Understanding Neighbourhoods as Multifaith Spaces

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Abstract: This paper asked whether it is possible to understand neighbourhoods as 'multifaith spaces' and whether doing so helps us think differently about neighbourhoods or about multifaith spaces. By referring to the English context, this paper explored the significance of the local and the demotic in the experience of religious diversity, the construction of space as 'multifaith', and the practice and experience of interfaith dialogue. It concluded that thinking of neighbourhoods as multifaith spaces both challenges how multifaith spaces are identified and articulated and deepens the discussion of neighbourhoods as key to the experience of living with religious diversity.

Keywords: multifaith; neighbourhoods; interfaith dialogue

1. Introduction

In this article, I will pursue a claim that religiously diverse neighbourhoods can be usefully understood as multifaith spaces and that doing so challenges the extant literature on multifaith space, nuances the literature on religious diversity in cities and neighbourhoods, and opens up questions about the relationship of interfaith dialogue with multifaith spaces. Research on multifaith spaces has focused on built and designed spaces for multifaith use, such as prayer rooms, chaplaincy buildings and other spaces for worship and engagement. However, there are also spaces which are multifaith by use and constituency, such as the religiously diverse neighbourhood, workplace or classroom. Engagement with these spaces can have a significant impact on the experience and practice of religion, and the opportunities which arise for informal but meaningful interfaith dialogue. Therefore, this article challenges the exceptionalism that surrounds the concept of multifaith spaces (MFSs) as used in much of the literature in this area by instead suggesting that how a space is used, and who it is used by is more important than the intention of the designer, architect or commissioning body. Looking at the experience of neighbourhoods, it is striking how similar the issues identified in the analysis of standard MFSs are to those experienced in religiously diverse neighbourhoods. This leads me to question whether it could be argued that the designation of MFS is useful and whether it denotes a special type of space at all. As I intend to show, attempts to define MFS have become so stretched that it is difficult to know what might not be included unless the most narrow definition is adopted.

The focus of this discussion is the neighbourhood, with a particular case study of one neighbourhood (in Leeds, England) at a very particular point in its history, and a broader look at English neighbourhoods as utilised in the Near Neighbours project. Although there are neighbourhoods which are intentionally created to be spaces for religious diversity, such as Esplanade des Religions in Bussy Saint Georges, Paris (https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/03/world/europe/bussy-saint-georges-france-builds-a-holy-quarter.html), or Highway 99—the 'Highway to Heaven'—in Richmond B.C (Agrawal and Barratt 2014; Dwyer 2017), my focus here is on residential neighbourhoods which are religiously diverse as a result of migration and other patterns of movement. These neighbourhoods tend to be managed (through planning processes for new places of worship, or social housing policies, for example) rather than planned from inception and, I contend, become MFSs through their use

and constituency. In neighbourhoods people experience religious diversity, including through the presence of their own and other sacred space and religious worship. Residents talk with others about matters from refuse collection and funeral rites to antisocial behaviour, and they informally engage in interfaith dialogue which shapes, positively and negatively, attitudes toward the 'other'. In this sense the neighbourhood is not a passive 'container' for diversity but instead creates the opportunities for engagement, which would be expected in a successful MFS.

Starting with an analysis of the way MFS are defined, I will move on to discuss the nature of neighbourhoods before drawing out the ways in which religiously diverse neighbourhoods do or do not meet the formal definitions provided. Arguably, if 'religiously diverse' is taken to be identical to 'multifaith', then it is self evident that a religiously diverse neighbourhood is an MFS. However, the use of MFS to denote a particular type of space usefully highlights the active nature of these spaces in shaping and forming identities and relationships. My point is that the literature on MFS discussed below uses a definition of MFS which would not necessarily include the neighbourhood unless the neighbourhood was built and designed to be an MFS. Whether or not it is useful or makes any difference to activity or dialogue to think of neighbourhoods as MFSs, it will become clear that the current definitions of MFS are potentially problematic and that neighbourhoods are an under explored space for understanding and engaging with religious diversity and interfaith dialogue.

