regeneration industry … and it's almost actually you're not allowed another culture, you know, you've got to take on this one. And because you've got a different culture and a different way that your community's going, that's not allowed, that's something bad … a value judgement has been made on it, and shed loads of money is going to be spent on changing all of that.'

Battle and fight

Other types of language used by some of the interviewees highlight further negative feeling. There is the language of battle and fight used by a number of the interviewees, but this fight-talk is expressed in two contrasting manners. The first style of fight speech is defensive in tone, and often borrows military words. For example, there are themes of mobilisation:

> '… recruitment of a team was really what took the priority for the first little while, getting people motivated and interested and talking to people, communicating with people about what we were trying to do here … between May and November 2000 we had sixteen people move into the little community just round here with a particular sort of vision …'

Changing the community through active, dynamic methods, such as 'being embedded', a term that can be argued to have entered general circulation during the Iraq War is another example of military vocabulary. The desire to 'impact' the local community is often mentioned in these interviews, and energetic, forceful vocabulary enters the speech:

> 'We have got such an opportunity to actually impact the community at that level, because of our relationships, because we're all sort of embedded if you like.'

'Christians do need to have a voice, when Christ came, he was quite a radical and he could also be known to be involved in politics when we look at what was disturbed around the time. So I think Christians need to impact upon all levels of society and effect change.'

' … the church is about the whole of life, and I mean the whole of life, no holds barred …'

The other pattern of 'fight-talk' which emerges may better be described as the language of struggle, where there appears to be an unspoken assumption that a battle is being fought, but in contrast to the proactive, military-style response of some of the interviewees, these respondents adopt a weary, resigned tone. Anticipation of failure but being bound to maintaining the endeavour in pursuit of an ultimate greater good is frequent in these responses. One interviewee's sense of struggle is particularly marked. The phases 'I try' or 'We try' are used fourteen times in this transcript:

'Well, we have a lot of difficulties, really … we try to involve other churches in the community … we try to go to their celebrations. We try to involve the community itself in what we're doing ... we're trying … and I think that we try to be very welcoming at church. I think we try not to push our beliefs onto other people …'

An attitude conveying the inevitability of suffering in the struggle, but the need to continue the fight is clearly demonstrated in another response:

'… you accept the suffering that you are involved with it because there is something more important and better … reality is what that means … to take up our cross, but that that was what we as a Christian community were called to do. And I was very proud of them because we did think about it and we did talk about it. But they were absolutely agreed that we had to do it again ... despite what the cost would be.'

It is interesting to note that these contrasting uses of the language of battle and struggle coincide with earlier observations about heroic and tragic narratives. The dynamic, active language is spoken by the romantic heroes, who believe that the fight will be won, and that the 'goodies' and 'baddies' are easily identifiable characters. The language choices symbolize their willingness to participate in the exciting, cosmic battle they are engaged it. Likewise, the tragic voices are willing to participate in the battle they are embroiled in. However, they see the road ahead as marked with suffering, yet continue to struggle in order to attain the ultimate reward.

The interesting observation which can be drawn from these linguistic differences concerning battle and fight is the marked gender difference. In every case examined, male interviewees responded with the proactive, energetic language of battle and heroism, whilst female interviewees adopted the language of struggle. This gendered delineation of the romantic and tragic was not present in other areas and narratives, but in every case concerning response to struggle and battle, the women and men adopted opposite stances. It is important to note that while both women and men may act with the same outward level of dynamism and energy, the attitude to participation

in the struggle appears to be approached differently. Whilst the male interviewees appeared to become energised and impassioned by the battle, female interviewees appeared to become weary, resigned and scarred.

Our interviewee base included women and men from all levels of leadership and involvement, and some of the contrasting gendered responses to struggle came from within the same congregations, so it is not immediately clear why there is such a difference in this area. One suggestion could be that the male interviewees are conditioned to respond in a certain manner, despite possibly feeling wearied and resigned beneath the surface. It is possible that the men wished to demonstrate an 'up and at 'em' style of approach, and unconsciously conveyed themselves as unflinching soldiers in the face of adversity in order to fit with certain norms and values. It is hard to know if beneath these veneers lurked concealed attitudes of fearfulness and struggle. Likewise, it could be argued that the female interviewees did not want to convey themselves as aggressive or 'pushy' and so unconsciously responded with explicit language of struggle. Whatever attitudes or feelings are being held here, the difference is obvious and significant.

Rejected or ignored by communities

A further negative strand discernibly running through the responses concerns a sense from many churches of having been rejected or ignored by the communities they are trying to serve. Our interviewees relate that they will not leave the communities, but feel that the community does not support or appreciate their presence:

> '… I think the community to a certain extent has turned its back on the church, rather than, the church has never turned its back on the community ... it's possibly not that the church could do more, it's the community could do more with the church, you know, but this isn't, the community doesn't seem to want to or have the inclination to do so just yet.'

One interviewee suggests a reason why the community may have rejected the churches in this way is the behaviour of church members who are perceived to have created certain attitudes :

> 'Many of us detest Church and God because of what we know of God. And many of us only knew the God of 'go and sit down'. We only knew the God of 'you must go to Church or else'. Many of us only knew the God of 'do as I say, not as I do'. And if that's the God you know, you will start to despise God when you become aware and you are enlightened by age itself, so I think many young people have come to have an aversion to Church and to God because of the hypocrisy they met within some fellow Christians.'

One faith based voluntary organisation recounts how they realised the need to conceal their church origins due to hostility expressed locally towards churches and Christianity. Having now gained the respect of the community, they are more able to be open about their background, but outline the initial reaction of some people to the realisation that they [the community] were dealing with church people:

> 'There's a famous story that that will tell at some point, where a community person that we'd been working with for, oh, a good six months or so, suddenly

realised that [my colleague] was a nun and I was a vicar … and she had a very rude outburst of, I can't believe I'm working with an effing nun and an effing vicar … but … in the last, I think twelve months or so, [we have been] asking questions about where do we stand in terms of our church background and faith and so on. We're now I think re-assessing how explicit we want to be and so on.'

A counter claim to this apparent community rejection is made in some of the responses, although not many people from the community attend the church, the interviewees assert they still value their presence in the locality and want them 'to be there' for support in times of need and loss:

> 'With most people it's like, you know, don't go on about it [the Christian faith] and so forth, you know, until something really bad happens in their life then all of a sudden, you know, they may want to know.'

> '… I think people value the church being there. I think people want the church. They might not come but they still want us there.'

However, even in these cases there is a sense that the churches are just used by the community for their own purposes, ignored in times of plenty and asked for help in times of need. Despite this awareness, there is a sense of commitment to the communities. It appears that the congregations are willing to be used in such a way by the communities, as they feel this is an effective way of meeting the needs of those they wish to serve. Their presence, invitation and acceptance are seen as providing a 'beacon' to the community to come in when they choose. There is a sense of vocation and duty about this, but also a sense of gladness to be serving those they feel called to minister to.

Chapter 5 - Emerging methodologies

The emerging patterns of church response identified in our three research areas can be described in a number of ways and are examined in this chapter as methodologies of engagement, in other words, the different practical ways that churches are responding to the changing context and needs around them. As with previous chapters, this information can be taken on its own, or seen as part of a package that might constitute 'religious capital'. There are a number of ways in which the aspects of these methodologies can be examined within our findings:

1) Look at aspects of the *language* used to describe the nature of the engagement. Some use of nouns, verbs, metaphors and similes has been already been discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter focuses on extended phrases or passages of description that communicate some of *the values and processes* of church-based methodology. We shall be calling these passages *process descriptors* (e.g. 'we just need to take them on like Jesus took them' or 'we touch the community because we are the community').

2) Take the analysis down to a more local and praxis-oriented level via two or three case studies of individual church partnerships, in order to explore the different ways those churches are affected by the experience of this partnership.

3) Adopt a broad overview perspective by looking at *spectrums of response*. This allows a more subtle way of evaluating method than the simple either/or analysis that shuts out the possibility of simultaneous ways of working.

Process Descriptors

This section relates language to methodology, in particular looking at what we are calling *process descriptors* - i.e. short passages of linked words which describe the *processes* of change and engagement (as distinct from outcomes) as seen from the churches' perspective. This begins to identify a distinctive language that highlights the different emphases of approach the churches think are important when it comes to regeneration and promoting civil society. We have selected ten in order to give an idea of the wide range of different types of church engagement.

1) '*I think there needs to be **bi-lingual facilitators and advocates** - those who actually come from the community and speak both languages*' (black-led church member)

This phrase describes how this church sees the need to ensure that when it comes to consulting the local black community on issues of crime prevention, or planning (for example), the voices of black people, including idiom and other cultural forms of expression are properly heard and understood because there are 'a lot of times the voices of the people don't enter the arena'. This concept of bi-linguality, reflects a number of possible meanings, including a new found confidence from within the black community to actively engage in public structures. Bi-lingual also denotes a high degree of competence and skill in linguistics and explaining complex concepts. It

assumes an intimate knowledge of two cultures - black, but also white, grass-roots communities as well as professional regenerators. The concept is supported by two complementary roles. *Facilitator,* denoting a neutral, listening and highly skilled understanding of group processes. *Advocate*, suggesting a tougher, more outspoken and politically committed stance within a public forum. This descriptor is therefore highly suggestive of a sophisticated and subtle understanding of the complex processes involved in regeneration and the need for a multifaceted approach to it. It unintentionally refers to the concept of translation and bi-linguality discussed in the panels in Chapter 2.

2) *'I think we just need to take them on like Jesus took them really ...he met people where they were; they were hungry so he fed them; they were naked, he clothed them, he'd speak to them - it's a really touchy feely gospel'* (black-led church member)

This highly rhetorical descriptor in the 'heroic' tradition (see Chapter 4) is based on an image of Jesus as the personification of open, unconditional and practical love of neighbour. However, its context follows a more nuanced observation of the fragmentation of identities and patterns of belonging, especially church attendance. The previous passage contains descriptions of first generation Jamaicans coming over to Manchester and creating their own churches. '… people had stronger religious values back then, so they would come to church … and then perhaps they weren't so readily accepted in the mainstream church.' For our interviewee, a second generation church goer (i.e. British-born Jamaican), the cultural context is markedly different. 'Now we're reaching second and third generation who are not purely West Indian, most of us have intermarried, okay or mixed and you're reaching a different type of audience … you can't sell it by saying we are a good traditional Jamaican church anymore … you need to go to what is relevant in the community … to understand where people are at.'

In other words, the present context for the Gospel is not exclusivity, but inclusivity. The context for sharing the Gospel is not based on cultural purity (a 'good traditional Jamaican church') but on racial and ethnic diversity. The process by which this interviewee believes her church connects to the new *hybridised generation* is not through preaching certainty, but through an appeal to non-judgmental inclusivity which prioritises a contemporary emphasis on emotional and physical connection (a 'touchy-feely' gospel). It is evidence that the church is having to learn new ways of connection; 'The message has always been the same ('redemptive love'), but what needs to happen is to recognise that the method needs to change.'

3) *'I mean there's been changes, the population changes of people, but the church has kept going there all the time'* (white female Anglican lay person)

The context of this observation is that the parish church has been on the same site (at the prominent junction of two busy roads which bisect the middle of Moss Side) for over one hundred years. The quote suggests the importance of having a physically-identifiable church presence at the heart of the community that carries within it the memories and experiences of previous generations, as well as meeting the needs and aspirations of the present community and those to come. It suggests a methodology of engagement based on *service, sustainability* (i.e. long term commitment) and *contextualisation.*

This theme is continued elsewhere by the interviewee. 'I would say in five years time, it will be entirely black-led which is very important in that area.' The significance of this remark is that although *longevity* is seen as a vital contribution to the process of regeneration, (i.e. being there on a 'week by week basis'), *adaptability* to the rapidly changing context of the local area is also seen as highly significant. There is also an implication contained in this descriptor that change is inevitable and that the church's role is to *absorb* the results of these often traumatic changes as well as proactively attempt to change things for the better.

