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Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Prideaux, M and Dawson, A (2018) Interfaith activity and the governance of religious diversity in the United Kingdom. Social Compass, 65 (3). pp. 363-377. ISSN 0037-7686

https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768618787241

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Interfaith Activity and the Governance of Religious Diversity in the UK

Abstract

This article analyses the governance of religious diversity in the UK by focussing upon a number of faith-based organisations undertaking interreligious and multireligious activities in and around the northern English city of Leeds. The piece opens by delineating the 'UK religion policy window' which has existed for a number of decades and comprises a range of changing political priorities and programmatic approaches that inform the governance of religious diversity in the UK. A subsequent section provides a detailed engagement with selected examples of multifaith activities and interfaith organisations in and around the city of Leeds. This grounded reading of exemplar organisations is then developed by a concluding section that reflects upon the mutually constitutive dynamics of contemporary governance mechanisms as they play out through the partnerships embodied by the interfaith sector and framed by the UK religion policy window.

Keywords

Diversity, governance, interfaith, multifaith, policy, religion

Résumé

Cet article analyse la gouvernance de la diversité religieuse au Royaume-Uni en mettant l'accent sur un certain nombre d'organisations confessionnelles qui mènent des activités interreligieuses et multireligieuses dans et autour de la ville de Leeds, au nord de l'Angleterre. L'article commence par définir le cadre de la politique religieuse du Royaume-Uni qui existe depuis plusieurs décennies et comprend divers changements dans les priorités politiques et les approches programmatiques qui influencent la gouvernance de la diversité religieuse au Royaume-Uni. Une deuxième partie fournit une étude précise avec une sélection d'exemples d'activités multiconfessionnelles et d'organisations interconfessionnelles dans et autour de la ville de Leeds. Cette étude détaillée de quelques modèles d'organisations est ensuite développée dans une dernière partie qui analyse la dynamique de construction mutuelle des

mécanismes de gouvernance actuels tels qu'ils se manifestent à travers les partenariats mis en place dans le secteur interconfessionnel et régis par le cadre de la politique religieuse du Royaume-Uni.

Mots-clés

Diversité, gouvernance, interconfessionnel, multiconfessionnel, politique, religion

Introduction

This piece engages with the interfaith sector in the United Kingdom by reflecting upon selected multifaith activities and interfaith organisations in the northern English city of Leeds. These activities are chosen because of their exemplar status as representative of broader dynamics and processes underway across the UK as a whole. In describing and analysing these activities and organisations, along with policy and broader context, we are conscious of the way terminology can be both slippery and confused. We use the term 'interfaith' as it is the term most commonly used in the UK context. Broadly speaking, the terms interfaith and interreligious are interchangeable, suggesting an element of active engagement between individuals or organisations identified by religion. 'Multifaith' on the other hand indicates that although multiple faith groups or individuals may be involved, the primary purpose or focus of activity is not active engagement between religions. As such, interfaith organisations often support multifaith activities. What follows frames the interfaith organisations of Leeds as active agents whose everyday activities contribute to what Dick and Nagel term the 'positive co-governance' of religious diversity progressively evident throughout the increasingly diverse global-modern societies of Europe and beyond (2016). In true sociological fashion, however, we acknowledge that such 'co-governance' does not take place in a vacuum but occurs relative to a range of socio-cultural and political-economic dynamics which combine to furnish the overarching conditions of possibility which impact, mobilise and sometimes delimit the everyday organisational activities of these groups. The most relevant overarching dynamics at play for our study of interfaith activity and religious diversity governance in the UK comprise a range of political priorities and policy programmes that coalesce to form what is here called the 'UK religion policy window'. By way of providing background context, the next section delineates the UK religion policy window that first properly opened in the late-1990s and, though changing shape throughout subsequent decades, remains open still. A following section then provides a detailed reading of selected multifaith activities and interfaith organisations in the city of Leeds. The grounded reading of the exemplar organisations of Leeds is subsequently developed by a concluding section that reflects upon the mutually constitutive dynamics of contemporary governance mechanisms as they play out through the partnerships embodied by the interfaith sector and framed by the UK religion policy window.