2. What Is a Multifaith Space?

Trying to locate a definition of MFS is not straightforward. Many definitions simply identify MFS as shared prayer rooms, for instance:

> Multifaith spaces are a new kind of sacred environment in which anyone can pray whatever their religion (Crompton 2013, p. 474)

Research on MFS tends to focus on the architectural, the built and the designed (Brand 2012; Crompton 2013). However, many definitions extend this conceptualisation of the MFS and open the door to the exploration I pursue here—of whether it is possible or useful to consider the religiously diverse neighbourhood an MFS. This extension of definition can be seen most clearly in the way a large-scale research project (Multi-Faith Spaces: Symptoms and Agents of Religious Change) developed its definition over time and in different contexts.

On the website of the Multifaith Spaces research project, there are two different description statements (as of May 2019). On the front page of the website (https://cargocollective.com/wwwmulti-faith-spacesorg), it is noted that

> Multifaith Spaces (MFS) have no precise definition; existing only in the eye of the beholder. They are places where a range of faith-based or spiritual activities can be undertaken, wherein each user should find something of appeal.

This way of identifying MFSs certainly does not exclude a religiously diverse neighbourhood. However, the website goes on to note the designed nature of MFSs:

> MFS are designed spaces, constructed at many sizes and scales. MFS are not fixed, so at different times the same space could resemble a single faith building, a consecrated space or a secular facility. Consequently, whilst often appearing sacred and certainly capable of housing sacred acts, MFS should not ordinarily be understood as holy sites. This ambiguity is a positive attribute, recognising differing viewpoints regarding the constitution of sacred space.

It becomes clearer that MFS are identified with religious buildings per se. The MFS itself may not be a religious building (not a 'holy site') but it is nevertheless a single container. Usefully, this part of the description, MFS is ambiguous. Arguably, a neighbourhood can contain much of this description—it is 'certainly capable of housing sacred acts' within religious buildings, homes and indeed on the streets. Neighbourhoods are therefore less clearly included in this way of thinking about MFSs, but they are

not excluded either. 'This ambiguity is a positive attribute' for considering a neighbourhood as an MFS.

The final part of the description of MFSs from the project website can also be interpreted to include religiously diverse neighbourhoods:

> MFS are spaces within places, always located within a larger context. They are commonly, but not exclusively, found within airports, hospitals or universities. Similarly, many modern towns and cities will contain distinct zones of multifaith activity, a feature also apparent at historically significant sites such as Jerusalem or Glastonbury.

The phrase 'distinct zones of multifaith activity' most clearly articulates what a religiously diverse neighbourhood may be considered to be. Yet the definition here is somewhat unclear—are these 'zones' the sites and contexts within which MFSs can be identified, or are they MFSs themselves?

A more specific definition is found in the 'research summary' for the Multifaith Spaces Project (https://cargocollective.com/wwwmulti-faith-spacesorg/Research-Summary), which leaves less room to consider the religiously diverse neighbourhood as an MFS:

We define 'multi-faith spaces' flexibly, as spaces that often exist in the 'eye of the beholder', where a range of spiritual activities can be undertaken, either together or apart. In addition:

- They are created spaces that have undergone some form of deliberate design.
- They may resemble 'single faith' buildings, consecrated spaces or secular facilities.
- They are spaces within places, often located within a larger context, such as an airport, hospital or university.
- They are largely defined through use: customary activities, including prayer, meditation, contemplation, reflection, study, rest and relaxation.