4) '*Our crunch points have been around this impact of globalisation on local people and because after five or six years we have been able to critique externally what we have seen happening and how things have or have not changed for people*' (church-based 'community empowerment network' worker)

This descriptor shows the importance of the *political and economic analyses of power* that are undertaken by some churches engaged in regeneration. The interface between global patterns of inward investment and locally-used space is one of the *key areas of critical analysis* that needs to occur in any discourse of regeneration. It is an analysis that is almost entirely absent within the official regeneration discourses except in moments of private confidentiality (see transcript analysis in our Year One Report, p. 38). The above quote implicitly acknowledges that some things have changed for the better for local people, but that others have not, and the overall tone of the interview suggests that more critical questions need to be asked concerning issues of change and empowerment and the methods used to bring them about. Such statements can be characterised as asking the 'who, why and what' questions.

5) '*In the future, we have to look completely afresh at our strategies, lest we go down a **road that has been made for us**, and it appeared like a collusion or compromise…*' (church-based 'community-empowerment network' worker)

This descriptor reveals a *highly self-reflective awareness* of the dangers of being co-opted into a way of speaking and acting that has been provided by another external agency. The reference to 'in the future' implies a close reflection on past experience and a determination to follow a more autonomous path from now on. This reflects the fundamental importance of paying *heed to feelings and processes within regeneration partnerships and acting upon them* as a reliable source. This observation on process reflects the earlier observations made in Chapter 3 about language, namely: whose language are we using and does it inspire, or frustrate, participation?

Some interesting consequences of this self-reflection have emerged for the organisation which this interviewee is part of. One has been to critique the effectiveness of networks of participation as an effective tool of community empowerment, a surprising admission given that this way of working has previously defined their very identity. This network of participation approach is also at the heart of government and local authority guidelines concerning the delivery of social cohesion outcomes. As one of the workers says, 'I think we have become more critical … on the whole issue of participative processes, that we have begun to reflect on the weaknesses within that … and we have flagged those up for the future'.

This process of self-reflection and critique is a paradigmatic principle and methodology that should apply to all partners in regeneration, but especially those who are engaging with the systemically disillusioned.

6) '*Those are the kind of things that we need to be* **chivvying** *along and we need to keep saying, but we need to make sure that my next door neighbour can actually have a house in the new estate*' (independent white-led charismatic church leader)

Chivvying along is a deceptively deprecating phrase for a vital role this particular church finds itself playing with respect to the constantly returning theme of housing-led regeneration and the suspicion by some that it is a form of 'ethnic cleansing' (see Year One Report). The context for the above descriptor is the proposed demolition of six hundred houses in East Manchester to make way for mainly private housing. One of the original principles agreed between the local residents, planners, developers and local authority was that 'the current community must be facilitated in all possible ways to stay together, to be the community that lives on the new estate'. The current value of residents housing has risen to £40 - 50,000 (Dec 2004) and that is what they will receive under compulsory purchase order payments. It has recently emerged that the cheapest family housing by the developers will be in the order of £150,000 leaving a potential mortgage shortfall of £100,000, the sort of mortgage normally accessed by jobs paying salaries of £20 - 25,000 per annum. These jobs are not available in the local community. Meanwhile those who have already paid off the mortgage on their old houses face the prospect of having to take out another one, typically in the later stages of their lives or working careers. As residents, the members of the church understand some of the implications of this process and consequently believe that they will 'have some big questions to answer in five to ten years time if this becomes just a suburban estate with a lot of sort of business people living on it'.

Hence the important role of 'chivvying', and reminding those who ultimately make the decisions of the need to make them *based on first principles*, namely 'we need to make sure that my next door neighbour can actually have a house in the new estate'. The methodology deployed here is reminding others of *important core values* and principles and negotiating as subtly but powerfully as possible to ensure that these are respected.

7) '*But also I think engaging with power structures … not being afraid to, I don't know, have lunch with a tax collector. It's not exclusively with the poor… there's a kind of bridging role I think within Christ's ministry, who certainly inspires me in my role*' (member of church-based community-empowerment project)

This process descriptor identifies the important fact that despite having a critical analysis of the way globalised power impacts on local spaces and of the real dangers of being co-opted down 'roads' that are not one's own chosen way, it is crucial to build bridges with those who hold the power. It is important to engage in dialogue with them and build up relationships of communication, and if possible trust, so that they become more aware of the impact of their actions and are committed to trying to work in closer partnership with the existing local structures. The word 'bridging' clearly carries with it connotations of the concept of *bridging* as opposed to *bonding* social capital. This means that a group proactively seeks to build up relationships of

communication and trust beyond its own usual natural contact group. This 'bridging' role is a constantly recurring theme associated with the methodology and self-awareness that churches have concerning their identity.

8) '*On Sunday we have a luncheon club, but that's for people who have a psychiatric illness, and that's once every month they come to meet and have a meal, they **cook it themselves** on the church premises ... and we now have a club for the people who live alone or are lonely... and they can meet on a Tuesday afternoon ...**they run the club themselves**'* (lay member small Baptist church)

The context for these comments emerge from the ministry of a small, elderly Baptist church, whose building is facing imminent demolition as part of large-scale housing renewal programme for East Manchester. There appear to be two striking features of the ministry as suggested by these remarks. The first is the very *ordinariness of the setting,* the simple *act of hospitality* by a fragile church community, whose existence is being called into question, towards those within the wider community who are *equally vulnerable.* This feels a long way from the economic critiques of global capitalism and engaging with the powerful being done by other church-based groups in the area. But there is a powerful connection being made with those on the very edges of society in surroundings that for them feel *homely and accessible.* What is more significant perhaps is the emphasis on *self-empowerment* when connecting with these groups. The Tuesday club 'runs itself'. The Sunday club have a meal and 'cook it themselves'. Most host organisations offering hospitality to such groups might feel the need to operate in a more 'controlling' way, aware of obvious health and safety implications at the very least. This small church, possibly because of its own current lack of resources, feels more comfortable with simply producing an 'open space' for such groups to use. Despite possible signs to the contrary, this process of empowerment, based on *principles of open space and self-help,* appears remarkably effective.

9) '*I think, although we had a vibrant community here, I don't think we will ever have what we had here before because the world has moved on. But we will have something new here and it will be, I'd like to think, a co-creative experience – dynamic ...*' (lay member, small Baptist church)

This reflection highlights a recurring theme regarding church methodology, namely 'church' as *container for the expressions of the community* in which it is placed. The church has traditionally been seen as one of the important voluntary institutions which reflect *the memory, sense of belonging and identity within the local community.* The fortunes of a church and the fortunes of the community often seem to go hand in hand.

However, the significance of the above quotation is the implied plea for this particular church not to become a vehicle of representation for a community that is dying out. It is the express wish of this interviewee, despite the small and predominantly elderly make-up of this church, that the church becomes connected to the new communities that will be coming in - wealthier, professional people with young families who will develop different ways of expressing 'community belonging and identity'. What is being hoped for is an *adaptability to change with the times*, to avoid what Peter Ward

in his book, *Liquid Church* calls institutions of refuge, nostalgia and heritage. (Ward, 2002: 26 - 29)

We have seen evidence of this adaptability in the way for example, the black-led churches featured in this research have evolved from monochrome churches of identity and refuge for first generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants to upwardly mobile, increasingly diverse and inclusive communities who are attempting to hold together old ways of belonging with new forms of identity and belonging expressed by second and third generation British-born black populations. If this adaptability and *willingness to engage with new forms of community* can be sustained, the firm implication expressed by this interviewee is that the church itself may 'have its own regeneration'.

10) *'...the thing I talked about, the supporting of people who have times in their life that are very hard ...it's such an **accepting** place to be, you know, they will **grieve with you**, but there's not much condemnation ... I don't want to come over like it's a utopian vision ... we have as much church politics as anywhere else, but there is a sense in which people listen to each other.'* (Anglican lay woman/community worker)

This final quotation expresses another dimension to the churches' contribution to civil society; namely a place of **support and a place of listening**, especially in times of personal hardship. It is of a similar type of engagement to the 'open space' model featured in quote 8 above, a **non-judgemental place** where individual regeneration can be allowed to slowly take place. The interviewee, recovering from a broken marriage, describes the way the church supported her through her separation and divorce and then celebrated when she got remarried 'far more than I expected really because you kind of think well, they're not going to be too impressed with that and they were very supportive'. There is a sense of '*journeying with'* individuals through the hard times in their lives which is a vital if generally unacknowledged part of regeneration and renewal, albeit at a personal and micro-level. This sense of individual, close and ongoing support and pastoral care is endorsed by the use of the word 'family' twelve times in the course of the interview.

Three cases of church partnerships

There follow three reflections on individual case studies of churches and specific projects. The aim of these reflections is to further highlight the dynamics at work and how the experience of working in partnerships with others has influenced the way the church expresses its identity.

1) Learn Direct – the learning community

St Luke's Wythenshawe and Learn Direct

The Learn Direct initiative currently hosted by St Luke's Church, Benchill, is an example of a partnership project that rises to a level of symbolic and pastoral intensity so that it becomes a major way in which the church defines its own sense of well-being and status in the community. The relationship becomes deeply *symbiotic* and holds up a mirror image to the church.

The Learn Direct scheme is a government initiative to provide high quality post-sixteen learning for those with few or no skills and qualifications who are unlikely to participate in traditional forms of learning. It also seeks to equip people with the skills they need for employability and is delivered through the use of new technologies.

St Luke's is situated in the heart of the Benchill area, until recently designated as the poorest ward in England. Built in 1935, the link between the church and community goes back to the inception of Wythenshawe as a new garden city (Benchill was the first area to be built) and since then, the church's fortunes have been directly linked to the fortunes of the community. For example, in the 40s, 50s and early 60s, the church was a thriving centre in a well-established and stable white working class community. However during the spiral of sharp decline in the 70s, 80s and 90s, (see Chapter 1 of this report) the membership and fabric of the church also went into steady reverse.

At the height of this phase, a former vicar established (in partnership with other churches) the Benchill Ecumenical Service Scheme (BESS) to provide counselling to those undergoing personal crisis in the midst of ongoing poverty and neglect. The original BESS project was set up in the refurbished church hall (with grant-funding from secular sources) thus marking the ongoing link between church and community. The BESS scheme is now one of the major providers of social capital and support in the whole of Wythenshawe.

The fragility of the community continues to this day, but with signs of hopeful change in the latest round of regeneration (post 1997) beginning to take root. One of these signs of new hope was the institution of the Learn Direct scheme run from the church hall. However, numerous incidents of vandalism and burglary (including the theft of the computers) resulted in the project being closed at the end of 2003. The church decided to reopen the project in May 2004 and a party was organised to mark its relaunch to which all were invited. The party was an open buffet with clowns and community stalls. The new course now has one hundred and fifty residents signed up, with long waiting lists. The current vicar expresses the impact of the closure and reopening of the Learn Direct project in explicitly theological terms, including the relaunch party itself:

'Come to me if you are hungry and I will give you something to eat.' She continues, '… it seemed that we were feeding people at several levels … we were literally feeding them, but also feeding them in terms of spiritually, emotionally and intellectually'. She then describes the events of 2003 as a death and resurrection experience, explicitly refracted through the lens of the Learn Direct project. 'I mean we had all these burglaries last year, and in that I was very aware of the cross and how actually we are called to be faithful in spite of the painfulness of that, and I suppose that when the Learn Direct Centre which had been going so well was closed down by the carjacking in January that was a real sense of death and loss and brokenness.'

After a period of soul-searching, members of the community started coming up to her and asking 'Is there anything we can do to get Learn Direct started again?' and it struck her that 'the whole point of the cross is that you accept the suffering, that you are involved with it, because there is something more important and better, and God's faithfulness is about believing that God's goodness is stronger than the evil and destructiveness that people can show'. The PCC, she recalls, were clear that if they

reopened the Learn Direct centre, they were choosing to be burgled again. 'Reality is what that means, to take up our Cross, but that is what as a Christian community we're called to do.'

One significant outcome of this symbiotic relationship between a secular agency and church community is the way in which the church learns for itself a *deeper understanding of its own faith tradition and mission* from the outside community. Learn Direct seems to have become a source of learning and wisdom to the church and in this way ministers as much to the church as the church to it. Another is the degree of *empathy and identification* the church allows itself to have with an organisation *outside its normal terms of reference* which allows such a learning transaction to take place.

An *openness to learning* from the encounter with the Other (of which this an example) appears to be a key aspect of the churches' methodology when engaging with post-modern, post-industrialised urban spaces in Manchester - whether the Other be another church traditionally at odd with one's own identity and ethos, a secular regeneration agency or a fellow resident from a different ethnic, cultural or religious grouping.