The UK Religion Policy Window

To borrow a phrase from Pierre Bourdieu, the UK religion policy window exists as a 'structuring structure' that both informs and directs the everyday activities of the interfaith organisations to be described in the next section (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 139). As well as the active agency of the interfaith organisations themselves the structural determination effected through the religion policy window is also, however, itself shaped by what Anne Mette Kjær identifies as a new form of governance operative within modern, Western democracies like the United Kingdom (2004). As enacted today, Kjær argues, the dynamics of contemporary Western governance refer 'to something broader than' or 'outside the narrow realm of government' and thereby point beyond '*state* actors and institutions' to acknowledge other structures, processes and agencies as constitutive of contemporary political-social realities (2004: 2–3). Kjær identifies three important modern developments as primarily responsible for the contemporary practise of governance as an inclusive *ad extra* governmental concept. First, modern (here, principally Western) societies have seen 'a change in political practices' from top-down, autocratic approaches to more consensual and inclusive modes. Second, 'increasing globalization' is restricting the reach and impact of the geographically bounded nation-state which must find ever newer ways to exercise influence in an increasingly transnational world. Third, traditional statist strategies are rendered redundant by 'the rise of networks crossing the state–civil society divide and increasing political fragmentation' (Kjær, 2004: 6). Typically modern modes of governance thereby involve the relativisation and dispersal of formerly centralised governmental power which must now be practised alongside, with and through well-resourced, motivated and strategically shrewd civic structures, social movements, non-governmental agencies, private enterprises, and charitable institutions (Kjær, 2004: 4–7). As with other forms of modern state management identified by Kjær, the governance of religious diversity enacted through the UK religion policy window involves collaboration, consultation, innovation, and sensitivity.

The UK religion policy window first opened in the late-1990s subsequent to the election of Tony Blair's 'New Labour' government on 1 May 1997. While modern connections between religion and policy in the UK existed prior to this time, religion undoubtedly experienced a newfound political prominence in the late-twentieth century by virtue of its increasing relevance to the three intersecting state agendas of societal order, socio-cultural empowerment and social service provision. As applied here to the UK context, the notion of a

policy window is borrowed from John Kingdon (2003). According to Kingdon, a 'policy window is an opportunity' for particular parties (e.g. interest groups, lobbyists, politicians) to advance their favoured 'solutions ... special problems ... project or concern' in respect of 'given initiatives' (2003: 165). 'Basically', he argues,

> a window opens because of a change in the political system (e.g., a change of administration ... or a shift in national mood); or it opens because a new problem captures the attention of government officials and those close to them. (2003: 168)

The opening of a policy window thereby comprises a practical-symbolic reprioritisation in which prevailing state ideologies, strategies and programmes are downgraded or rejected in favour of new or revised interpretations, objectives and practices better suited to the changed preferences of a newly installed government or the perceived exigencies of a given event or crisis.

In the liberal-democratic and highly transformative modern contexts of which Kingdon writes, changes in government and the occurrence of 'problem' events conspire frequently not only to open or close new and prevailing policy windows but also to modify the character and shape of those that remain in place despite changes in political administration or shifting foci provoked by problem events (2003: 165–95). While the religion policy window has been continuously open in the UK since the late-1990s, its profile and priorities have thereby undergone numerous modifications over the course of its almost 30-year life-span. Although not the only factors in play, the transformations experienced by the UK religion policy window have primarily occurred relative to the political parties in power, the problem events encountered and the respective dominance or implementation of one or a combination of the three intersecting agendas of societal order, socio-cultural empowerment and social service provision (Dinham and Lowndes, 2009; Jawad, 2012; D'Costa *et al.*, 2013; Lindsay 2017). In respect of social service provision, for example, the political dominance of the centre-right Conservative Party from 2010 onwards (in coalition government from 2010–15 and majority rule from 2015) resulted in a significant upsurge in state co-option of faith-based organisations (FBOs). Committed to reducing the overall size of the state, successive governments since 2010 have sought to cut public funding and enhance individual choice by increasing competition in respect of public service delivery. Wanting to increase competition by diversifying provision, both coalition (2010–15) and Conservative (2015–) governments

encouraged FBOs to offer themselves as providers of public services previously delivered under state auspices. While the state's co-option of FBOs as public service deliverers was, in many ways, a continuation of the mixed-economy programmes of earlier governments, the post-2010 context undoubtedly constituted both an escalation of government intent to co-opt FBOs and, by extension, a reshaping of the UK religion policy window and the political opportunities furnished by it.