However, it is still possible to make a (rather stretched) claim that religiously diverse neighbourhoods fulfil the underlying principles asserted here, even if they do not look like the space that is being identified. Some form of deliberate design occurs in neighbourhoods as new places of worship and other buildings go through the planning approval process. Governmental interventions (funding projects, improving shared spaces, developing business) also serve to plan and design the neighbourhood and are often influenced by the religious diversity of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is secular space, but religion is written into the buildings and bodies that inhabit it. The neighbourhood is also a space within the larger place of the city. Importantly, neighbourhoods are very much defined by use—and this is seen in the problematisation of the neighbourhood (the deprived inner-city neighbourhood damaged by gangs and factionalism) as well as its valourisation (the neighbourhood where everyone cares for their neighbour and works together towards common goals). Clearly, on a very stretched interpretation of this definition, a religiously diverse neighbourhood can be considered an MFS. The diversity of 'standard' MFS used in the Multifaith Spaces research project, such as prayers rooms, quiet spaces or more complex chaplaincy buildings (or networks of buildings) in airports, hospitals and universities, as well as newer ambitions for single buildings housing multiple places of worship, such as The House of One in Berlin (https://house-of-one.org/en/concept), extends the definition away from the model of a shared prayer room which seems to underlie the majority of the research undertaken as part of that project. After an initial focus on the designed and built prayer room, it clearly becomes harder to delimit MFS as the purposes and constituency of the spaces become more varied. The range of definitions available in this one research project make it clear that it is not straightforward to distinguish MFSs per se from any space in which religious diversity is experienced. Arguably, thinking about the religiously diverse neighbourhood as an MFS is both obvious—it is a space which contains more than one faith—and challenging, as it calls into question the extent to which the MFSs identified in the literature are, in any way, exceptional.

At this point, I have made the case that a religiously diverse neighbourhood could be considered an MFS when the broadest possible definition is used, but also that doing so invites some challenging

questions about how MFSs are being understood and discussed. Thinking about the neighbourhood as an MFS will clarify why the definition of MFS as a discrete, designed and built space is so challenging and draw out some of the features of the neighbourhood which make it a significant space for religious experience and encounter.

3. What Is a Neighbourhood?

Given that MFS are not easy to define, it is unsurprising that neighbourhoods are none too straightforward either. However, the key feature is that of 'living in close proximity'. As Petra Kuppinger notes of her research in Stuttgart:

'Living in close proximity with each other and engaging with neighbors results in personal ties and cultural understandings that are of fundamental importance for urban futures' (Kuppinger 2013, p. 11)

Clearly, these personal ties and cultural understandings are not always positive. The independent Cantle 2001 (popularly named after its author) report responded to the race riots of northern England of the previous year and noted the 'parallel lives' of different communities. Neighbourhoods can be spaces for contestation and conflict just as much as prayer rooms in universities (Smith 2016) or at football stadia (Brand 2012), but in the case of a neighbourhood, the implications of such conflict can be much more significant because the space is residential—standard 'prayer room' MFSs are places which can be walked away from, disengaged with and ignored. Neighbourhoods, on the other hand, are places where people live, work, socialise, and educate their children. They are more significant in the lived reality and everyday experience of religious diversity. The neighbourhood is, I would argue, a human scale environment for sensing and making sense of diversity that can be positively facilitated or neglected.

In general, scholarly work on the city looks to the larger scale, to population movement, and to vast unknowable populations. Work on the city as a site for experience and governance of diversity (e.g., Orsi 1999) looks to the grand, rather than the 'human' scale. The neighbourhood, on the other hand, is accessible. Over time, it is built, designed and shaped by localised expressions and impacts of the change and movement which shape the city as a whole. The neighbourhood becomes the opportunity par excellence for 'making meaningful places out of contingent spaces' to paraphrase Orsi (1999, p. 44). It is a place where religious people share and experience 'lived religion' (McGuire 2008) in all of its variety and plurality. When Orsi discusses the way in which the city shapes and is shaped by urban space, it is not the city as a single whole that most readily springs to mind but the neighbourhood—the local experience of the city:

City folk do not live in their environments; they live through them. Who am I? What is possible in life? What is good? These are questions that are always asked, and their answers discerned and enacted, in particular places. Specific places structure the questions, and as men and women cobble together responses, they act upon the spaces around them in transformative ways. This is the architectonic of urban religion. (Orsi 1999, p. 44)

In the neighbourhood, these meaningful places may not always be positively experienced, and indeed, religion may lead to contestation and conflict, but this is still to experience the place as meaningful. Unlike the airport prayer room, it cannot be walked away from.