2) Street Pastors - the risk-taking community

New Testament Church of God and the Street Pastors initiative

Among the long list of civil society initiatives undertaken by this church is the commitment to support the Street Pastors scheme in Manchester. 'Street Pastors' is an initiative from Jamaica and piloted in London, whereby members of local churches engage with young men involved in gangs or other forms of violent street crime. The main purpose of the initiative according to one church member is to be a 'listening ear, someone who can offer 'wise counsel or advice' and is predicated on the assumption that black-led churches (from which most street pastors are drawn) are still sufficiently respected and engaged with disaffected black youth to have a positive influence. The opportunity for personal evangelism and prayer is not discounted, although 'that is not the predominant underlying motive behind why Street Pastors is around'. However, this dimension is clearly important to our interviewee and those others from his church that have volunteered to give up their evenings in this way. 'Underpinning everything that my church is about, it's about evangelising and bringing people to God … by portraying the gospel and speaking the truth basically … the only way that positive change is going to come about is by people's lives ultimately being impacted by the Gospel.'

The dilemma experienced by this black church member in this work is created by Greater Manchester Police and Manchester City Council, who are both enthusiastic supporters of the scheme and who both see it as a way of reducing crime and 'solving' a lot of their crime-related problems. 'My concern is … whose agenda is it? And who is being used as … the political and social puppet? How am I going to be perceived by people who are in gangs or whatever … is this person (i.e. himself) an informer? Is he taking information that he knows to the police.' He continues, 'I am not answerable to the police or Manchester City Council' and expresses a sense of

misgiving at the church's agenda being used as a route by others 'to kind of do their work for them'.

He concludes '… there's a fine line between social agenda and a pressing need that needs to be spoken out against and the agenda of the church which is preaching the gospel and making disciples of men'. While he sees these two aims as broadly compatible, his sense of unease at being co-opted by an agenda that doesn't express his own sense of mission and identity, is clear. This represents a different approach to power within a regeneration partnership, no self-emptying empathy (as in the St Luke's scenario) but an honest and critically-edged engagement that acknowledges dilemmas and fears of co-option and subtle takeover whilst nevertheless carrying out a commitment to be engaged in civil society initiatives.

This could be said to reflect a methodology of risk on a number of counts. Firstly, the nature of the work with a violent and unpredictable client group puts one at potential personal risk. Secondly, there is the risk associated with being perceived to be working for groups other than the churches (for example, the police and local authorities). Thirdly, there is the risk to one's identity and integrity working in partnership with secular agencies who tend to want greater levels of control and accountability when working with high-risk groups.

3) Reflexology - the therapeutic community

Mersey Street Baptist Tabernacle and community health initiatives

We have already looked at the case study of the small Baptist community hosting a variety of self-help groups including those suffering mental health problems and loneliness. A further initiative hosted at their church premises is reflexology and aromatherapy offered on a drop-in basis through a qualified practice nurse. We have already noted the possibly symbiotic relationship between the host community and client groups, how the apparent vulnerability and fragility of the host community creates a non-threatening space that feels safe for those most vulnerable. The continued use of the building by needy client groups reinforces a sense of usefulness and relevance for the host community, even though there is always the threat of imminent withdrawing of funding or closure of the building.

The issue of health is an important one within traditional concepts of Christian pastoral care and the role of Victorian Christian-based philanthropy, usually reserved for the 'deserving poor' based on Charles Booth's typology of urban poverty in the 1880s (see Baker, 2002:30). Within this tradition, pastoral care has traditionally been seen as a hierarchical transaction - administered *to* the poor *by* the fortunate who enjoy salvation and security. In more recent post-modern traditions, Foucault for example has observed the persistent link between health and social policy and its link to the control of those people labelled by the wider society as deviant, undesirable or dangerous. (Foucault: 1972)

There are still resonances of that type of approach to health care within the modern health service, with health campaigns that are still aimed primarily at the lifestyles of the poor. In the same neighbourhood as this project, a brand new health centre has opened offering a range of hi-tech services and efficient services. Repeated visits to

the local area and careful listening to the views of the residents reveal that this new health centre is unpopular. Local people feel intimidated by the brisk efficiency of the approach and the smart but utilitarian feel of the building. They have trouble meeting appointments and following health regimes. The 'health care' offered at the church is distinctly low-tech, a massage table in the middle of a jumbled space offered on a drop in basis. But it connects - it feels homely.

And there is perhaps something significant in the services of *reflexology and aromatherapy* that are being offered. There might be some within church and orthodox medicine circles who would still perceive these to be complementary therapies and therefore untried, untested and frankly new age, even 'pagan' in origin. But what is strikingly significant is that they are therapies of intimacy and tender touch, ministered with complete dedication and discretion by the practice nurse to elderly people with 'old and worn' bodies. It has distinct overtones of gospel encounters when it is retold that Jesus allowed his tired body to be touched and cared for by those carrying sweet-smelling ointments. Even his dead body was cared for and caressed in this way. Is it possible to say that there is something deeply gospel based in this encounter - an exchange of touch that brings about healing and soothing of the senses as well as the body?

It also resonates with the new typology of social capital offered by Ann Morisy in her latest book, *Reaching Out*. Here she describes the existence of *brave* social capital - social capital that reaches out beyond the margins of safety implied in bonding and bridging social capital to engage with the most dangerous and the most marginalized sectors of society. Her observation, relevant to this case study, is that it is often those small church groups who operate in a low-key and 'natural' way that are most effective in this work, even when they themselves are not strong or powerful in any normal criteria. (Morisy, 2004:60-62)

The reason for calling this church-based project a therapeutic *community* is its mutuality, its homely context, its non-hierarchical setting. It offers a powerful counter-point to the sometimes 'driven' activity that characterises both church and secular-based regeneration.

Spectrums

Another layer of interpretation by which to define emerging methodologies is to look at the idea of spectrums. One example is briefly examined here:

a) Explicit and/or implicit identity

This spectrum of engagement lies at the heart of church-based efforts within civil society and partnership working. All churches expressed the importance of their identity, but there were different ways of reflecting that identity in the wider community.

Many interviewees in the black-led churches in our survey for example articulated the importance of an *explicit Christian theology and identity* when engaging with civil society, often linked to the evangelistic mission of the church. One interviewee asks,

'What can the Church offer? The Church can offer Christ. We don't need any more social events, we don't need any more gimmicks … we just need to send out the clear message of Christ to the souls of the lost'. Another said, '… underpinning everything that my church is about, it's about evangelising and bringing people to God really … by portraying the Gospel and speaking the truth basically, as opposed to what people really want to hear that, that's neither here nor there'. A pastor reinforces this link between identity and evangelism while picking up on the theme of regeneration. 'The word regeneration for me has always been God *transforming* people to his Gospel, making their lives over … I see Christians in the community being involved as Christians and *impacting* those areas of the community.'

Other voices are also concerned to highlight an explicit Christian identity within their interactions within the wider community. A worker from a white-led independent church focusing on young people and family work stressed the importance of 'standing with people wherever they are at', but this was done 'alongside introducing people to Jesus who will bring the ultimate satisfaction and wholeness.' A Baptist church member similarly stressed the need to maintain a balance between preaching the Gospel and doing what he calls 'community work'. 'There's got to be a balance … we're about God's business at Brownley Green, no matter what we do we are about God … our role is to preach the word of God and to see people saved, but we have to show God's love to the people in the area.'

These comments reflect the *explicit* nature of Christian identity and the Gospel, and tend to come from churches with an evangelical tradition. Other church traditions express their Christian identity more through notions of service to the community. They offer a more generalised understanding of God working through the structures of regeneration to bring about individual renewal 'we have seen God at work so much in our church just recently (then referring to increase in numbers) … I mean He's sort of obviously working in people, working in us as well as in these newcomers for them to come and stay'.

A different model, working from an *implicit* identity is offered by a church-based community-empowerment network organisation operating throughout Manchester and Salford. The reason for operating in this way was a reaction to the negative perception many of the churches had incurred in their area and the realisation that if they wanted to build bridges in the community, then to do so from an implicit base was the best approach. In practice this has meant three ways of operating:

- Identifying overlapping concepts and concerns - for example the language of inclusion versus exclusion, justice and local democracy; the language of 'common alliance around social commitment to fundamental equality, social justice and all of those.' This reflects the Roman Catholic/Liberation Theology tradition of 'preferential option for the poor' which is one of the principle influences on the network
- Recognising Gospel values as 'benchmark values' but internally rather than explicitly
- Being seen to be 'judged on what we do rather than what we are' and being seen 'in the wider context of the voluntary community sector rather than a church-based organisation'

Another example of an implicit approach is offered by a local Catholic church in Wythenshawe. There, according to one parishioner, the church is putting into practice a new approach to mission, linked to a reformulated theology of evangelism. In the 'good old days', the purpose of mission was to get people 'to go to church, you listened to the Gospel you did this you did that and you do the other …'. Now, church members being trained as lay pastoral workers are learning that evangelisation is a more implicit affair; taking Mass out into the community; neighbourhood discussion groups; Christmas and Summer Fayres to which the whole local community are invited; saying prayers for your neighbour. When it comes to baptism and wedding preparation classes, the emphasis is on listening to those who come and share their spirituality and hopes on the basis of shared bible passages, rather than the church 'telling them' what to believe. She concludes, 'I think we sometimes underestimate what people have in their hearts and minds about God because sometimes they come out with the most profound and simple truths about what was there, and it might only be a passage that long ... it's there in the people, whatever they like to call it, it's there'. The hallmarks of this more implicit approach to identity are:

- Listening carefully, not preaching
- Respecting existing belief systems and spiritualities
- Respecting and learning from narratives in the community
- Opening doors to the wider community in a way that stresses identity and solidarity, rather than judgement or coercion

However these obvious descriptions of explicit and implicit ways of working do little justice to the subtlety with which these churches work. So for example, the members of black-led churches that express a strong theology of visibility also recognise the need for a more implicit approach to complement their overall approach to civil society. One black-led church is planning to set up an umbrella organisation called GIFT which will combine four existing community-based organisations into one loose entity in order to attract greater pots of funding and combine existing resources more effectively. The projects include initiatives providing counselling, mentoring and support to vulnerable black young people and supporting victims of gun-crime. This intra-partnership is designed to connect with secular agencies more effectively than projects with an explicit Church-based identity, 'because people just think about the church in terms of maybe a negative experience they may have, or … for example, they see churches as hypocrites'. This is a form of *arms-length initiative* designed to present an implicit Christian identity for the sake of becoming more deeply involved in civil society initiatives.

Another example of implicit methodology from within an evangelical tradition comes from the independent charismatic church quoted earlier, specialising in youth, school and family-based interventions. A reference by the church leader to 'our evangelical heritage' is supported by explicit commitments to church growth, increased baptisms and a commitment to alternative lifestyles, especially in relation to issues of sexual morality. However, interweaving this belief structure is a willingness to have the boundaries of identity blurred. As they live longer in the area, so church members are learning more about the complexity of issues surrounding drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, poor education, long-term unemployment and chronic poverty. The issues of 'friendship' with the wider community, and becoming 'increasingly part of the community' are superseding traditionally understood roles and labels. '… we used

to do a lot of detached youth [work], well that kind of gets merged when you walk down the shop and bump into a bunch of kids that you know on the street corner and they ask you something … before you know it you spend half an hour talking and you've walked down the shop to buy a bottle of milk when you think, what was that? Was that life? Was that shopping? Was that detached youth work?' This 'blurring of the boundaries' is pithily summed up later by the comment, 'we are residents first, Christians second'.