In partial contrast to social service provision, the socio-cultural empowerment agenda was most influential during the former years of the UK religion policy window when New Labour governments ruled from 1997 to 2010. An early document concerned with community regeneration, for example, acknowledged the 'large and relatively well resourced ... networks of mutual aid, service provision, community development activities and community organizing capacity' at the disposal of 'faith organizations' as an 'enormous potential contribution' to empowering hard to reach groups and socially marginalised neighbourhoods (Home Office, 1999: 21–2). New Labour's commitment to socio-cultural empowerment likewise informed its incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights within UK law. Only one year after taking office in 1997, the Human Rights Act passed through UK legislative processes, with historically unprecedented provisions in respect of religious freedom, non-discrimination and diversity coming into full force in 2000. Responding to or inspired by ongoing developments in Europe (e.g. European Employment Equality Act, 2003), further rights touching upon freedom, non-discrimination and diversity were enshrined in UK law at various points of New Labour's thirteen years in government (e.g. Equality Acts of 2006 and 2010). Through both policy programmes and legal frameworks, New Labour's commitment to socio-cultural empowerment contributed not only to the initial opening of the religion policy window but also to the continued commitment of subsequent UK governments to the demands and implications of religious freedom, non-discrimination and diversity.

In large part, the opening and evolution of the UK religion policy window was motivated by growing concerns with social order closely associated with the unfolding implications of inward migration that had steadily increased subsequent to relaxations of longstanding restrictions in the late-1960s. Likewise, the Iranian *fatwā* issued in response to the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988) and nascent activity of Islamic radicals in UK mosques and university campuses had already piqued the attention of the state prior to New Labour's accession to government in 1997 and the subsequent opening of the religion policy

window (Weller, 2008). Social order concerns were further heightened by two significant problem events occurring soon after New Labour's re-election to office in 2001. Ethnically inflected social disturbances in a number of northern cities broke out in June a matter of days after the general election and, some months later, the terrorist atrocity of 9/11 brought down the Twin Towers and sent shockwaves around the world. Soon after New Labour's re-election to power in mid-2005, the 7 July London bombings shook the UK. Following a series of problem events throughout the preceding year (e.g. Madrid bombings, Theo Van Gogh's murder and ethnic minority disturbances in Birmingham), the 7/7 bombings initiated a fundamental re-shaping of the religion policy window as social order gained an undisputed prominence, while socio-cultural empowerment and social service provision became increasingly regarded as policy means to the political ends of 'integration'. Further problem events such as the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby (May, 2013), the killing of 30 British Tourists in Tunisia (June, 2015) and ongoing preoccupations with Syrian-related radicalisation and Isis-inspired terrorism continue to underwrite the primacy of the social order agenda. Though reshaping the religion policy window along particular lines, ongoing preoccupations with social order broaden rather than diminish the political opportunity structures available to FBOs across the UK (see Butler-Sloss, 2015; Casey, 2016).

Framed by the UK religion policy window, the interfaith organisations discussed in the next section are part of a broader swathe of multifaith initiatives emerging in recent decades across Europe and beyond. In the UK context these organisations have become part of what we describe here, following Beckford's use of 'faith sector' (2012: 15), as an 'interfaith sector'; that is, a body of organisations which relate to one another and to government in complex ways and often as a single 'sector' rather than as discrete organisations. Such relations are shaped by a 'partnership' model which, among other things, involves the 'calling forth' (Weller, 2009) and 'interpellation' (Beckford 2010) of FBOs and other organisations within the prevailing policy window. As well as sharing a focus on 'interfaith' as the means to respond to the religion policy window these organisations also share an ability to evolve in response to the changing frame offered. As we will see in the discussion of the Leeds context, the relative success and failure of these organisations is often related to the ways in which they come into being and develop – and this is often shaped by the religion policy window. This growth of a discrete 'sector' in the UK is related to the much broader swathe of multifaith initiatives emerging in recent decades. Writing about the Danish context, for example, Ahlin *et al.* regard the proliferation of 'inter-confessional, ecumenical, and inter-