As Baker points out, though possibly tending towards the valourisation of the neighbourhood, it is notable that in hyper-diverse cities, there is such a high degree of tolerance, partnership and flourishing of diverse neighbourhoods:

. . . partly due to the 'urban white noise' or background influence of ethically guided individual behaviour which is operationalized at both individual and aggregated levels within urbanized localities and which is consciously aimed at creating a harmonious public space in which ideas of the common good are affirmed and enacted. This background 'hum'

of tolerance, trust and compassion is boosted by the globalized hyper-diversity of cities or large towns because of the closer spatial proximity to, and density of, encounters with the Other . . . (Baker 2017, p. 223)

Neighbourhoods can be effective and productive environments where diverse people come into regular contact in a range of contexts: formal and informal, private and public, religious and secular. As such, where these neighbourhoods are religiously diverse, residents engage in this work of 'creating a harmonious public space'.

As the examples discussed below will make clear, neighbourhoods are places where religion, in particular, is experienced, shared and contested. They are places where 'meshworks' (Ingold 2011) can be seen in operation—where bodies move in and out of negotiated spaces, linking distant and nearby other places, and making sense through interaction. They are also a form of MFS, created by use and constituency and often sustained by design and planning. Attention to the experience of the religiously diverse neighbourhood is both instructive for thinking about MFS and valuable for paying attention to the experience of the neighbourhood. The examples below indicate where the origins of this observation arise and provide some evidence for the claims I make. They are not a complete picture but provide sufficient nuance and material with which to think about the issues raised.

4. Cases to Think with

In the early 2000s, I was conducting fieldwork for my doctoral thesis. My study (Prideaux 2008) involved a detailed engagement with a multifaith project and the ways in which it was shaped by and influencing the neighbourhood within which it was located. I was particularly interested in how this project lead to the creation of a shared space and how this space had an impact on and was shaped by the 'demotic' interfaith dialogue of the neighbourhood. A related observation has crystallised for me as the literature on MFS has become more developed—the buildings that resulted from this project 'leaked' into the neighbourhood. The 'space' of the buildings extended into the place from which it was created. Some more descriptive detail will help to give shape to this observation.

Beeston Hill is a neighbourhood of the city of Leeds in Yorkshire. It is a small, diverse and economically deprived neighbourhood, covering a set of streets of closely packed terraced houses. Beeston Hill is a negotiated space—religious and non-religious groups and individuals have, over time, formally and informally negotiated everything from the use of community buildings to the games played on the streets. It is a space in which religion is experienced as embodied. People dress, act, eat, celebrate, are born and die in a context of diversity and plurality. To an extent, the neighbourhood is also defended, as was particularly notable after the London bombings of 2005. The young men who carried out the bombings were from the neighbourhood, and the neighbourhood pulled together to defend itself. Lastly, Beeston Hill is 'built' both literally—in community and private buildings—but also symbolically in the accounts which are given of the neighbourhood.

Some vignettes from fieldwork provide examples of the types of interaction and neighbourliness experienced in the neighbourhood at the time:

A Muslim woman described putting a large number of greetings cards into the postbox in early December. An elderly neighbour with whom she had had very little contact was passing by and said, 'it is a bit early for Christmas cards!' The woman replied that they were Eid cards and thus, they had a brief conversation about Eid. As neighbours, they now say hello in passing and in early December each year, the gentleman wishes her a happy Eid—she was yet to explain that it is not a set date.

In a focus group with Muslim elders about their experience of religious diversity over decades in England, they repeatedly commented with disappointment that they no longer heard the church bells on a Sunday.

> In a community centre nursery, Christmas decorations with a religious theme were enthusiastically put up by a group of Muslim nursery workers, but non-religious parents asked whether they ought to be—might it offend the Muslim families?

> At a church group meeting which was discussing entering into dialogue with people of other religions, the group was working through a resource introducing them to the beliefs of major religions. A respected member of the congregation shared that he believed in reincarnation.

> In the aftermath of the 2005 London bombings, a minute of silence was held on the streets of the neighbourhood while army bomb disposal units moved around and the only noise was the sounds of photojournalist's cameras. The silence was broken when the vicar said a simple prayer in English to which Muslims, Sikhs and others also said 'amen'.

What all of these vignettes do is highlight how people in neighbourhoods get to know one another, negotiate their own and others' religious identity and defend a place which is meaningful to them. In each of these examples, there is a clear sense of negotiation and engagement with difference, helping to illustrate my point about neighbourhood as an MFS. What all of these vignettes further have in common is the location in which the event occurred or the story was shared: the Building Blocks and Hamara buildings.