Intriguingly, the implicit/explicit continuum also works the other way. Those church based groups working from openly implicit identity also find themselves challenged to be more explicit. Thus the network based organisation we met earlier, keen to disassociate itself from 'negative' church images, has after seven years been encouraged by its partners to more formally own its religious identity. This appears to have come about through partners now 'trusting' the organisation to work in an inclusive and participatory way. One of the project workers recalls, 'I think we have demonstrated over a number of years now that we do work in an inclusive way, and it's for that reason that people have said to us essentially … go ahead, celebrate your value base, make it clear you're a church-based organisation because … you're not doing it in an exclusive way'. Another adds, 'Yes, and the local people have said, well it's about time you actually came out and said it'. The net result of this process of realignment has been the production of a new publicity pack that reads 'Whilst Community Pride's inspiration springs from a desire to make real the values of the Christian Gospel, it has always welcomed people of any faith or no faith to play a full part in its activities and management.' (Community Pride Initiative leaflet, 2004)

These few case studies have shown some of the different ways church groups handle the issue of *explicit and/or implicit identity* as a response to the complexity of the urban contexts in which they work, and as a response to the expectations and possible prejudices of their many partners. For some the handling of this complexity is a tricky but ultimately creative task. For others, the tension between the two can be felt as an unwelcome but necessary fact of life. The question of integrity is always uppermost when one engages with other partners in issues of civil society. As one black-led church leader reflects 'Council people (i.e. local authority) are asking, what is the church doing? Sometimes when I hear that question, it is not the biblical agenda that I exist to fulfil, but rather to fulfil an agenda other people have for the church. And in our attempt to become relevant … we are moving out of this 'living the gospel' thing to doing things that people want *us* to do. Doing things in themselves is not a bad thing, but the reason why we are doing it I consider questionable.'

Conclusion

Three important features emerge from this study into the methods of engagement with local civil society and governance of the eight churches featured within our three research areas:

First, is the enormous range of organisations that these churches work in partnership with (see Appendix 4).

Secondly, in many cases, the churches are the initiating organisations.

Thirdly, this way of working is enormously complex and subtle. In many cases, the churches are choosing to work in ways that:

- Stress openness to working with partners from different perspectives
- Combine a number of different methodologies and approaches simultaneously
- Involve risk and experimentation
- Expand core identities but that are continuous rather than discontinuous with existing identities and values (in other words evolution not revolution)
- Can be highly reflexive but also strategic
- Involve meeting the challenge of learning new skills

The above methodologies tend to point to a way of working that is hybrid - made up of different components, along the lines suggested as a theoretical development at the end of Year One report. This hybridity is expressed in the ways in which methodology is 'both/and' rather than 'either/or' (for example working in ways that contain both explicit and implicit identities). Hybridity is also expressed in the way in which churches are prepared to adapt their methodologies to incorporate good practice from other disciplines and partners (for example, Eden Openshaw working with children and families at risk which are highly specialised areas of work, and the aromatherapy/reflexology work initiated by Mersey Street Baptist Church). This is derived from a belief (asserted several times by churches of all theological positions) that there is no one single methodology or pastoral strategy that is going to deal effectively with the problematic of poverty and marginalisation. What is required is a more pragmatic and locally agreed response.

Hybridity is also expressed in the growing ethnic and social diversity of many of the congregations and an openness to blurred ethnic and social identities. This is being reflected in the move from monochrome to hybrid identities, that in turn have evolved a more hybrid theology - i.e. the emphasis much more on tolerance, acceptance, practical problem solving for life issues and love rather than overt moralising, judgement and separation from the prevailing culture.

These examples of hybrid ways of working are seen as a response to rapidly changing urban and social processes affecting Manchester and to the wider cultural and political trends influencing debates about the nature of civil society, governance and ways of being community. As we have seen in Chapter 4 some of what will we call negative experience expressed by our interviewees and in the panels suggest that willingness and the ability to adapt to rapid change is by no means unanimous or uniform. But the general direction is towards the need to embrace change and to adopt more flexible, creative and open ways of working with an increasingly large variety of partners and within a growing number of networks.

There is also evidence to support the view that the type of hybrid engagement undertaken by the churches would fall mainly into the critical end of the spectrum identified within our Year One Report and based on the work of Jan Pieterse. There we outlined his 'continuum' of hybrid typologies. At one end was what he calls the *'assimilationist'* hybridity that leans out towards the centre, adopts the canon and

mimics the hegemony'(or dominant class/tradition). At the other end of the spectrum, there is the '*destabilising* hybridity that blurs the canon, reverse the current, subverts the centre'. (Pieterse, 1995: 56-7)

For example, we have discovered that within the methodologies employed by the churches there is by and large, an awareness of the 'colonising' tendencies of the regeneration dominant tradition, (see for example process descriptors 4, 5 and 6) which implies that the churches could fall more into the destabilising end of Pieterse's spectrum by subverting the hegemony. However, their response generally is neither assimilationist or destabilising, but critically friendly, in what is seen as a 'bridging' role between different sections of the wider community, engaging with those in power and acting as translators and bi-linguists.

Chapter 6 – Theology

Theme 1 - Hospitality

One theological theme that runs throughout many transcripts concerns hospitality. There is an evident openness and sense that this hospitality is extended to all. This relates to the theme of empathy and judgement which will be examined later. The theology presented by the interviewees is person-centred and inclusive - striving to offer relationship and welcome to the surrounding community.

The flow of motivation for this hospitality will now be outlined, substantiated by three case studies of this theologically grounded hospitality. The three motivations overlap at times, but come across clearly in the interviews as three separate reasons for offering hospitality.

Expressing God's love. Throughout many of the interviews, hospitality and welcome is expressed as a desire not only to show God's love through acts of kindness and support, but also to personally feel this love and relate it to the surrounding community. God's love is viewed as the source of all the church's work and response, and the internalisation of this love for one's neighbour is a repeated motif throughout the responses:

> '… it's about loving God with all your heart, mind and soul, and love your neighbour as yourself. So if you're going out and you first of all love God, and then you're loving your neighbour as yourself, then that's going to impact on the other … it's love in action. And that's basically it, because out of love everything else will come out of it ... because it's the God of love, unconditional love.'

> 'I mean basically God is love and, you know, he commissioned us to love one another and that is the way that the world will recognise him through us and through the love that we show. Love is action and love we show to the community will project God to them; the love and the practical care and services that we offer and provide voluntarily to the community makes the Church a very positive and relevant force in the community which is invaluable.'

> '… God loves every single one of them and it's such a big mixed area and everybody doing different things. It's the love of God that I think we have to put forward to them … preach that message if you can, and again a great love of neighbour because I mean those are the two things we're required to do as Christians, love God and love neighbour.'

Therefore, the hospitality extended by the churches is not related simply as the desire to show God's love practically, but moves beyond into having a personal love and compassion for others which is inspired by the love of God and expressed practically through welcoming people into church, and attempting to meet people's needs:

'… the church has to continue to be … reflective of the heart of God in terms of helping where the help is needed.'

This love which our church members profess for their communities is described as unconditional and inclusive, and such assertions are substantiated by narrative evidence. For example, the case study of St Luke's Wythenshawe and the Learn Direct project who experienced a series of burglaries and car-jacking incidents and yet responded with forgiveness, prayer and the continued endeavour to care for and meet the needs of those in the community around the church (see page 58).

Solidarity with the community. A further apparent motivation for the theme of hospitality running through our responses is a solidarity and relationship with the community based on the understanding that church members themselves are part of the community they wish to serve. There is a strong sense that we are all members of this community, along with our neighbours who may not attend church, and so all have a responsibility and desire to improve it. Interviewees refer to their family links, friendships, wider community awareness, and even informal networks built up at supermarkets, and this feeling of *belonging* in the neighbourhood leads to welcome and hospitality at church, and increased social action in the community.

'The church is part of the community. We make up the community, we are from the community, we know the community, we know the needs of the community, and also we have got, you know, skills and experience within our organisation.'

'One of the big links I find is a help from the Church point of view is I go to Asda in Hulme. And I meet in there a lot of people from church, and not only from St James's I meet them from the other churches, so I've sort of worked with them … it's a great community point really is Asda.'

For some churches, particularly the black-led ones, these community links fulfil much of the hospitality aspect of the Church. Leaders and congregation members see their active participation in the community and striving to improve it as a 'given' of Christian life. This day-to-day ministry is expected of all members in their home/work/public life, and thus complements the need for formally established voluntary initiatives:

'The church has to live out this gospel in its day to day existence in the community. I see us, the doing good bit, getting involved in things that would help to change the community, to make the community a better place. One, I am a member of that community and two, as a Christian I need to work out what this implies in my day to day living.'

'What we have tried to do is combine the two things - firstly the experience that we have gained from working in an organisation like this and getting to know the community and the needs of the community; but also because of what we feel compelled to do because of our relationship with God, then it's like setting up a link, a new model really basically …'

One church leader describes how strengthening and enabling the congregation has positive implications for the wider community as these church members take the benefits back into their localities:

> '… it's not just about what we can do for the community, but also recognising that all of the members of the congregation are members of this community, and the more that they feel empowered and validated by their membership of the church, the more they can take that home and live that everywhere else in this community and that's what it means to be salt or yeast or life … what I think I'm doing on a Sunday, is actually giving them a place to bring the brokenness that is so much part of this community, but also refreshing and renewing them and enabling them to take something of the might and glory of God out with them, and be able to share that with their neighbours.'

Duty/Vocation. A third reason for the church hospitality is a feeling of duty towards the community. The churches appear to have a sense of vocation, and believe that they have been 'called' to live and minister in the communities in which they are resident or attend church. This is expressed by a number of interviewees as a belief that no matter what circumstances the church faces - decline in congregation size, lack of funding, criminal targeting - there is a duty and obligation to remain in their communities:

> 'I keep saying we have got to stay there, because the Church is moving out in lots of inner city areas, and I think it's very very important we stay there and we serve the community … I really do feel we have got to be the Church and a Christian presence there.'

> '… we're concerned about the area. We're concerned about the people who live there. I mean we should have closed really, because we were so few of us at one time, but we were concerned about the welfare of the area ... it's a fact that you, as a Christian, have to serve the community you live in, no matter how rough that community is. You can't walk away from it.'

There appears to be a sense of weariness in this vocation - a silent acceptance of the struggles and hardship that accompany the fulfilment of their calling. However, there is also something energising about this obligation, something that enables the interviewees to maintain their endeavour to serve the community 'despite the cost'. The sense of fulfilling God's purposes evidently provides the motivation and inspiration to battle on, and thus receive the ultimate reward. These strands of vocation, duty, solidarity and love support the presence of earlier examples concerning Hopewell's typologies of romantic and tragic narrative. For some interviewees death is an inevitable part of the duty, whilst others foresee a victory before death is reached. However, both these stances envisage a future glory, or final reward, which will make the hardships all worthwhile. In addition to this idea of future reward, it is important to note that many interviewees appear to enjoy living out their vocation in the present. For them, the promise of the future is complemented by the challenge and excitement of the contemporary context:

> '[My church] is much more on the 'well, actually, no we don't all have to suffer now, you know, God doesn't actually want us to do that' ... the whole

point is about building the kingdom and that's what we're about doing, and that means here as well as there - when we all get to glory. We don't have to wait that long, there are things that we can do along the way.'

In one congregation, the sense of vocation leads them to leaving more comfortable surroundings and relocating to more difficult circumstances in a different area. The desire to become part of the local community and live out their calling within it is interpreted as a direct imitation of Christ, portrayed in very heroic terms:

'I was offered the job of being the team leader and accepted that through a fairly lengthy process of lots of soul searching … [we have got a] really strong social conscience … I don't think you can be a Christian and live in an area of social deprivation and not have a social conscience. [We talk about the] mission of God, if you like, doing his missionary bit by coming from heaven to earth is replicated by Christians who will continue to live out that purpose and emulate … compassion, putting himself into places of darkness.'

Case Studies of Hospitality

1. The Feast

The significance of the feast in our transcripts, is that it extends hospitality on a physical, emotional and spiritual level. The act of gathering to eat together and develop relationships is recounted several times as a way of inviting and welcoming the surrounding community into the church. One interviewee makes the theological significance clear:

'… we were feeding people at several levels. You know, we were feeding them in terms of spiritually and emotionally and intellectually.'

Eating together is also of key significance for another church, and is seen as both physically nourishing and emotionally strengthening. It provides comfort and companionship, key themes of hospitality for these interviewees:

'On Sunday we have the luncheon club but that's for people who have psychiatric illness, and once every month they come to meet and have a meal, they cook it themselves on the Church premises. And now we have got a club meeting … that's for the people who live alone or are lonely … it's therapy because they live on their own and the people will have, somebody will come down and talk to them about something to do with life in general.'

The idea of inviting and welcoming someone, and then sitting and sharing food is used as a way of talking about openness and inclusivity. In one context, the interviewee is discussing relationships with those from outside of the trusted community - referred to as the 'power structures'. The symbolism of eating together creates an image of building trust and links between the community and the 'structures':

'But also I think engaging with power structures - not being afraid to have lunch with a tax collector. You know what I mean? It's not exclusively with the poor, it's, there's a kind of bridging role I think within Christ's ministry ...'