religious' initiatives as responding to a 'new diversity' of 'recent decades' (2012: 411, 413). Treating 'interfaith initiatives' in France, Lamine identifies 'crisis' events such as the Gulf War (1990–91) as instrumental in their recent proliferation, but also argues that progressive commitments to equality and increasing concerns with social cohesion likewise provoked state interest (2005). In her overview of the Spanish context, Griera associates 'the growing presence of interfaith groups, councils and initiatives all around the country' with governmental perceptions of 'religious diversity as a "risk factor"' to be minimised through strategic intervention (2012: 571, 580). Tuomas Martikainen and Dawson likewise identify the growing importance of interfaith networks as strategically inclusive ways of managing religious diversity in Finland (2016) and the UK (2016) respectively. In similar vein, Brian Pearce notes that 'over the past few decades' there has been 'a substantial increase in the number of interfaith organizations' across the UK (2012: 152).[i] Having delineated the overarching UK religion policy window, we now turn to a more grounded consideration of interfaith activity in the UK context by focusing upon the northern English city of Leeds.

Diverse Leeds, Diverse Provision

Leeds provides a useful case study because it shares socio-economic, political and other features with many large English cities, such as Birmingham, Bristol or Manchester. Like most English cities, and many in the regions of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Leeds has a diverse and changing population and this diversity and change is particularly notable in terms of religion. As well as a long established Jewish community, Leeds also saw a significant growth in religious diversity from the 1960s with migrants arriving from the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent to work in the textile and other industries of the region. At the time of the 2011 census (ONS, 2012) Leeds had a population of 751,485 with 56% identifying as Christian, down from 68.9% in 2001 (Leeds Observatory, 2017). The census showed a growing number of Leeds residents identifying as non-religious (28%), Muslim (5.4%), Hindu (0.9%), Sikh (1.2%), and Buddhist (0.4%). Judaism was the only religion other than Christianity to show a decline, from 1.2% in 2001 to 0.9% in 2011 (Leeds Observatory, 2017). Forty-five other religious groups were separately identified in the census including Jain, Baha'i, Rastafarian, Druze, and the highest number of people identifying as 'mixed religion' in West Yorkshire. Local studies show that this 'top level' (Vertovec, 2007) of diversity is further complicated by diversity within traditions. For instance, there are over 75 black majority churches in Leeds, while a 2014 study identified over 40 different religious

organisations in a single, small neighbourhood (Adams *et al*., 2014). As well as this diversity, and the features it shares with other UK cities, Leeds offers a particularly fruitful location for a close study of local interfaith activity because of the range of types of organisation and activity. Shaped by local and national policy initiatives, the range and type of activities also respond to the local specificity of diversity and to the national and local structures within individual religions. Most notable in this context is the role of the Church of England. Monsma and Soper (1997) describe the situation of the Church of England as that of 'partial establishment' in that it is neither fully separate nor fully integrated within the state apparatus. They argue that this 'partial establishment…sustains a cultural assumption that religion has a public function to perform and it is therefore appropriate for the state and church to cooperate in achieving common goals' (1997: 121). This arrangement leads to two related but significant observations about the Leeds context: first, and in many of the case studies to be discussed, Church of England vicars play a significant role in either a personal or representative capacity; second, the role of these individuals is seen in many cases as facilitating the broader engagement of religion with local government in particular. The extent to which this dual role is self-aware or strategically undertaken requires further research, but some aspects of the questions this raises are noted in the following discussion of specific cases.