These two community buildings resulted from a partnership project 'Faith Together in Leeds 11' which had a variety of religious and non-religious community partners. The local Methodist minister, who, along with a community leader from the largely Muslim South Asian local community, was pivotal in the development of the project through grant fundraising, provided a religiously motivated vision for the neighbourhood and the project:

> 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. We have said from the beginning that if God wants our scheme to succeed it will succeed (Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum 2000, p. 9)

The project was initially about responding to the significant socio-economic needs of the neighbourhood and freeing up underused Christian worship space for the use of the whole community. Building Blocks was and is partly a church building and Hamara contains a prayer room, but both buildings were used for a variety of purposes (healthy living centre, community café, neighbourhood nursery) serving the needs of the neighbourhood and also proactively seeking to bring neighbourhood residents together. During the early 2000s, there were a series of interfaith gatherings, street fairs and other events which were creating opportunities for bridging and bonding social capital (Putnam 2000). The minute of silence and prayers (the most obviously 'worship' inflected shared event) following the London bombings was held on the street alongside the two buildings. However, the most profound opportunities for interfaith dialogue reported by the people I engaged with were experienced as informal contact during these events, but also the more mundane experiences of living in a religiously diverse neighbourhood, provided (Prideaux 2009). In terms of MFS then, do these buildings provide examples and is their apparent reach into the local neighbourhood significant for how we think about MFS?

Clearly, using the most extended definitions of MFS articulated above, the community buildings can be seen to fit the definition. They are certainly 'zones of multifaith activity'—there are spaces for the fulfilment of religious obligation (the prayer room in Hamara, the Christian worship space in Building Blocks) as well as spaces for contact and shared activity. However, the buildings were not built and designed with the intention of being multifaith spaces of religious observance. The buildings also extend into the neighbourhood; they do not keep religion 'hidden' within secular space as many standard MFS can be seen to do (Bobrowicz 2018; Brand 2012). The creation of Building Blocks and Hamara was about the needs of their neighbourhood, religious and community events were held on

the streets beyond the building, and the implications of interaction were felt beyond the buildings. Taking this a step further then, it is arguably the MFS of the neighbourhood which has led to the creation of the buildings—which are then emblematic of the already existing multifaith zone of the entire neighbourhood. This is almost the reverse of the context of most standard MFS. Usually, in secular places (airports, hospitals and shopping centres for instance), MFS take religion out of the public space and create a controlled space for religious observance and engagement. In Beeston Hill, religion is already present and visible and these buildings are a manifestation of that capacity. The way in which the space of the buildings leaks into the streets and environment further underlines this. The neighbourhood as an MFS becomes generative but also iterative as the creation of the spaces leads to the reengagement with themes such as religious diversity and religious expression. Unsurprisingly, the neighbourhood as MFS rather than a secular space was also contested during the period I engaged with it. A local community leader was particularly expressing concern at the way religion was seen as the 'way into' the community for local governance and governmental structures wanting to 'manage' the community.

Whereas the Beeston example shows how a neighbourhood can generate and shape MFSs, which then themselves generate and shape inter-religious activity in the neighbourhood, the Near Neighbours example shows how the neighbourhood can be proactively supported towards becoming an effective MFS. The way in which the Near Neighbours scheme achieves this also illustrates the generative capacity of the neighbourhood and the way in which governance structures capitalise on the social capital of existing neighbourhood ties.

Near Neighbours was launched in 2011 and is a government funded scheme (through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) to increase social capital and cohesion in diverse communities. The website describes the scheme as:

> Near Neighbours brings people together in communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust, and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in. (https: //www.near-neighbours.org.uk/about)

Dinham notes the way in which the Near Neighbours scheme marks a significant change in policy direction in England ' . . . from a broadly owned and distributed multi-faith paradigm which many traditions, and none, have a stake, to one in which the Church of England gate-keeps a primary funding stream and is revalorised as 'national church'' (Dinham 2012, p. 586). Managed through the Church Urban Fund (Church Urban Fund CUF), the scheme funds a variety of small-scale projects as well as larger projects, including a youth leadership scheme and the 'Real People, Honest Talk' scheme. The activity of the scheme is expressly focussed on the issues experienced in neighbourhoods where interaction does not occur between different groups and where often, there are also issues of deprivation which negatively impact the experience of the neighbourhood. The scheme therefore identifies social interaction and social action as its two main objectives. The website notes that

> In many neighbourhoods across England, different faith and ethnic communities live and work next to each other, yet rarely interact with one another. Often these are also areas of deprivation, where people share a common concern for a better community, but don't come together to talk or act as much as they could. Yet it is local people, in local communities, who are ideally placed to identify and develop solutions that can improve their own neighbourhood.