The openness of sharing a meal together is a valuable idea. This level of hospitality and invitation allows for everyone's participation, the building of trust and the sharing of ideas and space.

2. The Hub - where people come together

A striking component of the hospitality apparent throughout the transcripts is its inclusive nature and outward-looking focus. Hospitality is not restricted to any particular group or demographic, but appears as a genuine desire to engage the wider community and enter into relationship through invitation and the extension of hospitality to them.

This characteristic of the churches' hospitality is demonstrated in part through the opening of their physical space to meet the needs of other groups and individuals (see Appendix 4). This overlap of space for church and secular usage fosters relationships and involvement:

> '[The Church] building is very heavily used because it's one of the only community buildings. And that actually give us a lot of connections with people … because we're working with them every day if they're in and out of our building. And that often leads to people becoming involved in things that they didn't even know was happening. But also it means that people think, feel about the church that it's a place where they can advertise what their community group is doing, and they know that, we will help them to host things if they want space, you know, to use for a particular event or whatever … but we do have good interfaith relations I think especially with the people who are using our building every day, because we have quite a lot of Muslims groups that use the building, and two that are permanent residents.'

> '... we also have the church hall which we let out to a large number of community groups - I mean basically so much of the space in church is being used that we're having to find a new room to meet as a PCC.'

3. The Dance

The importance of shared space is clear, creating 'bridging' opportunities with the wider community. It also symbolically and practically invites others into the church, space, to participate in the community. This suggests the building up trust and respect, as well as raising awareness of the church's presence. One example of hospitality that crosses denominational and faith differences is that of the classical Indian dance class. This has been established in the hall of a Roman Catholic school as the result of an offer from the new Keralan communities from Southern India (many of whom are Catholics and now attend the adjoining Roman Catholic church) who have arrived in Wythenshawe to work in the newly-expanded NHS trust. The dance class receives funding from secular sources, but its impact can be said to work on many different levels. The idea of class was partly prompted by a suggestion from the Catholic priest so that the new Keralan communities didn't 'ghettoise' themselves. The space also offers a chance for a diasporic community to express something of its cultural and ethnic heritage.

But what is particularly exciting is that this act of hospitality by the church for the benefit of a newly-arrived immigrant community also contains an element of reverse-flow hospitality. The immigrant community are themselves offering something to the host community - an opportunity to participate in a new and esoteric experience that brings music, dance, colour into a situation not always renowned for providing these things in the past. The priest recalls how this initiative has touched members of the host community not normally associated with such practices:

> 'One of the Indian groups managed to get some funding from the partnership and they've had an open classical Indian dance series of lessons … and about a third who participate are Caucasian. And a significant number are male - I can see a certain lad in my mind's eye - he's in year nine … and it's incredibly strict, it's two Indian ladies who are Hindu, there's absolutely no problem there, and it's lovely to hear them sharing their sense of spirituality …'

The image of the dance seems a particularly powerful image of hospitality that is deeply mutual at a symbolic, cultural and even spiritual level. Within its simple transaction, two communities offer hospitality to each other, and the chance to learn new experiences and understanding is taken by at least some of Benchill's citizens.

Theme 2 - Talents/Gifts and Tending the Garden

One key feature of the methodology of church engagement that has emerged during this research has a strong resonance with the parable of the talents (see for example, Mathew 25: 14 – 30) and the sayings of Jesus about the good tree bearing good fruit (e.g. Matthew 12: 33 – 37). The particular community where this resonance is most pronounced is the black-led church community, with its strong emphasis on tithing (i.e. giving at least a tenth of what you earn back to God via the church). The importance of tithing for these communities seems to be related to pride associated with 'good housekeeping' with respect to internal economic affairs, but also as a symbol of collective pride - i.e. that there is enough given by the members to support the running of the church as a self-sufficient entity, but also enough to give to others in need and to support the outreach of that church into the wider community.

One pastor of a black-led church describes the importance of tithing in the early days of his church, '… those people were faithful - it's tithing consistently … in those early days if you had a programme, something about £6,000 would be raised. The equivalent of that today? You tell me …' There is an explicit criticism from him of some of the younger members of his church, second and third generation Black-British Christians who are in his words, 'upwardly mobile people … thinking people, but who are not as committed as they were then'. However, the pastor also mentions some of the people the church currently supports from its tithing, including several students who need grant funding to complete their studies. In addition, the pastor describes how the church were able to create a paid cleaning post for an asylum seeking couple, which not only gave the family some income, but enhanced employment prospects and gave a purpose and structure to days spent waiting for a decision about future immigration status.

However, younger members of the church, even if they are perhaps not as committed in their giving and patterns of attendance at church as their forebears, do strongly perceive a moral duty to use their enhanced status in society as professional, and middle-high income earners, for the benefit of those at the lower end of the social ladder. The roll call of professions represented by these church-goers reflects a strong location within the caring public service professions; Housing Benefits Officer; Housing Association Manager; Probation Officer; Regeneration and Business Enterprise Advisor; as well as those working in the private sector as lawyers, solicitors and accountants. A key phrase used to describe this process by one interviewee is the activity of *'ploughing back'* into the community the skills and influence they have now acquired. The full context for her description runs like this:

> 'A couple of decades ago, our area was made up of a majority of semi-skilled blue collar workers who struggled to make ends meet. Those same families now have children who are white collar professional workers like solicitors, lawyers, local government officials … all of whom are able to volunteer their services and sort of *plough back* into the community in terms of advising members of the local church and wider community with regards to maximising any of the benefits entitlements, helping them to fill in forms, giving them legal advice, holding health and well being workshops, counselling and so on.'

In other words, there appears to be a strong concept of *tithing one's talents* as well as one's money which is a rich theological contribution to understanding the motivation and contribution of church-based civil society from this sector of the community. It reflects the importance of seeing one's life as an offering to God and therefore being a blessing to others, both within, but also (crucially) outside of, one's kinship or ethnic boundaries. There is perhaps, as in the parable of the talents (gold coins), still a strong residual sense from these younger black Christians, that they will be held accountable by God at the end of their life for the way they have used the gifts and resources that they have been given. There is a strong emphasis on the creation of sustainability in the sense that these local people who have acquired skills, competence and economic power are redistributing those resources into the local community rather than taking them elsewhere.

There are perhaps implied overtones of another key biblical parable and motif - that of the Parable of the Sower. By 'ploughing back' into the community skills, help, advice and empowerment, is there a possibility that these seeds of potential and hope will bear fruit in the lives of those to come? Some seeds will undoubtedly fall on barren soil or get eaten by the birds (e.g. the lure to become part of the destructive gang culture). But there would also be a hope and expectation that some seed will fall on rich soil and bear fruit, 'some a hundred grains, some sixty, others thirty'. (Matt 13: 8)

This image of the local community being ploughed as a field is nicely complemented by a closing image from a member of an Anglican church also based in Moss Side. Her definition of the role and method of regeneration is not to see it as a one-off injection of massive resources into the area in the hope that something will eventually emerge. Her understanding, based on her church's presence in the community for over 100 years, is that the community is like a *garden* which needs careful and patient nurturing all year round if it is to flourish. 'It's keeping it (the community) going all

the time and putting new life into it, nourishing it, like you do with a garden, you've got to keep it going, got to keep it fed, got to keep it watered and I think with any community you have to do that to keep it going.'

Theme 3 - Micro-Macro Change

This theological theme refers to the way in which small changes are interpreted by the interviewees as being of far greater significance than meets the eye. It concerns the extent to which physical changes impact on the spiritual and emotional, and the way in which God is recognised through the physical, regenerative changes.

One observation when examining this area is the feeling of *hope* amongst the interviewees that the physical changes are improving the emotional state of local residents. Almost all interviewees also note that the physical changes are not sufficient, and that more person-centred change is required in order for the regeneration to be sustainable. They agree that spiritual regeneration is the only effective option to bring 'life to the full' to the communities. However, most do acknowledge that the physical differences are helping to an extent:

> 'Well living has gotten better. I was … driving through Alexandra Park a week ago and I was saying wow, it looks like human beings are living here at last, you know. You have homes with lawns, gardens - it's a totally different world to the 60's.'

> 'Yeah, definitely the community's being regenerated … I think the people are different, I think they're just, they're happier. There's just a difference. That's all I can say really - they can see the difference that's going on, they talk about it, and I think they seem happier to see all this going on … I think we can see Wythenshawe now is an up and coming place …'

However, there is criticism of the apparent over-reliance of regeneration industry professionals in only focussing on the physical. Interviewees speak in *micro terms* about the affect of people's personal lives on physical regeneration:

> '… I know people have different backgrounds, it's the way you're brought up - how you were treated as a child can affect the rest of your life. So obviously if you were abused or something like that you wouldn't necessarily see the garden or the house being kept nice as your main priority, probably surviving day to day probably would be.'

> '… allowing so many pound shops or cheaper shops has made an impact, and it's more or less saying to the people of Wythenshawe that's all you're worth … are they then saying to the people of Wythenshawe, that's all you can cope with, that's all you've got ... and unless you did something, unless they do something about that, I think it's a stigma …'

Many interviewees also relate how they perceive God to be at work through the regenerative processes. In some cases this relates to the regeneration of the church and new members joining the congregation:

'I always think he [God] is working with people … my daughter's mother in law came for the first time a couple of weeks ago. I don't think she's ever set foot in a church in her life, and why she came I don't know. She just said I'm not religious but I just thought I'd come. And she's been back. And she came again on Sunday … we're obviously doing something right. God's obviously working in her to make her want to come back. I mean he's sort of, he's obviously working in people; working in us as well as working in these newcomers for them to come and stay.'

One church member sees God working in small ways to bring about larger changes through 'stirring' individuals to respond to the need they see. This image of God makes people and their needs a priority, and perceives God as being concerned enough with the small details of people's lives to work to change them:

'I think it's a case of, I think God's been stirring us, you know, individually and collectively, you know, they'll look around the community and these are the needs, and that we need to do something about it. We can no longer just stay within the four walls of the church.'

Another sees God working through human beings, and thus regeneration and church work done by individuals is affected by the will of God:

'… last night my daughter rang me and we ended up talking about God and the church and how things that happened to her didn't just happen just like that, it must be God who is working through her …. during that discussion I said to her don't forget that there's a Guardian Angel, according to the Psalm 90 … there is a spirit of God within each and every human being… each of us have a spirit of God keeping us ... whatever I do I like it to be known that I do something for God.'

These themes of micro-macro change portray an image of God who is concerned with the little details, as well as the bigger picture. The interviewees hold a person-centred view of God, in which the individual is of great significance and the ability of the individual to positively influence the wider community is enabled by their experience of God in the details. The image of the 'guardian angel' is a significant one, clearly showing the value of the individual within the bigger picture of local change and regeneration. The physical, tangible changes brought by regeneration are significant and contribute to well-being and happiness, but there is also an acknowledgement that only a deeper level of change will allow for real, sustainable 'regeneration' of a locality.

Theme 4 - Prophetic theology

The role of prophetic theology in this context is to raise a voice of critique and reflection. This sub-section brings together the various strands of language and methodology that have emerged during this volume raising concerns and critiques of the ways in which power is exercised within civil society and regeneration processes and the values that are often expressed as standard or normative. The nature of the critique offered by the church communities in our research has been concerned with:

- The processes of colonialisation of local communities explicit in regeneration rhetoric and methodology

- The holding to account the powerful in relation to promises and ways of working made at the start of regeneration processes

- A lack of true inclusive participation in the way host communities are treated by those from outside

- Offering a considered critique of how globalised forces impact on local spaces and communities and how they can perpetuate or exacerbate dynamics of poverty and exclusion

- The potential for collusion of identity and values when 'walking' the road of regeneration

- Holding in tension the desirability of physical regeneration on the macro level with the need to consider the importance of micro-change, i.e. the spiritual regeneration of communities and individuals as part of the process of regeneration

- A critique of the way religious language can be appropriated by the regeneration industry for its own ends

- A radical self-critique of church-based assumptions and methodologies that can easily be taken for granted and potentially exclude others as powerfully as those of partners

The theological image that perhaps emerges most powerfully from this section is that of the chosen road or path. The springboard for this reflection is the short phrase already analysed in Chapter 5 '… lest we go down a road that has been made for us, appeared like a collusion or a compromise'. Within the visions of the prophet Isaiah, there is the central motif of the road or way of the Lord being made in the desert, an image of bringing life to barren places and a road of salvation along which the currently exiled people of Israel will walk to reclaim their city and freedom (Isaiah 40: 1 – 5). The new society envisaged by Isaiah will be based on obedience to the word of God - no worshipping of false idols and a commitment to a society based on justice rather than oppression and crime (Isaiah 61: 8). There is perhaps an implicit link to the concept of Isaiah's divine road of justice and new life carried within our quote - that the engagement of church-based communities in wider society could have these elements of social change and transformation linked to them.