The following two sections use content drawn almost entirely from internet materials including websites, organisational and other reports, and some specific publications about interfaith activity in Leeds. The ready availability of so much primary material provides some indication of the scale and type of activity sufficient to generate a significant corpus of publicly available material for analysis (although it should be noted that in some cases the content used was subsequently and unexpectedly removed from the internet). The detailed study of available material lead to the mapping of the key themes of type, origin and trajectory which are used to structure the analysis of the activity. The following section identifies example organisations and activity which illustrate the diversity of provision based on organisational type, origin and trajectory. A final section on Leeds then specifically locates different governance strategies in two examples activities. In each of these two examples the diversity of concerns is evident, with different organisations making different strategic and instrumental use of the religion policy window in pursuit of funding or influence. Different patterns of collaboration, consultation, innovation and sensitivity from local governmental bodies also shape the ways in which governance structures are visible or

active through this interfaith activity. The success or failure of the organisations is shown to relate in many, although not all, cases to the range of over-arching macro-structural processes and the conditions of possibility which the religion policy window has provided. Each section below will take as its focus the diversity to be found in the interfaith organisations and activities found in Leeds. Recognising that they form part of what we have described as an 'interfaith sector' it is in the diversity of these organisations, in a single city, that we can most clearly see the way in which the religion policy window has opened up opportunities, with varying degrees of success, for the governance of religious diversity through interfaith organisations.

Diverse Organisational Types

One of the forms of diversity seen in interfaith organisations in Leeds is the distinction between those based on 'individual membership' and those that aspire to function as a 'representative body'. Individual membership organisations are those which an individual joins, not as a representative of a community but as an individual interested party. More often described as 'fellowships' the focus of these organisations is more likely to be on personal religious and spiritual engagement with those from other religions. In contrast, representative bodies are often based on religious groups becoming members, and having a representative individual taking part in meetings and decision making. Sometimes such representative bodies seek, and rely on, the participation of individuals who can act as representatives of faith communities but do not have roles or status within the faith community. This clearly leads to some tension in what the nature of 'representation' is understood to be. However, despite these inherent tensions, the difference between the two types of organisations (i.e. representative and individual membership) illustrates a significant difference in the way the governance of religious diversity can be seen to take place.

One of the oldest interfaith groups in the country, 'Concord Interfaith Fellowship' is an individual membership organisation that has the broad aims of: advancing 'public knowledge and mutual understanding … of the different faith communities'; nurturing 'respect and friendly relations by facilitating interfaith dialogue and organising educational and cultural events'; and working for 'justice, peace and social harmony' (www.concord-leeds.org.uk/index.php). Concord has made strategic and instrumental use of the religion policy windows and related funding opportunities to support its work. Activities include

education, social justice and community engagement through 'Walks of Fellowship', interfaith week displays and women's sewing projects. As an individual membership organisation, however, it has avoided co-option by governance structures. This can in part be related to concerns about funding agendas limiting the organisation's ability to work on the key interests of the group (Bates *et al*., 2016). There may also be elements of a concern which has been identified in interfaith organisations and FBOs more generally (Halafoff, 2013), about engagement with funding agendas limiting organisational ability to offer a critical voice on policy. Despite not being constituted as a representative organisation, Concord nevertheless provides a forum for 'recognition' (Dawson, 2016) made explicit by one of its leading members whose objective in joining was to increase recognition for Pagan religious identity (Bates *et al*., 2016: 201). Founded by a Methodist minister, membership of the organisation includes individuals who identify as 'Baha'is, Brahma Kumaris, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Pagans, Sikhs among others' (http://www.concord-leeds.org.uk/).

Concord works closely with the Leeds Faiths Forum (LFF) which was established to provide a representative body for faith communities in Leeds, particularly in working with Leeds City Council. Membership of LFF is made up of subscribing organisations that pay an annual membership fee which is calculated based on the size of the organisation (http://www.leedsfaithsforum.org/ - website currently unavailable). Unlike Concord, the LFF has had a leader drawn from the Church of England throughout its existence and can be seen as an example where the existence of a formal structure and a recognised social role legitimate the Church of England in leadership of formal activities which have partnership roles with local government. The LFF is made up of key individuals in leadership roles within religious groups, who consult with their groups and represent the shared or diverse views of these groups locally. However, this representative role is part of the broader stated aims of the Forum which highlight the particular policy window in which the organisation developed, focussing on 'working for good community relations' (http://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/mgOutsideBodyDetails.aspx?ID=253). Although the organisation has not been directly funded by national policy initiatives around 'community cohesion', the organisation developed during a period when there was a significant growth in the number and variety of interfaith and multifaith representative organisations. The LFF is undergoing rapid change (as seen by the website being removed in 2017), and this illustrates the way that such representative bodies are engaged in responding to changing priorities and