There are clearly no buildings explicitly linked to the activity (though much activity happens in buildings—often but not exclusively churches) and there is no element of 'worship' either in terms of access to prayer rooms or shared activities. However, there are still some interesting questions arising from this scheme which relate to the argument extended here—that religiously diverse neighbourhoods can be considered MFSs.

Firstly, the scheme takes a particular place (the neighbourhood) as the location for activity. However, much the neighbourhood has porous and extendable boundaries and is or is not experienced as part of the city as a whole, it is nevertheless a more or less identifiable space within which activity can take place. Secondly, the neighbourhood is the site for diversity. Regardless of how people engage with one another or with the place, they do so, as in the Beeston Hill example, conscious of and displaying religious identity and activity. Thirdly, although the scheme is engaging with diversity in broader terms, it is clear that religious diversity is a principle focus and it could be argued that the management of religious diversity is being attempted through the scheme. Lastly, the scheme is proactively seeking to bring together residents and develop meaningful places out of contingent spaces. The scheme is therefore interesting in that it treats the neighbourhood as a potential MFS and seeks to support activity which enhances the experience and engagement that takes place there.

In both the Beeston Hill and Near Neighbours case study, we can see that there are significant shared themes around religion in public life, which are also visible in the discussion of MFS. Issues around identity, dealing with contestation and the management of religion in secular space are visible as are objectives to increase inter-religious contact, manage religious lives and expressions of identity, and improve experience for residents or users. It is possible to see the two examples as being on a continuum, with the prayer room as the most simple form, the community buildings of Beeston as a more complex form which 'leaks' into and from the surrounding neighbourhood, and the Near Neighbours scheme as engaging the reality of the most complex form—the religiously diverse neighbourhood in which communities are not engaged with one another. Equally, the prayer room can be seen as a very localised response to religious diversity which is about removing religion from the visible and shared space. Near Neighbours, on the other hand, is a large-scale response in the same vein as the localised response of Beeston Hill which looks to engage with and make religion visible as a resource to respond to social and other challenges.

Neither of these cases provide a straightforward example with which to make the claim that religiously diverse neighbourhoods can be considered MFS. They do, however, nuance a discussion about what constitutes MFS and how the study of religiously diverse neighbourhoods can both inform and be informed by considering them as MFS. Importantly, they also provide some important indicators of the key ways in which positive interaction are supported and sustained in the religiously diverse neighbourhood—through leadership, resources, and planning. This is significant for understanding the relationship between the experience of the neighbourhood as an MFS and the nature of interfaith dialogue in that space.

5. Multifaith Spaces, Interfaith Dialogue and Religiously Diverse Neighbourhoods

Having identified the way in which MFSs and neighbourhoods are defined and providing two cases to illustrate this argument, I move now to discuss why and how I think interfaith dialogue is a relevant feature of the religiously diverse neighbourhood. Although rarely explicitly stated as a goal of standard MFS, interfaith encounter and co-existence is variously identified as a positive potential and actual outcome of the shared use of an MFS. Biddington, for example, concludes his theological reflection with:

> It would then appear to be possible that multifaith spaces do indeed offer themselves as sites of potential for humanity to discover and engage with urgent strategies for a new stage of global co-existence and harmony; a place for 'strangers to become neighbours' [citing Beaumont and Baker, 92], at least for those open to the possibility (Biddington 2013, p. 328)

However, Brand (2012) notes that the 'informed hypothesis' of the Multifaith Spaces Project is that 'MFS rarely trigger genuine friendly encounters among their users' but instead that '... in those multi-faith complexes where users of separate prayer rooms have a concrete opportunity to meet in a more secular shared setting (e.g., a cafeteria) some cross-religious conversations are more likely to occur' (p. 222). This is a description of an MFS which looks very closely to that of the religiously diverse neighbourhood