A use of the road or path image from the New Testament that also resonates with this phrase is the saying of Jesus referring to the narrow path that leads to salvation (e.g. Matthew 7: 8). While the quotation from our interviewee does not necessarily imply connotations of judgement or salvation, it does however reflect the idea carried in this verse from Matthew that the road of integrity is the harder (i.e. narrower) road to choose. The invitation to collude with another's agenda, especially within the context of access to money and influence within the regeneration industry (based as they are on the principles of bidding and competition) is reflected perhaps in the biblical temptation to walk the wide path of ease, comfort and status. This path however, does

not lead to true happiness, satisfaction or transformation. Related to the image of the road is that of the 'martyr' - the one who bears public witness to the coming of the way of the Lord and who pays the ultimate price of their lives for their proclamation of God's truth and justice, often against the workings of the state or government. The word 'martyr' occurs in a humorous exchange with workers from the community empowerment network who are aware within themselves of a tendency to overwork and become 'martyrs' to the cause of community empowerment. The team leader says to one of his colleagues 'The word that's been used of both if us, is 'martyr' which is … driven, but to be a martyr is about a *witness*, you know, if you go back to the origins of the word'.

The word *witness* is an important aspect of being a martyr, witnessing in public spaces, to the ways in which the world and human standards of love and justice often pervert and distort God's standards of love and justice. The clear implication of this use of the word, in the context of the work being undertaken by this group, is that they see their role as bringing into the public domain the sometimes hidden workings of local authority, business and central government and where necessary, challenging any behaviours or policies that deny the possibility of ordinary people living life to the full. In fact, one of the workers expressed the mission of their organisation in words of Jesus lifted straight from the Gospel, 'I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10: 10)

Theme 5 - Empathy and Judgement

Despite some expectation that the churches may convey judgement or disapproval towards the wider community, examination of the transcripts uncovered almost no evidence of this. On the contrary, empathy and compassion are expressed, and judgement explicitly rejected on a number of occasions. Sadness is expressed at certain aspects of the wider communities' activity, but this is understood to be restricted to a few individuals and the impact of this behaviour on other residents is the primary concern. In many cases, the destructive or criminal behaviour of some community members is acknowledged briefly by an interviewee, but no judgement at all is expressed:

> 'The odd gun goes off, but it's mainly between the young West Indians from Longsight vying with a group in Moss Side. Unfortunately sometimes people can be in between. One of our congregation was living at Great Western Street. Luckily she wasn't in her front room … she was in the rear, and somebody - one fired at another, it misses who they were firing at and goes through her window, you know.'

> 'We have problems in Moss Side as you know and the police is trying to deal with that the very best they can.'

> 'Now, increasingly we're just seeing it [drug abuse] on every corner. And the more addicts you know, the more you find out where the dealers are. And I would say that it wouldn't be an overstatement to say that drug abuse is rife in the community, far beyond probably where most people realise it is. Just by the nature of living here you sort of see things, and you begin to recognise signs which means you notice other things.'

Instead of judgment, empathy and compassion are frequently expressed towards members of the community. There is a tangible sense of sadness on behalf of those particularly perceived to be struggling around them, but a desire to help rather then a decision to judge is portrayed in such incidences:

> 'There's a family that lives very close to me here … there's a twelve going on thirteen year old, and I'll swear he's bringing up his younger brothers and sisters. I mean it struck me, I think it was one of the, just before the Sports Aid thing was on, and there was a whole series of things like Africa and Latin America, and I was like oh this is horrible, this is horrible. And then I saw him walking down the road, being the parent. I thought, this is horrible. But he's trying his best.'

> 'I think when you first come into an area you see certain surface issues, the more you get to know people and discover, you realise the depth and the complexity of the issues behind … someone who is a heroin user or is an alcoholic and has children or, you know, children that are being neglected, children who in my sort of previous life, if you like, would have been considered severely at risk who just aren't near enough the top of the social services priority list to even be bothered with really … which means, you know, people like us need to be almost more active in trying to help some of those families get themselves in a place where they can manage life better.'

A further aspect to the theme of judgment emerging from the transcripts was the assertion that whilst the churches are not appearing to judge the community, regeneration professionals are perceived as judging the church as well as the wider community. One interviewee spoke of the regeneration industry having a 'missionary'-style approach of arriving in a new area and being able to tell the existing residents and organisations how to improve themselves and their lives. There was a tangible sense of frustration at this attitude of judgement. One regeneration leader in particular (in the following excerpt renamed 'Mr X') is described as being revered and respected like a missionary, and the interviewee uses the language of colonialism to describe the feeling that regeneration professionals are coming to tell a community how to improve. Again, there appears to be no judgment of the community for their reverence of Mr X, but there is a suggestion of underlying frustration and sadness at the situation:

> '[my colleague] describes it as a colonial process, and I think that he deliberately implies within that a kind of missionary dimension … I mean there's no question to look at - well I don't mean this nastily, personally, but look at Mr X at the New Deal for Communities ... as a missionary kind of figure, you know, in all kinds of terms. The man that has come to save East Manchester, and the way the residents relate to him is like a priest in some respects, they defer to his wisdom. And he comes and presides at meetings, there's loads of imagery like that.'

The reason given in every incidence for the attitude of non-judgement expressed to the community concerns the emulation of the response of Christ. However, the predominant basis for empathy is that 'Christ did not judge, and so neither shall we':

> '… this church aims to reflect that Jesus receives everyone - regardless of what they've done, regardless of where they are, and that the church is an open door that whenever they come they should feel received and accepted, that this is their home, they belong here and whenever they're in need as a family we'd like to extend an open door, that when they come in they feel comfortable. Which is to say not to be judged, not to be qualified, but just come.'

> 'What you've got to do is open the church doors to everybody, yeah, and you must not be judgemental. What you're there is to - the doors are open, you can come in, yes, see what it's like.'

Non-judgement based on solidarity with the community also relates to the idea of grace. One interviewee explains how as a forgiven sinner, one cannot judge others. Instead, there is a desire to extend this grace, and thus show empathy, with the wider community:

> '… it's the God of love … unconditional love … and then, and by having that approach then there's more room for grace as well. Because it's all about the grace of God, and because the fact that I'm in church doesn't make me any different, it's just that I'm a forgiven sinner. And it's only through the grace of God. So through love you're also expressing the grace.'

One interview contains an interesting response to the area of judgment. 'Religion' appears to be understood negatively, incorporating judgement and structures, and there is the assertion that God is not interested in this. Instead, the interviewee believes that an empathetic, loving and non-judgemental attitude towards others is of most significance to God. Paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 13, they describe how this attitude, incorporating faith, hope and love, leads to a 'brazen' love:

> '[God's] not interested in religion. We're interested in religion. But God isn't interested in religion at all, he's interested in people. And he's interested in what people do … but basically I think it is the fact that God is concerned about faith, hope, trust, love, and how we treat our fellow human beings are in the teachings of Christ, that's what it's about. It is not to do with religion and nit picking or how we should have communion and how we shouldn't. Because God's not interested in this kind of thing … he's interested [in] what are you doing about certain things, we're his eyes, his ears, his hands. God's love was brazen when it came to the Good Samaritan, now our love has to be brazen.'

The idea of brazen love for the community is striking, and presents perhaps the most powerful example of 'empathic' language. It implies a bold, shameless, blatant, unabashed, barefaced love, which continues to love and serve despite the cost. This one word 'brazen' perhaps best sums up the attitude and response of the interviewees and the churches they represent. Their love is brazen and unashamed, regardless of disappointments and frustrations. The refusal to, as they perceive it, abandon the areas they feel called to, even when those areas begin to be demolished around them demonstrates a brazen belief in the vocation they believe themselves to have. Their love is brazen, but is based on the faith and hope they place in God and the desire to convey this to their communities.

Theme 6 - Powerlessness as power

The key theological texts in relation to this concept are perhaps expressed most powerfully in the hymn to Jesus' divinity (Philippians 2: 6 – 11) and in the saying of the fallen seed (John: 12: 24).

In the first passage, we read that although Jesus had 'the nature of God' he did not 'cling to equality with God' but chose of his 'own free-will' to 'empty himself' and take the identity of a 'servant'. The key phrase in this passage is *emptying oneself*, which in Greek is covered by the word *kenosis*. This concept is central to Christian ideas of sacrifice, vocation and discipleship (explored in Chapter 2) whereby one is stripped or emptied of the need for status and power and enters willingly into a life of practical service and devotion, becoming a 'servant' for others in close parallel to the perceived method of Jesus' own ministry. Thus the idea of *self-kenosis*, the willed giving up of power, is central to Christian identity.

The theological paradox contained in this apparent powerlessness is reinforced by the well-known verse from St John's Gospel about the fallen grain of wheat. 'I am telling you the truth; a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, it produces many grains.' It suggests that true power and new life can only be harnessed and produced if there is a constant attentiveness to the need to give up power and to metaphorically die. Thus it is that church-based engagement with civil society is, as we have seen, often wrestling with this paradox (which lies at the heart of all faiths, not just the Christian one). The paradox, on one hand, is to be engaged in multiple ways and at multiple levels with regeneration and the power structures that shape emerging forms of civil society, *while at the same time* attending to a radical form of self-critique which acknowledges the need from time to time to give up some forms of power and 'die' in order to be reborn into new identities and understandings which provide an ongoing effective engagement. We have seen at least three powerful examples of self-kenosis in our research:

- The white-led Anglican church that in five years time will seek consciously to move to black leadership to reflect the fact that over 75% of the congregation is Black; '… the white members are much less in number will be handing over because we're training these others.'

- The community empowerment network that understands the need to hand over pieces of work as soon as it is possible to the local community; '… as a team we're very self-critical, we're always saying oh we are clinging onto everything and not giving it away and not making it sustainable in its own right … but actually it surprises me how much of our work we have handed over … and I would say we need to carry on that approach.'

- The small Baptist church that is facing the inevitability of its own demise but hosting self-run groups while its building is still open and hopes to be reborn as an open 'faith space' at the centre of a community health centre. Either way, it is recognised that the church is not even necessarily a building, but a tabernacle, a meeting place for the new people who will be coming to live in their community, a mobile space that is always uprooted and re-pegged, and

never allowed to become too rooted. 'Well the tabernacle's a tent - it will go with us and I hope the community will.'

The placing of this theological chapter at the end of those looking at language, values and method is deliberate. This is because, according to the principles of theological reflection (see for example, Gibellini, 1987, Schrieter 1985, Holland and Henriot, 1983, Green 1990) the theological hermeneutic (or interpretation) emerges from the narratives that have sought to express the experience (in this case) of being part of communities being regenerated in Manchester. The theology has also emerged from the experience of negotiating one's way as church-based communities, through complex partnerships with other sectors of civil society and expressing oneself with integrity via language and values. Because theology emerges out of a process of reflection between experience and faith, it represents the kernel of what is distinctive about the religious capital that churches and other faith communities offer, even though it may be the part that is least-easily understood by other sectors of civil society.

This chapter has sought to synthesise the some of the many theological constructions offered by our interviewees into 6 clusters which express different facets of the churches' understandings, values and motivations when it comes to engagement in regeneration and civil society. They rehearse many themes and ideas that have been expressed in the previous chapters.

Thus the theme of *hospitality* for example, lies at the heart of the identity of the churches and their motivation for getting involved in the regeneration of their communities. As we have seen from the image of the Feast, this urge to hospitality belongs to a Biblical imperative located in both the Old and New Testaments - the feast described by the prophet Isaiah is also the feast of the Eucharist or Holy Communion that is linked directly to Jesus' own ministry of hospitality. It has close links with the vulnerable hospitality observed in the Baptist 'therapeutic' community and the connotations of openness to learning from the experience of others as we saw in the Learn Direct project.