opportunities for 'positive co-governance'. The significance of the Church of England leadership in providing a stable representative structure for the LFF in times of rapid change should not go unmentioned. As well as working with Concord on specific education projects the Leeds Faiths Forum is also the key liaison body for the 'Religion or Belief Hub' of the Equalities Assembly (Equalities Assembly Conference Report, 2015) which is discussed below. However, organisations and activities overlap across the interfaith sector, often involving the same individuals in different roles.

Diverse Origins & Trajectories

Concord and LFF illustrate how different types of organisation can operate in similar space but with very different governance engagement and outcomes. In this section, two organisations with different origins will now be used to illustrate how interfaith activity develops in response to a very specific framing of the religion policy window, and its interaction with other policy imperatives. Established in 2005, the 'Yorkshire and Humber Regional Faiths Forum' was a governance-driven response to a regionalisation agenda. It developed despite an earlier feasibility study which found 'no consensus among faith respondents that a regional faith forum would be a welcome development' (Knott *et al*., 2003: 30). As a representative and consultative organisation, the Forum supported the work of the Regional Assembly for Yorkshire and the Humber, through such work as quantifying the economic benefit of religion to the region, as well as supporting local interfaith and other faith-based activity. Due to subsequent changes in regionalisation policy and related shifts in funding, however, the Forum ceased operation in 2011, two years after the Regional Assembly itself ceased to operate (http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100528183955/http://www.yhassembly.gov.uk)

Around the time that the Regional Faiths Forum was being developed, an organisation called 'Faith Together in Leeds 11' (Faith Together), founded in 1997, was reaching its goals in a deprived neighbourhood of inner-city Leeds (Prideaux, 2009). In contrast with the Regional Faiths Forum, Faith Together is a grassroots organisation which initially arose from Muslim–Christian–Secular co-working around funding opportunities engendered by New Labour policy concerns for socio-cultural empowerment and social service provision. The project was driven by a practical imperative concerning the spatial needs of the local Muslim community and the desire for relevance of the Christian (here, the Church of England and

Methodist) community. At a public meeting attended by Muslim and Christian project leaders, the Methodist co-leader of the project stated that 'I believe people of faith have to stand together if we are going to see the kind of world we believe in materialise, a world controlled by God and not by people' (Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum, 2000: 9). This articulation of the project is strongly religiously motivated, and illustrates the tactical way the project was presented for different audiences. Activists were particularly adept at the strategic use of religion for accessing funds. While eager to express a religious identity in what he considered an overwhelmingly secular society, one Christian leader of the project pragmatically accepted the need to make strategic decisions about its representation to funding bodies if it made it 'easier to get funding' for projects (Prideaux, 2009: 191). In the same vein, an atheist activist involved with the project acknowledged that using 'religion' opened up opportunities to apply for different funding streams by making applications seem more respectable (Prideaux, 2009: 192). Clearly, different activists within the same project might choose different ways at different times to describe and emphasise the interfaith dimensions of their work. In contrast with the Regional Forum, which ceased operation relatively soon after it was established, Faith Together continues to operate and is today primarily identified as the organising group for the 'Building Blocks' childcare provision programme (http://www.faithtogether.org.uk/buildingblocks.html) The contrasting fortunes of the Regional Forum and Faith Together illustrate well the extent to which origin informs an organisation's long-term prospects. Whereas the Regional Forum was 'called forth' (Weller, 2009: 76) by local and regional governmental structures to satisfy prevailing policy agendas – and soon disappeared when those agendas changed – the grassroots origins of Faith Together in local need furnished a more solid foundation that sustains the organisation to this day. Faith Together thrived through strategic grassroots use of the religion policy window, the Regional Forum failed because it lacked any grassroots base and only existed in response to religion and regionalisation policy initiatives.