(separate prayer spaces with shared communal areas). Brand notes the tension between MFS as a means to 'hide' religion from the secular space (so that people do not perform ritual acts in public spaces), and MFS as an open visibility of religion 'a silent resacralization of the West' (Brand 2012, p. 222), this tension is exacerbated by the way in which MFS must manage 'offence' both internally (where images, smells etc., might cause offence to others) but also externally, where those opposed to religion may be offended by its visible presence in an otherwise secular public space. Bobrowicz identifies the tension between different MFS designs with the tension Dinham (2012) identifies in the 'multifaith paradigm' between using religion as a resource for tolerance and cohesion and delimiting religion by preference for a more privatised faith. Bobrowicz notes the 'white box' model of the standard MFS (negative design) as tending towards this latter secularising effect (Bobrowicz 2018, p. 3). The 'white box' is an empty receptacle where religious bodies and activities are managed such that the privatized model of religion is taken as the norm. The outcome of this negative design is a home for no-one, limited engagement and potential for conflict. A neighbourhood, however, can never be a 'white box'. Religion will be written onto the buildings and the bodies that constitute it—through the presence of places of worship, the clothes people wear, the celebrations and gatherings that take place, and the festival decorations that appear. Religion and worship have always existed outside of the place of worship. 'Beating the Bounds' (an ancient English parish practice)[1], Nagar Kirtan (Khurana 2011) and other public parades (Sciorra 1999), public acts of remembrance (Wabel 2012) or other forms of civil religion—all mark 'religion' into the landscape—making any place potentially 'sacred'.

This visible presence of religion can be a source of tension but can also be a resource for the governance of religious diversity and the facilitation of interfaith dialogue. In their 2013 article Agrawal and Barratt, from research on a religions 'zone' of development in Toronto, argue that:

> . . . clustering [of places of worship] has the potential to increase contact, but does not significantly promote interfaith dialogue . . . interfaith dialogue is an overly ambitious undertaking—a project that may overshadow the achievements that arise out of mundane or fleeting encounters between individuals of differing faiths within a social space (p. 569)

It is these fleeting moments of contact which particularly interest me about the religiously diverse neighbourhood. The 'informal' interfaith dialogue (Prideaux 2009) that takes place in shared space is a significant demotic exercise of power over the space. However, it is not sufficient to only note positive examples of contact, one must also recognise that proximity can lead to negative views and hostility. Agrawal and Barratt, in reviewing the literature on this issue, and using the framework of Contact Hypothesis, noted that

> . . . there is insufficient evidence to ascertain the role of physical proximity and contact in altering individual prejudices (Agrawal and Barratt 2014, p. 574)

However, in their own research, they did find that whereas proximity does not support formal interfaith dialogue,

> Geography does, however, seem to play a role in increasing the amount of contact between faith groups, and it appears that these encounters are influential in improving interfaith relations, evidenced by increased interactions and cordial relations, as well as altering attitudes about the religious "other". (Agrawal and Barratt 2014, p. 584)

This is where intention and leadership become significant in the initiation and maintenance of dialogue. In the traditional MFS of a prayer room, there is be a centre manager or chaplain to negotiate access, maintain the space and facilitate resolution around conflict. Users of the space principally do so with

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1　This practice is especially interesting for the current discussion as it is about demarcating the parish—the area defined by the parish church—thus extending the geographical sphere of influence of the church building itself. (Rumsey 2017).

the intention of taking part in some religious activity. In the religiously diverse neighbourhood, the role of facilitator is potentially taken by a range of community leaders—religious and non-religious. Their intention, and the intention of those inhabiting the neighbourhood is to ensure that the space is as harmonious as possible. Those using the space do so as their 'home' where religion is more or less significant in their understanding and their physical engagement with the space.