The theme of hospitality links closely with the ideas of *empathy*, not judgement, which we have observed as a powerful theological shift in all churches, including those from the evangelical tradition, and the importance of offering one's talents for the benefit of the wider community in a act of unconditional love and exchange. The image of the garden, where all things are nurtured and tended in order to create an equal and balanced ecology speaks of the need for careful listening to and respect of the voices and experiences of all those living in a neighbourhood. It links with the concern to promote connectivity (expressed in Chapter 2) between individuals and groups so that all are valued and listened to, even those offering differing perspectives and coming from different sectors of civil society.

Meanwhile the connection between prophetic theology and *powerlessness as power* is created by the common theme of transformation or *metanoia*. The prophetic critique that emerges from the churches relating to the processes of colonialisation of existing communities by some aspects of the regeneration process (for example) links powerfully to the theme of *empowerment* which emerged in Chapter 2. To be alerted to the external factors shaping your situation is a contribution to the empowerment of

those traditionally excluded from processes of change, and this creates a fuller participation and experience of life.

However, radical transformation within the Christian tradition only comes, paradoxically, when one is aware of the need to die to self and be reborn. This not only reduces the potential of complicity and collusion with what Marxist analysis would call the prevailing 'hegemony' (see Chapter 5), but constant self-critique and willingness to evolve leads to potentially richer and more creative engagement with processes of rapid urban and social change. Only then can true regeneration in the fullest sense of the word be said to potentially occur, and it is a lesson that some churches themselves find hard to learn.

As we saw in Chapter 2, there is a perception that dying churches are using regeneration processes to 'prop up' outmoded and institutionally top-heavy methods and identities. Yet the recognition of the role of *powerlessness as power* is possibly the most distinctive insight that religious capital has to offer to the wider civil society and regeneration debate, and those church-based projects that have applied the most self-critical analysis towards the need to 'die' to old patterns of behaviour and explore new ones, are arguably the most effective in engaging with other regeneration partners on the basis of integrity and respect.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

Three distinctive contributions are offered by this report, and can be summarised as follows:

1) This report examines in close detail some of the extraordinarily wide range of contributions that the eight diverse churches in three small neighbourhoods of Manchester make towards regeneration and civil society. We have also explored some of the values and motivations that lie behind these contributions.

The churches interviewed have all been engaged in highly creative and innovative regeneration and social capital enterprises, both as initiators of projects (e.g. Street Pastors Schemes, Community Empowerment Network) and partners with a wide variety of both faith-based and secular partners (e.g. Moss Care Housing, Learn Direct, SureStart etc). As we have seen from our literature survey, assessments of the economic impact of this regeneration and civil society work are beginning to reveal the very high levels of contribution made by faith-groups to wider society. A recent economic impact survey for the Northwest Development Agency assesses the contribution of volunteer hours conducted by faith communities in the North-West to be worth around 94 million pounds to the regional economy. (NWDA, 2005) Religious capital really is *capital* in the traditional economic understanding of the word (i.e. the income it generates).

2) A second contribution of this report has been to examine these diverse contributions to see whether or not they represent a further understanding as to what might be meant by religious capital and regeneration.

3) The third contribution has been to explore the issues of language in regeneration and civil society - in particular the way in which regeneration language and civil society discourse appears to disempower some, if not all, of those who use it. We have also examined the way in which the current language of regeneration appears to inhibit people from expressing 'real' and more meaningful language that manages to connect with people from different sectors. Such is the disempowerment of this language that former Home Secretary David Blunkett has called for a 'new jargon of democracy'.

The main conclusions drawn from these three areas of specific interest in this report are summarised below:

Religious capital – beyond a functionalist understanding.

As we have seen from our literature survey in Appendix Two, traditional definitions of social capital talk about the need to develop 'social relations' 'groups' and networks based on 'trust and reciprocity'. These can be both 'formal and informal' but their main purpose is to create environments of 'trust, mutual reciprocity and civic engagement'. These conditions also 'help communities and organisations work more effectively'. The above definitions tend to reinforce a 'functionalist and conservative' (Furby and Macey, 2005) understanding of community and social cohesion which lies at the heart of government rhetoric and which assumes that the role and identity

of faith communities is to provide almost unlimited supplies of voluntary and capacity-building social capital.

When you attempt to combine (as we are suggesting) the language, values, methodology and theology of a cluster of faith communities you find that existing understandings of social capital such as those above are 'thickened' in a variety of ways. *Religious capital is:*

1) As committed to changing personal values and the circumstances of personal fulfilment as it is to providing material improvement. It explicitly holds together the need for 'regeneration' to occur at both the micro (individual) and macro (community/neighbourhood/city) level

2) In the light of the above, committed to laying considerable emphasis on the importance of personal narrative, especially in relation to how personal 'regeneration' occurs (i.e. redemption or new life in the midst of experiences of suffering or despair)

3) Concerned to create due process at the deepest level which would possibly include the dimensions of saying sorry (repentance) and forgiveness

4) Concerned to create proper processes of engagement that allow those directly affected by regeneration to have a say in the decisions that are taken concerning their personal circumstances rather than a 'tick-box' approach

5) Committed to the explicit or implicit belief that a divine agency is also at work within the processes of regeneration and the building of civil society

6) Prepared to challenge and critique prevailing norms and assumptions and is more interested in a critical consensus rather than an uncritical one. This can include both economic and theoretical analyses as well as political and cultural ones (e.g. the colonialisation critique)

7) Prepared, as part of the attention to proper process, to accept the validity of conflicting emotions being expressed within regeneration and civil society forums: for example, anger, frustration, cynicism and often a profound sense of weariness and fragility (see Chapter 3). In traditional theological language, this could be called the importance of recognising the importance of suffering.

8) As part of its religious core value of self-emptying (self-kenosis), appears willing to push the boundaries of traditional understandings of social capital. Concepts of 'bridging' and 'linking' social capital do insufficient justice to the values of forgiveness, transformation, risk-taking and openness to learning we have recorded in this research. We have noted Morisy's category of 'brave' social capital (see Chapter 5) which picks up on the risky and often vulnerable forms of social capital that we have observed (e.g. the therapeutic model). However, there are, as we have seen, confident, assertive, critique-based and empowerment dimensions to the contribution of churches to regeneration debates. Would a term such a *'transforming' social capital* or *'empowering' social capital* be an appropriate addition to the civil society/regeneration

canon? If one adds 'empowering/transforming' social capital to Morisy's concept of 'brave', then perhaps one is moving towards a distinctive contribution that can be termed 'religious capital'.

Obstacles to religious capital

However, this research has identified serious obstacles to communicating faith-based understandings and values to other sectors of civil society. These barriers tend to focus on issues of language. Some of the dimensions of this problem can be summarised as follows:

- Church communities feel that their language and values have been hijacked by the wider regeneration community and that their previous contributions to civil society have been ignored until the present

- This 'blurring of the edges' prompted by central government's recent 'conversion' to value-added criteria for social cohesion and civil society (see Furby and Macey, 2005: 108) appears to have diminished the distinctiveness of the churches' traditional understanding of their role as provider of community cohesion. Cynicism and frustration at this is compounded (from the churches' perspective) by the feeling that these values are not taken seriously, they are being used indiscriminately to secure funding and are now subject to the 'tick-box' approach. However, evidence from Chapter 3 shows that churches also 'collude' with this 'blurring' use of language.

- Some church communities express ongoing hostility and suspicion from certain sources. Manchester City Council is particularly mentioned as still harbouring elements of suspicion and hostility towards faith communities (including Christianity) which is based on a 'liberal secular' ethos. Mistrust of churches also appears to emanate from a general disliking for New Labour's emphasis on participative forms of democracy which undermines traditional representative forms (i.e. elected councillors - see for example Research Summary 7 of New Deal for Communities Programme evaluation, 2002/3, p. 13-14) who feel that community/voluntary organisations such as churches and mosques do not have the necessary skills or rights to take important decisions affecting the running of local communities.

- Regeneration language feels an imposed vocabulary which has not been subject to the usual processes of linguistic evolution. Neither does its 'functionalist' emphasis (i.e. presentation of social policy in simplistic, aspirational language) do justice to the complexity of local life or express how people on all sides of the regeneration debate really feel about their motivation and experience of partnership, consultation etc.

- Our use of Hopewell's analysis of congregational language has revealed a preference for the heroic and tragic narratives which not only place the individual within a larger tapestry ultimately controlled by a higher force (namely God), but see a strongly redemptive element to the experience of suffering . The ironic and comic narratives which stress the power of human agency are almost totally absent (see Chapter 2). If the prevailing secular ethos

within civil society and regeneration debates is oriented towards those narratives which stress human rather than divine agency, and which subsequently ignore the affective dimensions of suffering, then the potential mismatch in rhetoric is great.

- Our research also identified the different gender-based emotional responses to the experience to some of struggle and difficulty identified by our church members in relation to community regeneration and local life. While men and women both act with the 'same outward dynamism and energy', men appeared to be conditioned to demonstrate a more obvious 'up and at 'em style' and appeared to become 'energised and impassioned in battle'. Women, on the other hand, 'appeared to become weary, resigned and scarred' possibly out of a fear of being perceived as 'aggressive or pushy'. This dimension of language and debate within churches would therefore appear to be a further disempowering factor for women engaged in faith-based regeneration.

Our conclusion is that the overlapping consensus between churches and other regeneration partners is likely to revolve around the expression of a few common values: namely treating your neighbour as you would like to be treated yourself, believing that hope can triumph over pessimism, and on that basis, believing that things can change (or be transformed for the better). There would be a general consensus as well over other abstract values such as the importance of justice, well-being and equality. The hope that there might be a distinctive language that churches could bring to the regeneration debate has proved, on the evidence of this research, to be elusive.

However, this research has also identified three key themes that express some possible points of connection between religious-based capital and wider civil society.

Hybridity

As we have seen in conclusion to Chapter 4, several churches in our research showed an impressive creativity and flexibility when it came to engaging with an extraordinarily wide set of partners. This creativity and flexibility emerged from a conscious desire to move from rigid definitions of identity and expression of Gospel values to embrace a more open-ended approach that allowed the church and its resources to better *connect* with a variety of civil society partners. It also better connects with new cultural and ethnic trends that are pushing towards the creation of much greater expressions of diversity and hybridity (see, for example, the experience of second and third generation black Christians).

However, the move towards embracing a greater willingness to work in more hybrid ways has not diminished the churches' reflections on the importance of identity and core values. For some, the move towards hybridity raises sharp questions about identity and compromise, but even these churches show a sophisticated understanding of how to use both explicit and implicit forms of identity to further their practical contributions to regeneration without feeling they are compromising their essential identity (see Chapter 4).

Translation and bi-linguality

Much has been said about the need for translation and bi-linguality. This is desired in order that the values that underpin faith-based and non-faith-based understandings of civil society and regeneration can be shared more effectively. It also refers to the task that churches see they have of translating the real needs and aspirations of their communities to those in positions of authority and power. This recurring theme of the need for translation and bi-linguality supports the analysis presented earlier in this report which suggests that gaps of understanding and knowledge between faith and non-faith-based sectors are wide and levels of real communication poor. Instances within our research where real sharing of values and principles have been able to occur have been few and far-between, and there is very little idea at the moment of how more opportunities for sharing can occur that feel natural and comfortable for all parties concerned. However, the need to improve what Farnell et al. (2003) call 'religious literacy', particularly at the level of real sharing, rather than through the repeated production of policy guidelines, needs to occur. The churches' willingness and commitment to see this as one of their core contributions to civil society will hopefully bear fruit at a later date.