Diverse Governance Strategies

The previous sections have highlighted the significance of origin, type and trajectory for understanding the impact of the religion policy window on the development of the interfaith sector and opportunities for 'positive co-governance' of religion. In this final section on Leeds, two related activities will be used to illustrate the different governance strategies at play. Founded in 2009, the 'Equalities Assembly' is a local governmental response by the

Equality Team of Leeds City Council to the legislative framework within which public service providers must operate and which ensures equal treatment particularly for those who might otherwise be marginalised. The Equalities Assembly describes itself as 'offering all equality groups the opportunity to meet and work together to let the council know the issues that affect them' (www.leeds.gov.uk/council/Pages/Equality-Assembly.aspx). Within the Assembly, the 'Religion or Belief Hub' is an attempt to create a manageable grouping around the legally identified 'protected characteristic' of 'religion or belief'. In keeping with its organisational ethos, the Hub uses the Leeds Faiths Forum as a key consultative body. As with other organisations originating in equalities legislation (see Dinham, 2012: 586), however, the Hub's structure does not map directly onto existing configurations of faith groups in Leeds. Two reports identify interrelated issues concerning engagement with governance structures which significantly impact upon the functioning of the Hub. First, and reflecting upon the challenges posed by capacity and means of engagement, a 2011 report notes that 'for different strands, there are widely variable levels of existing community infrastructure, different levels of political experience on the part of Hub members, and very different ways in which particular protected characteristics face towards council services' (Vanderbeck, 2011: 21). Second, a later report on the role of the Hub notes that 'both Hub members and Council officers express concerns about the marginalisation of the Hub within the Council which severely compromises its effective contribution to the development of policy and services' (Lindsay *et al*., 2014: 16). This fear of marginalisation was in part linked to the concerns of officers of the council who felt both uncertain and uncomfortable about the presence of religion in the council, which they saw as a 'secular' (in this context meaning 'religion excluded') space. The inability of interested parties to articulate a shared identity and role for the Hub leads to an inability to articulate a shared agenda and thus to a risk of the marginalisation of both the Hub and its objectives. The space around the Religion or Belief Hub is evolving rapidly, with a marked shift from the 2015 Equalities Assembly conference report which showed a relatively limited level of activity focussed around the Hub's key consultative body, the Leeds Faiths Forum (http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Equalities%20Assembly%20Conf%20Report%202015.pdf) to the 2016 report where there is a focus on revitalisation of the Hub, and an identification of the key challenge to find 'representatives' from the religions of the city (http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Equalities%20Assembly%20Conference%20%20Report%202016.pdf).

Related to, but distinct from, the Hub, the 'Faith Covenant', launched in 2015, illustrates a somewhat different strategic engagement by local government with religious diversity. Officially titled the 'Covenant for Engagement between Leeds City Council and Religion or Belief Organisations', the Covenant embodies commitments from both Leeds City Council and FBOs on issues such as consultation, transparency and training opportunities. Two particular aspects of the Covenant are worthy of note. First, the Covenant requires the FBOs that signed it to commit to: 'Seeking opportunities to bring people together to serve the community, particularly its poorest and most isolated members' and to do this by 'serving equally all local residents seeking to access the public services they offer, without proselytising, irrespective of their religion, gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation or disability' (www.leeds.gov.uk/council/Pages/Faith-Covenant.aspx). Second, the Covenant comprises a one-to-one relationship between the City Council and individual FBO signatories and thereby articulates a de-collectivising strategy that contrasts with the explicitly collaborative model embodied by the Religion or Belief Hub. Practically speaking, the Covenant rewards its political sponsors by avoiding the attendant difficulties of engaging with a collective forum like the Hub in which members do not always share the same goals, have potentially competing concerns about representation and influence, and are sometimes in conflict over core beliefs and practices. In strategic terms, the de-collectivising character of the Covenant provides an alternative, if not complementary, approach to the use of interfaith organisations both in the governance of religious diversity and as a means to co-opt and engage with minority and marginalised communities.