In Bobrowicz (2018) discussion of the way in which multifaith spaces shed light on the 'secular premises behind the multi-faith paradigm' he discusses, among others, the 'House of One' project in Berlin, which will house a religious space for Christians, Muslims and Jews, as well as a communal room. He notes that ' ... every religion has its own place and is respected for its distinctiveness, but remains open to "the others" and common dialogue ... Therefore, it is not fully inclusive, like most MFSs, but rather focusses on certain religious traditions and adheres to the needs of the local population' (Bobrowicz 2018, p. 5). As with many accounts of MFSs, this seems to reflect well how a neighbourhood could (and in some cases does) respond to and support the needs of the community. A neighbourhood such as Beeston Hill, for example, contains a Christian, Muslim and Sikh worship space within a very short walking distance. These buildings all are 'open' to the local community to some extent (through open events) but all relate to the local neighbourhood—the street is, by necessity, the communal space for religious difference to be shared, discussed and communicated. In this sense, the religiously diverse neighbourhood creates for and of itself an MFS—sharing many of the same features, negotiations, and challenges of the designed spaces.

As Bobrowicz noted regarding standard MFSs, there are secular themes and tensions running behind how a neighbourhood develops as an MFS. The neighbourhood is not only an MFS but also a secular space. Therefore, it becomes a space of opportunity for 'postsecular rapprochement' (Cloke and Beaumont 2012) in the form of secular-religious co-working, recognition and engagement. At the same time, it is the site for negotiation of the presence and visibility of religion through local planning disagreements and debates. Most importantly, the neighbourhood is a 'home' for people who may be religious, non-religious or anti-religious. Even the most apparently homogenous neighbourhood experiences diversity of some form—but all within a shared 'home'. In this sense, although my argument would suggest that any space where religious diversity is experienced can be considered an MFS, the neighbourhood provides a particular example of a managed MFS which has the potential to support positive interaction between people of different religions. Indeed, given the observations noted above, it could be claimed that the religiously diverse neighbourhood is more likely to be successful in facilitating positive interaction than the 'white box' prayer room.

6. Home

In conclusion, I have attempted to extend the argument that neighbourhoods can be read as multifaith spaces and that doing so generates opportunities to think differently about how residents use and engage with the locality and religion by considering the spaces as more than passive containers for diversity. Doing so also draws attention to the limitations of the existing definitions of MFS, which focus on the traditional 'prayer room' model. Reflecting on this, the notion of 'home' becomes useful. In his theological reading of MFS, Biddington particularly looks at the notion of 'home' in understanding MFS and notes that ' ... it would appear that multifaith spaces are home for no one and everyone is an outsider' (Biddington 2013, p. 321). He argues that MFSs, as part of the public realm, are 'sites of interaction between strangers' which 'offer us the opportunity to acquire the skills of such interactions' (Biddington 2013, p. 322) by challenging the boundaries of home. Thinking about this observation in relation to religiously diverse neighbourhoods is revealing. The religiously diverse neighbourhood is very definitely a home—a series of private homes where the shared space becomes an extension of the sense of 'home'. It is also a workplace and a place to which people travel to take part in worship in specific buildings.

In the sense that the neighbourhood is 'home' despite the presence of other private 'homes', so too the religious identity of the neighbourhood is part of the sense of 'home'. Religious buildings

may not be spaces which everyone enters but they inscribe religion into the landscape in the way that standard prayer rooms inscribe (for those who seek it) belief into hospitals or prisons or universities. The contestation around 'home' is often heightened around religion and religion can become site and scene for contestation about boundaries and identity about the neighbourhood. This looks very much like the contestation that might occur over the location, design and usage of a prayer room. However, the MFS of a prayer room is, as Biddington notes, one which may lead to nobody being 'at home'. This is not an option for the neighbourhood, and this means that these contestations must be resolved—whereas in the prayer room, they may be resolved by the space becoming redundant. The neighbourhood is a space of commitment that a standard MFS cannot be.

At the end of his discussion on the architecture of MFS, Andrew Crompton identifies the perfect multifaith space as ' … an elusive zone where all people are at home' (Crompton 2013, p. 494). Despite the contestation and difficulty of the religiously diverse neighbourhood, it is nonetheless an environment in which residents are, in fact 'at home'. As spaces where residents come into contact with one another and often successfully negotiate religious difference and develop interfaith dialogue, religiously diverse neighbourhoods could be considered one of the more potentially successful multifaith spaces.

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