Openness to a theology based on learning

Within all the church members we have interviewed there has been a commitment to being open to new learning, even if only to a limited degree. This has allowed for a deepening of Christian identity while also expressing an increasing commitment to inclusivity, diversity and openness. What has been expressed most clearly is a commitment to *engage* rather than disengage and to *trust* that what is being undertaken in this engagement is of the Gospel. The rhetoric and methodology of all the churches interviewed also suggest to varying degrees, a shift in theology that can be characterised as a shift from *inwardness* to *outward looking* that is committed to engaging with diversity and plurality. The primary colours of this theology are:

- Acceptance of diversity and extension of hospitality to those beyond one's natural constituency
- An awareness of the limitations of the resources of one's own tradition and the need to work strategically with others
- A willingness to learn from the Other, to see the Other as a source of improved understanding
- A willingness to culturally adapt the presentation of the core message of the Gospel to better fit changing local conditions

We believe that this report reflects some the richness and diversity of church-based engagement with the regeneration of local communities. In addition, we believe that this report contributes further understanding and reflection on key ideas concerning the role and identity of religious capital within post-modern urban communities and local governance.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Acknowledgements

The William Temple Foundation gratefully acknowledges the hospitality offered to this research by the leaders and members of the following church congregations:

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Eden, Openshaw
Brownley Green Baptist Church, Wythenshawe
St John Fisher and St Thomas More Church, Benchill
St Luke's Vicarage, Brownley Road, Wythenshawe
St James with St Clement, Moss Side
Church of God of Prophecy, Moss Side

It is especially grateful for the time and trouble taken by the following individuals who participated in our research panels and semi-structured interviews and to the organisations they work for who gave permission for time to be taken in this way:

Appendix 2 – Literature Search

The academic and policy-based literature looking at the contribution of faith communities to civil society and regeneration has been on an upward curve since 2001 (possibly accelerated as a result of serious civil disturbance in some Northern cities in the summer of that year based on ethnic and religious identities - see Baker, 2005: 4).

The *Cantle Report* into the aftermath of the Bradford riots (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001) of that year alerted the wider public to the role of faith as a source of social division and polarisation in its function as carrier of pure religious and cultural identities for diasporic Muslim communities who emigrated to the city in the late 60s and who were facing high levels of poverty and exclusion. It concluded that it was perfectly possible for different communities to live side by side in the city but never meet or interact with each other on a daily basis, thus contributing to ongoing mistrust and fear.

Up to that point early literature on faith communities had been upbeat and positive about the role of faith communities as sources of social capital for the wider community, based on the longevity of their presence in local communities, their intimate knowledge of those communities and their ability often to connect with those most excluded from the margins of society - what the government called the 'hard to reach groups'. *Faiths, Hope and Regeneration* (Church Urban Fund and New Economics Foundation, 2001) would be a typical example of this type of literature, and it was followed in the post Cantle period by a raft of research reports and policy documents essentially following a similarly optimistic approach. Documents of this type would include, *Building on Faith - Faith buildings in Neighbourhood Renewal* (Church Urban Fund, 2002), *Neighbourhood Renewal in London - the role of faith communities* (London Group for Social Action and Greater London Enterprise, 2002), *Faith in Community* (Local Government Association, 2002) and *Faith in England's Northwest - the contribution made by faith communities to civil society* (NWDA, 2003).

However, a tone of realism begins to emerge from 2003 onwards pointing out the highly ambivalent nature of faith-based contribution to civil society. This is based on high levels of mistrust and suspicion between secular and faith-based partners based on misunderstanding and a lack of 'religious literacy' ('Faith' in Urban Regeneration? Farnell et al., Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2003); and the ability of religion to function as a force for social polarisation as well as cohesion. Other strands of criticism also emerged regarding the government rhetoric on what faith communities are and how they should 'fit in' with initiatives of social cohesion and good citizenship. One strand criticised the rhetoric for applying too simple an analysis of faith communities which missed the complexity and spectrum of approach within all faith traditions (see Smith, 2003, Baker, 2005, Furby and Macey, 2005). Another criticised government for adopting an uncritical view of the notion of 'community' which places undue emphasis on the 'warmly persuasive' connotation of the word to the create the correlation between close proximity and social cohesion and political consensus (Furby and Macey, 2005). In short, the main critique of government and

local authority rhetoric on both 'religion' and 'community' is that it adopts a narrowly 'conservative' and 'functionalist' approach (Furby and Macey, 2005) which fails to do proper justice to the ambiguous complexity of either. Meanwhile a recent Manchester-based report exploring the impact of religious-based social capital (see Graham and Baker, 2005) questions some of the cause and effect assumptions made by both faith-based and secular agencies that simply creating frameworks for local governance and belonging to voluntary organisations like churches produces social capital that is 'spent' in the wider community. In other words, the 'creation' of social capital is not the same as 'mobilisation' of social capital, and the processes by which the two are connected are hugely variable. More research needs to be undertaken to understand how the connection between the two works. The Manchester paper also clearly presents some of the obstacles preventing the delivery of church-based social capital which come not only from the government and the market, but also the churches themselves.

This research therefore finds itself located within an increasingly critical climate with regard to the current political project to engage churches and other faith groups in regeneration and civil society. Our research findings broadly concur with this prevailing attitude of realism and a recognition of the ambivalence and complexity at work within the processes of civil society and regeneration. The main route for this discovery for our research has been through an examination of how use of language within regeneration and civil society processes (especially rhetoric and spin) has blurred the traditional boundaries between faith-based and secular discourses and helped create a legacy of mistrust and frustration. However we have also shown extensive evidence of innovative and creative ways in which the churches featured in our research are attempting to work within these constraints to make a distinctive contribution to the civil renewal which we have described as 'religious capital'. It is fair to say that the churches we have worked with would clearly fit into what Furby and Macey's spectrum of faith communities would define as those 'moving outside to a more open and networked social engagement'. (Furby and Macey, 2005:104). This has meant that we have met little by way of what they would characterise as the other end of that spectrum, namely those who are 'politically conservative in their goals and centred on 'extending the fold' through proselytising' and/or 'offering a defensive/alternative world'. (Furby and Macey, 2005:103-4).

Appendix 3 – Methodology

Research assumptions for Year Two

The level of engagement of this research (i.e. at the level of values, language, methodology etc.) indicates clearly that this research has its own value system and *modus operandi*, or way of working. Its values are based on the importance of listening to the narrative and experience of grass-roots communities and churches and other development agencies. This in turn presupposes a more *inductive* approach to research – which means that research instruments are set up in such as way as to allow possible theories and patterns to emerge from the research data, rather than the research instruments being set up in such a way as to prove or disprove existing theories (i.e. a more *deductive* methodology). In other words, we have tried to create environments where people can be honest with us, and we have tried to openly reflect what they have told us. We have aimed to draw conclusions only after listening to and reflecting on the evidence we have collected.

This means that this research is more *interpretative* than *functionalist.* These terms were devised by Gioia and Pitre (1990) as contrasting methods of research and the generation of knowledge, and bear close correlation respectively to the traditional terms of qualitative vs. quantitative and inductive vs. deductive forms of research. We hope that using this approach allows us to understand the complexity of the post-modern world by integrating multiple perspectives. (This was the overriding principle that governed the research methods in Year One. See p. 4-5 of Year One's Report).

According to Gioia and Pitre, the functionalist approach represents the search for frequently occurring themes, and to test in order to predict and control. The goal of the interpretative paradigm, however, is to describe and explain in order to diagnose and understand and is based on the view of reality which sees all social reality as socially constructed. Therefore, the interpretative approach holds that the goal of social science is to understand what meanings people give to reality, not to determine how reality works apart from these interpretations.

Closely linked to the interpretative paradigm is the *constructivist* approach, which according to Guba and Lincoln (1989) emphasises the importance of exploring how different stakeholders in a social setting construct their beliefs, and uses these different beliefs and perspectives as the basis for attempting to develop a consensus, usually around a social program or political issue. The method of arriving at this type of information is based on open-ended interviews and group discussion as a way of uncovering each person's 'construction' on the problem or situation in hand. This is usually envisaged as a dynamic process called a *hermeneutical circle* whereby 'the constructions of a variety of individuals - deliberately chosen so as to uncover widely variable viewpoints - are elicited, challenged and exposed to new information and new more sophisticated ways of interpretation until some level of consensus is reached'. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:180-181)

Other processes associated with this method of research which have been used during the course of this year are *participatory action research* (see Whyte, 1991) where

those invited to take part in the research do so as active participants in what is seen as a collaborative enterprise. This in turn presupposes that both the researcher and the research participants have as an explicit aim the desire to *create change* in the context under research in ways that 'achieve a more just society'. (Bellah, 1985)

This interpretive/constructivist approach has been adopted to offer a piece of research in contrast to the prevailing trend within this area to date, which traditionally has tended to favour the more functionalist and deductive approach. We also hope that this value-oriented and praxis-based research offers a way forward for further discussion in Year Three, especially from grass-roots and church/faith-based communities seeking to understand more of why they do what they do (i.e. their motives and judgements) and their experience of it, rather than simply understanding the content of what they do. This we believe will offer a thicker analysis (i.e. looking at values, language and theological reflection, for example) of what might constitute religious capital within civil society.

The interviews and panels were held over a nine month period from March to November 2004.

Appendix 4 - List of Partnerships

ACCG, *Afro Caribbean Care Group, provides support and meeting spaces for elderly people of African Caribbean descent who live in Central/South Manchester and Trafford.*
Afterschool club
Army cadets
Asda chaplaincy
Asian community groups
Benchill Outreach Project
BESS, Benchill Ecumenical Service Scheme
Black Boys Can, n*ational organisation, committed to 'unleashing the unlimited potentials of Black boys, promoting positive images of them and creating, supporting and encouraging their educational success.'*
Black Churches Council
Black day care centres
Churches Together in South Wythenshawe
City Councillors
Crisis appeals
GIFT (Grace Incorporation Faith Trust), *consists of the four organisations: Women of Substance, Mothers Against Violence, Support for Progress and Gift Academy.*
Gift Academy, *targets disenfranchised young people, trying to improve their educational achievements and providing mentor role models.*
Homestart, loan scheme for first time house buyers
Karate
Learn Direct
Local MP's
Manchester City Council
Manchester City Council Educational Consultative Committee
Manchester Council Youth service
Meals on Wheels
Montserratian Forum, *a group concerned with the rights of evacuees arriving in this country after the 1997 volcanic eruption in Montserrat*
Morris dancing
Mosscare Housing
Moss Side Longsight Association,
Mothers Against Violence
Mother's Union
Mustard Tree, a*sylum seekers and refugee support project*
NDC, *New Deal for Communitie (East Manchester)*
Play scheme, s*ummer Moss Side*
Police
Prison chaplaincy
Rainbows, *pre Brownies group for girls age 5-7*

ScarmanTrust, *founded by Lord Scarman to 'promote active citizenship, where individuals are encouraged to contribute their ideas and skills into building healthy communities for all', works in partnership with many organisation.*
Schools
Singing group
Slimmers World
Street Pastors
Support for Progress, *Moss Side counselling group.*
SureStart
Tea dancing
Trade Unions
Uniformed clubs (scouts, brownies etc)
United in the City, an ecumenical church forum
Victim Support
Willow Park Housing Association
Women of Substance, *Moss Side group which exists to empower women to make positive changes in their lives.*
Women's Community groups
Women's Forum
Wythenshawe FM

Appendix 5 – Discourse Analysis

Here are two excerpts from our Year One Report (*Regenerating Communities, a theological and strategic critique)* which illustrate our discourse analysis with regard to regeneration language:

1) *Interviewee 1 [local government interviewee] relies heavily on use of jargon and technical language to use his knowledge and authority. He repeatedly uses formulaic phrases concerning regeneration, and appears self-conscious of this, several times restarting phrases from professional, technical semantic fields. He also appears to consciously intersperse jargon with informal, colloquial discourse markers to balance the tone of speech, '... through our community facilitators in our own interventions ... I mean, but they're in the mix ... but the real danger of inertia - rabbits in headlights ... a national policy making thing'. Such examples express a sense of unease with the language available - he has no choice about using the rehearsed, formulaic responses as they are the language of professional regeneration, but is aware that this removes his own voice from the narrative.*

2) *Interviewee 2 [faith-based, community activist interviewee] is more explicit in condemnation of the language available, '... consultation is a spin word,' 'regeneration is just a word used in order to distance the agencies...', 'not treating them as fools, not using jargon ...'. However, despite these criticisms, Interviewee 2 uses his own technical language and jargon - 'one of the leading BME organisations', 'local strategic partnerships ... and within that there's six thematic partnerships', 'top-down process'. Like Interviewee 1, it appears evident that Interviewee 2 feels there is no alternative but to use the jargon and technical language he is uncomfortable with. The language of regeneration appears to be disempowering to the people involved in its processes regardless of status or role, as suggested by inconsistencies in tone and attitude. This seems to be particularly the case for Interviewee 1.*

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