As well as the sheer levels of diversity and complexity, the various organisations detailed above evidence a range of key features characteristic of interfaith activity in the city of Leeds, and noted more widely in the UK (Dinham, 2012; Weller, 2009). Referencing the significance of organisational type and origin, as well as the strategic and policy framework within which these organisations work, the foregoing discussion also demonstrates the wide range of aspirations, concerns, motivations, and objectives held by individuals, FBOs and local government with regard to the governance opportunities provided by these organisations. Among such were concerns about religion and how it is 'used' in public life, the facilitating role of the Church of England in some key organisations, motivations to access resources, aspirations to extend influence, and objectives to engage with or implement legislative and policy frameworks to advance the diverse agendas of the respective parties involved. By way of concluding this piece, the following discussion reflects upon the

implications of these various factors for the contemporary governance of religious diversity in the UK.

Governance and Diversity

As we noted earlier, Kjær relates the complexities of modern governance to the democratic demands of consensual politics, globalisation's relativisation of the nation-state and the formation of myriad networks and movements that both fragment the political domain and flexibilise state–society relations (2004). Exemplified through reference to the northern English city of Leeds, the processes and dynamics inherent to its religious field serve only to exacerbate the complexities of modern governance as they pertain to religious diversity and its management. The 'positive co-governance' of religious diversity of which Dick and Nagel write (2016) must, then, account for a range of factors, not least among which are the sheer diversity of provision on offer, variegation of organisational types in existence, multiplicity of socio-political origins, motivations and strategies, as well as the potentially conflicting institutional agendas at play. Although complexifying the contemporary governance of religious diversity, such variation in the field contributes more than it detracts from meeting the various needs of the multiple parties involved.

As evidenced above, the variety of provision on offer and diversity of organisations in existence furnish an extremely broad range of capacity that is better suited to addressing the diverse and changing needs of different communities (and political agendas) in different ways and at different times. Although political functionaries and state bodies find the faith-based environment sometimes confusing to negotiate and difficult to manage, its governance should welcome rather than inhibit diversity and thereby avoid the kind of socio-political homogenisation that demands the same thing from otherwise very different entities (Furness and Gilligan, 2012; Williams, Cloke and Thomas, 2012). In this case, then, one size does not fit all, and governance approaches must optimise utility by ensuring an interface with the religious field that allows faith-based organisations to contribute according to their particular character rather than being forced to meet unduly homogenising frameworks and processes that fail to account for and ultimately smother the rich diversity of provision on offer. The progressive recourse to the Church of England by successive governments since 2010, through the Near Neighbours scheme particularly, is a case in point (Dawson, 2016: 147). At the same time, however, it's fair to acknowledge that established organisations like the

Church of England provide Government with ready-made institutional platforms that are both tried and tested (and thereby politically trustworthy) and geographically extensive (and thereby policy efficient).

The kind of sensitivity to the field called for here was clearly lacking in the case of the aforementioned Regional Faiths Forum which existed for only a short period of time after being 'called forth' (Weller, 2009) into existence as a response to changing policy agendas. As noted above in respect of the UK religion policy window, political priorities frequently change and, as such, local and regional bodies must not only respond but be seen to do so appropriately. This is a fact of governance, while political flexibility, adaptation and change are, in themselves, no bad thing. However, and as it relates to the religious field, if such change is to achieve the optimal returns desired, then the necessary time and effort must be expended to identify and engage established provision that, by virtue of already being in place, is more likely to better serve the long-term needs and aspirations of the communities for whom such policy shifts are ultimately meant to serve. Whereas the act of imposing from above newly created bodies may prove the easiest way of responding to changing political agendas, it is, as the fate of the Regional Faiths Forum evidences, potentially self-defeating for the governance of religious diversity.

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ii The organisation which Pearce established (Interfaith Network UK) is itself a useful case study of the relationship between governance, policy and interfaith activity in the UK, and recent legal challenges based on issues of inclusion indicate some of the problematic dimensions of interfaith activity in the UK (Dawson, 2016).

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